

AWAY O'ER THE WAVES: THE TRANSATLANTIC  
LIFE AND LITERATURE OF  
CAPTAIN MAYNE REID

by

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Dedicated to the memory of  
CHARLES THEODORE OLLIVANT

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ABSTRACT

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Although largely forgotten today, adventure novelist Mayne Reid, an Irish-born veteran of the United States' war with Mexico, was a household name on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. A prolific writer, Reid authored more than fifty "romances," some of which were reportedly based on his own experiences while traveling and working in the southwestern United States during the early 1840s. Approximately half his works were aimed at the juvenile market.

This study builds on previous biographies of Reid, both published and unpublished, to form a more complete picture of the author's life than has heretofore been available. Several hitherto unknown or forgotten facts are included. This study also looks at Reid's impact on the generation that formed his legion of "boy readers," his contribution to the myth of America's "Wild West," and his enduring popularity in the former Soviet Union.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

His own life, faithfully and minutely told, would form as interesting and varied a tale as the most strikingly imaginative of any of the fascinating stories which have proceeded from his pen.

— Helen Cromie Mollan (Mayne Reid's niece), 1885<sup>1</sup>

During the late-1860s the village of Gerrard's Cross, a small hamlet situated about twenty-nine miles northwest of central London, possessed an astonishing sight — a Mexican hacienda called “The Ranche,” a distinctively un-English dwelling completely out-of-place in its surroundings. The owner of this singular residence, a man whose sallow complexion strongly contrasted with his dark wavy hair and mustache, was equally exceptional in appearance. Now and then he could be seen strolling the grounds of his estate, wearing a scarlet dressing gown with matching smoking cap. His wife, an attractive woman whose youthful appearance frequently led observers to mistake her for his daughter, held his arm as she joined him on his walks. From time to time he was spotted striding across the village common, sporting a Norfolk jacket and black *sombrero* or galloping down some quiet country lane astride a jet-black horse outfitted with a military saddle and tiger skin.<sup>2</sup> Precisely what his neighbors thought of this unconventional fellow is open to conjecture but there can be little doubt they all knew Captain Mayne Reid, one of Great Britain's and America's most successful authors, both on sight and by reputation.

Today, anyone seeking the “Ranche” will be disappointed. It was demolished more

than a hundred years ago and in Gerrard's Cross — as elsewhere — both this remarkable dwelling and its onetime owner are largely forgotten. Yet during his lifetime, which spanned the greater part of the nineteenth century, Captain Mayne Reid was one of the most widely read authors of adventure novels in both Europe and North America. To state that his name was a household word on both sides of the Atlantic is no exaggeration. The business records of one of his principal American publishers, Ticknor & Fields, reveal that during the nineteen years from 1840 to 1859 the colorful romance writer was the Boston-based company's fifth most popular author, outsold only by Henry W. Longfellow, Josiah F. Bumstead, Sir Walter Scott, and Nathaniel Hawthorne.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence that Reid stood equally high on other publishers' lists was provided a few weeks after his death by an English newspaper, the Pall Mall Gazette, which ran some "interesting" statistics "concerning the sale of Capt. Mayne Reid's books." These figures were afterward reprinted in the New York Times.

In 1860 nine books of the novelist came into the hands of Messrs. G. Routledge & Sons, namely: "The Desert Home," (of which 8,748 were printed.) "The Boy Hunters," (8,455.) "The Young Voyagers," (6,954.) "The Forest Exiles," (8,315.) "The Bush Boy[s]," (6,710.), "The Young Yägers," (5,796.) "The Boy Tar," (6,878.) "The Plant Hunters," (5,000), and "Ran Away to Sea." (6,000.) In November 1860, Capt. Mayne Reid wrote for the same firm two original books, called "Bruin; or the Great Bear Hunt," and "Odd People;" of the former 9,000 were printed, of the latter 8,000. In July, 1879, "Gaspar the Gaucho," was published, of which 3,000 copies were printed. In February, 1860, two of his novels, "The War Trail" and "The Quadroon," came into their possession, of the former 14,500 and of the latter 11,400 copies being printed. In January, 1878, 20 more of his novels came into their hands. "Of "The Headless Horseman" 4,000 copies were printed, of "The Rifle Rangers" and "The White Chief" 3,000 copies, and of the remaining 17 2,000 copies each.<sup>4</sup>

Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Mark Twain — to name a few more of Reid's contemporaries — were all popular with readers on

both shores, but the flamboyant Irish author's life and career are perhaps more deserving of the term "transatlantic" than any of these. Not only did his tales of adventure appeal to readers in both North America and Europe; not only were they set on both continents (and some other places besides), but Reid as well spent substantial amounts of time on either side of the ocean. A native of Northern Ireland, he journeyed to the United States as a youth seeking adventure. Following some years working and traveling in the Southwest and a nascent literary career in the East (where he was befriended by the enigmatic Edgar Allan Poe), he went on to the brief but defining phase of his life — a year-and-a-half long stint as a soldier in the United States' war with Mexico, in which he was severely wounded leading the charge at Chapultepec. Afterwards, he retired to a friend's house in the Ohio River Valley to write his first novel, drawing upon his wartime experiences to fill its pages. Although he found a publisher in New York, events in Europe distracted him. Deferring his literary ambitions, he re-crossed the Atlantic, hoping to take part in the Hungarian revolutionary movement. Upon arrival in England, however, he learned that the revolt had failed and his services were unnecessary. Stripped of his sword, so to speak, he once again took up the pen — only this time on the other side of the ocean. Eventually he found another publisher for the novel he wrote the winter before, and which, in a revised and expanded edition, launched his career as a novelist. After the book became a success, Reid spent the greater part of the next two decades in England, churning out one volume after another and enjoying the fame and financial reward his accomplishments brought him. The outspoken author's sincere admiration for everything about the United States, combined with a fervent republican streak — no doubt the result of both his Scotch-Irish upbringing and his years in America — won

him many friends among the U.S. expatriate community in England. Indeed, Reid came to be so highly regarded by his American associates that in 1863 he was invited to speak at the first annual American Thanksgiving Dinner in London, where he paid heartfelt tribute to the Federal army and navy, which at that time were engaged in a bloody struggle to preserve the Union.

Although he never actually ran for public office, for much of his life Reid possessed an intense interest in British politics. Among his friends were several Liberal Members of Parliament, including Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart, John Bright, Richard Cobden, and William Ingram, publisher of the Illustrated London News — whom Reid aided in his election campaign. An enemy of the privileged classes, the hot-tempered Irishman was always ready to oppose the established order on behalf of the oppressed, whoever they might be. When the London Times castigated Hungarian freedom fighter Louis Kossuth for allegedly abusing his status as a political refugee, Reid leaped to his defense in a series of fiery letters, most of which the Times' editors declined to print (but were published in other, more obliging papers). A few years later, even though he was himself in dire straits, the empathetic author held a public poetry reading in an attempt to raise money to help London's poor, who were suffering through a particularly cold winter.

When unforeseen circumstances forced Reid into bankruptcy in 1866, he turned his back on England and returned to the United States, hoping to recoup his fortunes and, from all appearances, intending to stay for the rest of his life. For most of a three-year period he and his wife resided in or near New York City, where he applied for U.S. citizenship, contributed articles and stories to numerous publications, launched an unsuccessful



magazine, and unfortunately, nearly died when his old war wound (which seems never to have properly healed) became seriously infected. Depressed and in ill health, and with his financial situation unimproved, Reid returned to England after his physician recommended it, but was only able to do so with the generous financial assistance of friends — a group that included a distinguished historian and newspaper publisher, a celebrated Civil War general, and the father of a future United States president.

Reid spent much of the remainder of his life trying in vain to regain his health. Although weakened by illness, he continued to write, but it was painfully clear to all but his most devoted readers that with a few notable exceptions, his best work was already behind him. When he and his wife returned to London in early 1883, after spending several years living in the Herefordshire hills, the ailing author had only a short time left to live. On October 22 of that same year Reid died at home and was buried a few days later in London's Kensal Green Cemetery, where a distinctive headstone, decorated with an anchor, a sword, and a verse from one of his books marks his grave to this day.

During his lifetime Reid authored more than fifty “romances,” as the unconventional wordsmith liked to call them. A substantial number, popularly known as “boys’ books,” were written for the juvenile market — which seems to be one reason why he was not taken as seriously as an author as some of his more illustrious contemporaries. Almost half his tales were set in the United States or Mexico (or both). Several, according to Reid himself, were thinly disguised accounts of incidents in the author’s own life that occurred between the time he first arrived in North America and the end of the U.S.-Mexican War.

Lauded as “the first popular writer to know and love and tell us about our American

Southwest,”<sup>5</sup> Reid — in company with authors such as James Fenimore Cooper and Frederick Marryat (to whom he was often compared during his lifetime) — was unquestionably a major influence in the shaping of the popular image of America’s “Wild West,” both in the United States and abroad. But the imaginative Irish wordsmith also romanticized “Ould England” through such stories as The White Gauntlet and No Quarter!, while at the same time thrilling both youthful and adult readers alike with tales of adventure set in exotic locales as diverse as the jungles of South America, the plains of Africa, the mountains of Asia, or ships at sea.

Although his work is now obscure, Reid’s popularity persisted for several decades after his death. Until the Second World War, publishing houses in both the U.S. and Great Britain continued to supply bookstores with his most popular titles. Even during Reid’s lifetime, several (and in some cases his entire catalog) were translated into French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, and other European languages. Remarkably, Reid still has a following in the Russian-speaking parts of the former Soviet Union, where, apparently even during the darkest days of the Cold War, his tales of adventure in the American Southwest were immensely popular.

One way to measure the popularity of a celebrated person is to count the number of children named in his or her honor. In 1870, in the United States, there were six males with the first name “Mayne” in the entire country. Ten years later (and three years before Reid’s death) there were 44. By 1900 that number had increased to 108! The popularity of the name reached its peak in 1920 when no fewer than 179 American males were named “Mayne.” By 1930 the most recent year for which personal census information is available, the number of

“Maynes” in the United States had declined to 17. It is almost certainly no accident that the increase parallels the coming of age of many of Reid’s boy readers, who were starting families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Conversely, the decrease parallels his decline in popularity. Unfortunately, figures for the United Kingdom are more difficult to ascertain.

Today, apart from a few literary scholars and aficionados of nineteenth century western fiction, Reid is unknown in both the United States and Great Britain. I was myself completely unaware of him until 1989, when I came across a copy of The War Trail (1857) in a second-hand bookstore. I was drawn to the book by its title, its attractive Victorian-era binding, and the fact that it was set during the U.S.-Mexican War, a conflict about which I then had a budding interest. I was not surprised to learn later that the author was a veteran of the war. This knowledge sparked my interest in Reid himself — that, and his seeming obscurity, which I felt intuitively was not deserved. At first, the only biography I could find was Joan Steele’s Captain Mayne Reid (more about which, later). Then, at the University of Texas at Arlington Special Collections Library, I discovered a copy of the biography Reid’s widow first published in 1890. In 1996, I drew upon both these works to compose a brief biography (all of about four or five pages) — for inclusion in the Descendants of Mexican War Veterans’ reprinting of “Sketches by a Skirmisher” — Reid’s wartime reports for The Spirit of the Times, a New York newspaper. But my curiosity was unsatisfied. The more I learned about this fascinating character, the more I wanted to know. This was partly because Reid was such a paradox. Here, for instance, was a man who extolled the virtues of republicanism, proclaiming his admiration for the United States at every turn, a man who

detested aristocratic privilege and abhorred the idea of monarchy, yet spent most of his adult life living in Queen Victoria's England. Reid was also a man who time and again avowed his personal preference for dark-eyed, brunette beauties with a hint of a moustache on their upper lip, a man who seems never to have forgotten an early love affair with a woman who almost certainly fit that description, yet who married, and remained married for the rest of his life, to a fair-skinned, blue-eyed blonde — an Englishwoman whose physical attributes were the complete opposite of all he seemed to adore in the opposite sex.

My interest in Reid has since led me to acquire copies of some of his works — primarily those with North American settings and those that are considered “classics,” such as The Scalp Hunters and The Headless Horseman. My modest collection also includes some obscurities, most notably Odd People, Quadrupeds, and The Bandolero. Almost all the titles I possess were published during Reid's lifetime but none, unfortunately, is a first edition. Those are remarkably scarce. I have also managed to track down some of the nineteenth century periodicals in which the Irish author's work appeared, including Our Young Folks, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, Graham's Magazine, and the Boys' Journal. The most treasured items in my collection, however, are a complete bound set of every issue of Onward — Reid's short-lived American magazine, and a copy of Elizabeth Reid's 1900 biography of her late husband, Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures. I obtained the former through an online auction and found the latter (a discarded Library of Congress copy no less) at an unlikely place — Texas novelist Larry McMurtry's “All Booked Up” bookshop in the dusty little town of Archer City, Texas (of Last Picture Show fame). By happy chance, the biography came with some “extras.” Penciled in the margins are brief notes suggesting

that the original owner either knew Reid personally or certainly knew much more about him than the average reader. These notes have actually been helpful to my research. More recently, I acquired a printed color caricature of the author, published in an 1873 issue of Vanity Fair (which I have used as an illustration in this study), and his autograph, which came as a bonus with one of my book purchases.

Regrettably, I cannot claim to have read every book in my collection from cover to cover. Most are more than a hundred years old and many are fragile, requiring careful handling. When several pages in my much-referenced copy of Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures began to work loose from the binding, I was forced to make photocopies and retire the original for fear of further damage. Besides, I simply have not had the time. As noted previously, Reid produced more than fifty volumes. I seriously doubt that anyone, with the exception of his most diehard fans, ever read all of them, even when they were new. I have been more thorough however, in my scrutiny of the principal documentary sources upon which this biography is based.

During the height of his popularity, many of Reid's youthful readers sent him what would today be termed "fan letters." No doubt these admiring youngsters imagined the Captain to be as bold and dashing as some of the "heroes" in his novels — as indeed he was, or at least as he *had been*. Reader interest in Reid himself, as well as his work, was almost certainly the reason why one of the people who knew him best — his longtime friend and admirer, Charles Ollivant — composed a biography of the Irish author following his demise. Ollivant had himself been one of Reid's most devoted "boy readers" prior to meeting him in 1866. Over the next eighteen years he came to know the writer better than anyone apart from

Reid's wife. His lengthy (919 pages) holographic manuscript was completed only four years after his friend's death. Ollivant also composed an undated, handwritten personal reminiscence, only portions of which have survived, as well as a semi-biographical "Appreciation." Only the last-named of these efforts was ever published under his name — serialized in an obscure English periodical, Uses: A New Church Journal, between 1898 and 1901. Originally entrusted to Queens College, Belfast, they are today being cared for by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). Thankfully, these works had already been microfilmed by the time I learned of their existence. Instead of traveling to Belfast to examine them, I was able to take the far more economical expedient of ordering a duplicate reel by mail. My only complaint was that whoever filmed the manuscripts did so in a somewhat haphazard manner, which led to some initial confusion on my part as to which pages belonged with which document. This necessitated the making of a hard copy of every page — an extremely time-consuming task — in order to sort them out.

I will be perfectly frank: If it were not for Charles Ollivant's work, this study would have been far less complete. Of all the early biographical works dealing with the now-forgotten Irish-American novelist, his devoted English friend's lengthy unpublished manuscript is by far the most exhaustive. Moreover, it is accurate and well organized. Quite honestly, I have been unable to make much improvement in regard to its arrangement. If the present study bears a similarity to Ollivant's in terms of structure, it is no accident. But the manuscript also has its shortcomings. A scarcity of personal insight is the most noteworthy. This is particularly disappointing, in view of the fact that the one-time personal secretary was closely acquainted with both Reid's private life as well as his business affairs. Consisting in

the main of extracts from newspaper articles, book reviews, and letters from his idol that Ollivant faithfully preserved, it would not be inaccurate to describe “The Life of Mayne Reid” as a “cut-and-paste” biography. While all this material certainly has some value, it tells us more about Reid as a public figure than what he was like as a private individual. We must also keep in mind that the writer was an admirer of his subject, which seems generally true of most biographers. Anyone reading Ollivant’s manuscript from first to last page could be forgiven for coming away thinking that Mayne Reid had no faults of any kind whatsoever.

Ollivant began his “Life of Mayne Reid,” a self-described “labour of love,” on September 3, 1885. He finished it on February 1, 1887. For “nearly a year-and-a-half,” the middle-aged former secretary recalled in the manuscript’s preface, his “arduous task was carried out “in the face of adverse circumstance, having wholly been written in my spare hours after my daily commercial duties.” Numerous revisions in the text, along with the renumbering of many pages (two or three times in some cases) provide evidence that Ollivant made a number of mostly structural modifications during the process. His “Personal Reminiscences” of Mayne Reid, which were similar, and of which only a few pages are still extant, may antedate the “Life,” or conversely, postdate it.

It is to Ollivant’s credit that although he possessed a useful collection of letters and newspaper clippings and could draw upon eighteen years of personal acquaintance with the subject of his work, he also took time to make two trips to Northern Ireland for the purpose of “collecting the particulars of the early life of this remarkable man.” While there, he visited Reid’s only living sibling, Samuel Edgar Reid, who welcomed the inquisitive Englishman into the home he had inherited from his parents. No doubt Ollivant’s enjoyment of the trip

was enhanced by the experience of spending several days and nights under the roof of the very dwelling where his boyhood hero was born and raised. In addition to the author's brother, he spoke to his niece, Helen Cromie Mollan, and interviewed Reid's widow in London, who provided him with "valuable information, not otherwise obtainable."<sup>6</sup>

Ollivant's intention to publish his biography of Reid is confirmed by reports in both British and American newspapers. One of these, the New York Times, announced on February 7, 1887: "Charles Ollivant, of Manchester, has completed his biography of Capt. Mayne Reid and it will be published at an early day." The paper also added, "It has been written under the supervision of Capt. Reid's widow," which was mistaken. According to Ollivant, Elizabeth Reid quite literally cheated him out of any hope he may have harbored of seeing his work published under his own name. More than a decade later he revealed that when he initially encountered difficulty finding a publisher, Mrs. Reid offered to pay him "£40 or £50 for the manuscript, with the intention of engaging a literary man to re-write it." Declining any payment, Ollivant loaned her the manuscript "on the understanding that she had it re-written as she suggested," giving him "credit for supplying the material." Mrs. Reid, the trusting former clerk later recalled, even assured him in writing that "I shall see that your name is honourably mentioned." But when Mayne Reid: A Memoir of His Life — the first published biography of the late author — appeared in bookstores in 1890, Ollivant was shocked to discover not only that Elizabeth Reid was credited as sole author but also that the greater part of the book had been copied nearly word-for-word from his manuscript! The fact that it was dedicated to him, and that he *was* mentioned in it (but not until page 251!), was undoubtedly cold comfort. Not surprisingly, Mrs. Reid's duplicity, whether intentional or due



to some misunderstanding, seems to have created a rift between two people who may have had an uneasy relationship to begin with. At some point after retrieving his manuscript, the aggrieved biographer turned to its preface and with a pen marked out his previous acknowledgement of Mrs. Reid's help, along with a brief reference to "her own narrative," which she may have been writing before she got her hands on Ollivant's. He also penned a caustic rejoinder to a comment she had written in the margins of one of the pages.<sup>7</sup> Surprisingly, Ollivant seems to have taken no legal action, from all appearances limiting himself to complaints about the shameless widow's plagiarism in a review of a later version of the book, Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures, which was published in 1900. At that time he also called attention to its several errors and omissions, most of which he attributed to the editing work of Charles H. Coe, an American writer and printer who helped Elizabeth Reid revise the biography and who, from all appearances, was also quite an admirer of Reid — so much so that he named a son Mayne Reid Coe (who in turn, named his son Mayne Reid Coe, Jr.). Not much is known about Charles H. Coe except that he co-authored a study of the Seminole Indians of Florida, which was published in 1898. How Coe, who resided in Washington, D.C., came to be acquainted with Mrs. Reid is a mystery.<sup>8</sup> Why there was a second version of the biography is no mystery, however. In 1900 the New York Times reported that Elizabeth Reid had recently "been discovered in a poverty-stricken condition, in spite of the popularity her husband's novels once achieved."<sup>9</sup> Clearly, she needed the money. Perhaps Coe, a Reid devotee, was simply trying to help her.

A comparison of the two biographies credited to Elizabeth Reid reveals that while they are certainly similar, there are some noteworthy differences. One is that the first book

was much more concise than the second, in some parts remarkably so. At first glance this does not appear to be the case. Mayne Reid: A Memoir of His Life is 277 pages in length whereas Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures, at 262 pages, seems to be shorter. But appearances are deceiving: The first biography was printed with a significantly larger typeface or font. Moreover, the space between the lines is greater in the first book than in the second. If the first biography had been printed with the smaller font size and line spacing used for the 1900 edition, it would probably amount to no more than 200 pages, perhaps fewer. Another noticeable difference is the arrangement of some topics. For instance, Reid's accidental killing of an enlisted man in his own regiment is mentioned chronologically in the 1890 memoir, i.e., in the context of his military service, whereas the 1900 edition places the incident in a subsequent chapter.

Most astonishing of all are the many important episodes in her husband's life that Elizabeth Reid either completely disregarded in the 1890 biography or mentioned only in passing. Among the topics edited out are Reid's first meeting with Ollivant, his (Reid's) bankruptcy, Ollivant's unselfish efforts to spur sales of The Headless Horseman (which was Reid's latest book at the time of his bankruptcy), Reid's taking out U.S. citizenship, his lecture on Lord Byron in New York City, the hydrotherapy he underwent in the early 1870s in hopes of improving both his physical and mental health, an 1882 sleigh accident, and a host of lesser but interesting incidents. There is also no mention whatever of Mrs. Reid's brother, George Hyde, Jr., who participated in the Italian Revolution, lived with the Reids at their home in Buckinghamshire, and who, after accompanying his sister and celebrated brother-in-law to America, died in a New England mental institution. Equally astonishing is

the brevity with which Elizabeth Reid treated her husband's American magazine venture, Onward, an undertaking that absorbed a year-and-a-half of his life during his second American sojourn. In the Memoir, it merits only a single paragraph! Even Reid's final illness, his death, and his funeral, are disposed of in two or three sentences. Curiously, neither version of the biography mentions his first book, War Life, which was published in New York in 1849.

In contrast to the Memoir, the 1900 version of the biography, Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures, is much more complete, containing all the episodes, and then some, listed in the preceding paragraph. It also obviously relies more on Charles Ollivant's manuscript, in some cases copying it word-for-word or making only slight changes (and not always for the better). The decision to do this was probably Charles Coe's, as indeed Ollivant himself suggested when he referred to the book in a scathing 1901 review as "Mr. Coe's biography" of Mayne Reid, rather than "Mrs. Reid's."

Reid's niece, Helen Cromie Mollan, also wrote about the life of her uncle, although it is uncertain whether she did so for her own amusement or with an eye to publication. An unsigned typewritten manuscript attributed to Mollan is also in the safekeeping of Northern Ireland's Public Record Office. Whether she typed the pages herself or if they comprise a transcript of a now lost holographic manuscript is uncertain. Unfortunately, the work is incomplete, consisting of a foreword and twelve richly worded chapters that cover Reid's life up through the period when he befriended Edgar Allan Poe in Philadelphia — a total of 81 pages. It is interesting to note that like Mrs. Reid's two books, substantial portions of Mollan's manuscript bear a striking resemblance to Ollivant's work. PRONI also has on file

a few handwritten pages of anecdotal material attributed to Mollan. The age of these items is uncertain but they appear to date from the early twentieth century. The value of Mollan's work lies in its descriptions of Reid's early life as well as the inclusion of some detailed family history. Several stories concerning Reid's childhood, which only a close relation would be likely to know, are absent from both Charles Ollivant's manuscript and Elizabeth Reid's two books. Consequently, the present study owes much to Mollan as well.

Mollan had a great deal to say about her uncle, almost all of it complimentary. One thing she observed was that "He had a great love for boys and boys' ways and doings." Perhaps fearing that such an observation might be misconstrued, she added, "so long as they were natural manly boys." In fact, she remarked further, "the only time I saw him what we call 'put out'...was when we went to dine at a friend's house in London, where the only son was a boy who aped the man, and acted as though he were nine and twenty instead of about nine — or certainly not more than twelve." Her uncle, she continued, "would not entertain that night — was indeed barely civil; and when we came home said, if he had his way, 'That cub should be whipped and put to bed — even though his father was a Bow Street magistrate.'"<sup>10</sup>

Mollan described her famous uncle as "a very determined self-reliant man, regarding none his superior, genial and friendly with his equals, and to his inferiors or dependents extremely kind, without raising either familiarity or impertinence; and he was always held in respect by them." She remarked further:

He possessed, as many clever minds do, a power of keen sarcasm. This, however, was rarely used — never indeed, unless as a means of defense, or to put a falsely boastful person in the right place. On the contrary, he was kind and generous to a fault, and of a most social disposition. His conversational powers

were of a high order; and he could make anything he chose to talk of intensely interesting to all around. He was the life of a room, and though in his early days a thin sallow man — plain looking, most people would have called him — he had such a charm of manner and so sweet a smile that all else was forgotten. In later years, he had a fresh colour and became rather stout.<sup>11</sup>

”Keenly observant, she added, he “gloried in the midst of beautiful country scenes,” noticing even “tiniest plant by the wayside,” a trait that was carried over into his work, in that he was “always most careful in writing to be correct in both natural history and botany, it being his primary object to give pleasure and amusement with knowledge.” Revealing perhaps a little more about her uncle’s occupation than she intended, Mollan wrote further:

Most of the wild escapades in his tales, if not having actually happened to himself, at least came within his range of observation as having happened to others. He hunted the bear and buffalo, rode up to his horse’s flanks in morasses where the alligator was no stranger, and camped with trappers, Indians, and Mexican traders. But he often told with great amusement of an old lady who was immensely delighted to make his acquaintance at a dinner party in later years, who was much disappointed to find that was not he veritable hero of all his hairbreadth adventures she firmly believed him to be.<sup>12</sup>

The present study is also indebted to Dr. Joan Steele, formerly of California State College, Stanislaus, who unlike Ollivant, Mrs. Reid, and Helen Mollan, may still be living but whom I have unfortunately not had the pleasure of meeting. Steele, whose field of study was (or perhaps still is) Nineteenth Century English Literature, was the first person to produce an objective account of Reid’s life. Her groundbreaking doctoral dissertation, The Image of America in the Novels of Captain Mayne Reid: A Study of a Romantic Expatriate, was completed in 1970 at the University of California-Los Angeles. Following further research, it was revised and published in 1978 as number 229 in Twayne’s English Authors series under a shorter title — Captain Mayne Reid. To date, all my attempts to trace her whereabouts have met with disappointment. Consequently, I have been unable to benefit

from Steele's personal advice. In lieu of a personal interview, the notes in her works have proved invaluable, pointing me toward sources that would surely have taken me much more time to locate.

Together, Steele's book and dissertation form what has been up to now the most objective and scholarly biography of Mayne Reid available. Her work is not only polished and professional but also immensely readable. In view of these attributes, as well as the guidance her study provided, I am almost hesitant to point out its shortcomings. Yet I am compelled to do so because it is essential to making the case that my own study of Reid is an improvement over that which has come before. First (and this should not necessarily be considered a flaw, but rather a difference), although Steele declared in the introduction of her dissertation that the focus of her study was "both biographical and critical,"<sup>13</sup> it is clear that these two aims were not given equal weight. In her dissertation only a single chapter, the first of four, covers Reid's life — one hundred pages out of a total of three hundred and sixty-four. Similarly, the biographical portion of her book consists of only the first of five chapters, or twenty-five out of one hundred and forty-nine pages altogether. Although some additional biographical material is scattered throughout the remaining chapters of both works, the larger amount of space devoted to analysis makes it clear that for Steele the Irish author's personal life is of secondary interest to his literary output.

That being said, it is most certainly to her credit that Steele seems to have made a greater effort than anyone previously to clear up some of the uncertainty surrounding Reid's early years — albeit with little success. In 1972 she received a grant from the American Philosophical Society that enabled her to travel to Northern Ireland. There she examined

some of the author's personal correspondence as well as Ollivant's and Mollan's manuscripts. She also met and interviewed three of Reid's relatives, including the late author Meta Mayne Reid — the wife of one of Reid's great-grandnephews.<sup>14</sup> Even so, while Steele's on-the-spot research in Ulster was most certainly pioneering, she was not quite as thorough in other areas. For instance, when looking at Reid's service in the U.S.-Mexican War, undoubtedly the central experience of his life, Steele seems to have completely overlooked his military and pension records, which are open to public scrutiny at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. If she had taken the time to examine those files, Steele would have found therein a copy of the Reids' marriage certificate, which Elizabeth Reid had submitted in support of her application for a widow's pension. This marriage record was a document Steele had been unable to locate in England (she states that the Registrar General of England informed her there was "no record of the marriage taking place in England or Wales during the years 1851-1855"<sup>15</sup>). Therefore, if she had looked in the National Archives she would have learned that her guess that the author and his wife were married in the summer of 1853 was off by a year, which was not only because she was unable to uncover evidence of the marriage but also because she erred in picking 1851 as the year the couple first met rather than 1852, which Charles Ollivant reveals in his manuscript, a document to which Steele *did* have access.<sup>16</sup> In light of the professionalism she otherwise exhibited, it is equally surprising that Steele neglected as well to take a closer look at the several months Reid spent in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which is where he began his literary career and not in Philadelphia, an error her work implies and which is implicitly stated in a number of shorter biographical sketches by other writers.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, a comparison of

Charles Ollivant's manuscript with either one of Mrs. Reid's books would have shown Steele that the widow Reid's reference to a report of a political meeting in an 1849 edition of the Illustrated London News was not a figment of either the woman's or her late husband's imagination, as Steele suggests. In point of fact Mrs. Reid simply quoted the wrong paper. Ollivant tells us the report was published in the London Sun (and includes a complete extract). In all likelihood, Elizabeth Reid confused this meeting with a similar gathering that occurred in 1853, and which was in fact reported in the Illustrated London News.<sup>18</sup> Steele's complaint that so little was known "about Reid's childhood and youth up until the time he left for America that even conjectural statements...are not possible" also seems perplexing, in view of the colorful and very detailed account of Reid's early years included in the manuscript attributed to Helen Mollan, a work Steele mentioned she had the opportunity of inspecting while visiting Northern Ireland.<sup>19</sup>

While Steele's trip to Ulster certainly yielded some valuable new information (although, as I have pointed out, she seems sometimes to have overlooked some of the things that were more or less in front of her), it appears she had no luck attempting to solve the mystery of some missing documents, which she describes in the introduction of her dissertation. "Twenty-two years ago," she wrote in 1970, "Michael Sadleir, the English collector-scholar, forwarded a very interesting inquiry to the English Department of the University of California, Los Angeles." Sadleir, she explained, "had received a request from certain descendants of Thomas Mayne Reid whom Sadleir did not identify by name, asking whether he knew of someone who might be interested in writing the biography of their ancestor Thomas Mayne Reid, and offering the use of the family papers for such a study." It



is worth mentioning here that since Reid and his wife are not known to have had any children, it seems unlikely that Sadleir would have used the words “descendants” and “ancestor” in his letter and it may be Steele who made the mistake in her description of the correspondence. If Sadleir did in fact use those terms, he must surely have meant “relatives” and not “descendants.” In any event, Steele continued: “At that time neither Sadleir nor members of the UCLA English Department knew of any scholar likely to be interested in writing the biography of this popular and prolific romancer of the Victorian era.” Thus “the inquiry was laid aside for a period of twenty years” — until Steele came along and began her “research into the life and works of Mayne Reid.”<sup>20</sup>

Although UCLA acquired Sadleir’s collection in 1951, when Steele sought out the “original letter of inquiry” nearly two decades later it was missing. Furthermore, she added, “all efforts to locate the family papers mentioned in that letter or to identify the correspondent” led nowhere. Yet Steele was hopeful that “such papers do exist” and “that they will ultimately be brought to light.”<sup>21</sup> While she may have made a further attempt to solve the mystery when she traveled to Northern Ireland, there is no mention of it in her book. From all appearances, the question remains unanswered: Are there any Reid family papers in existence outside the collections of a public record office or university library? As previously mentioned, my attempts to locate Steele, in order to query her about this and other matters relating to her research, have been unsuccessful.

There are at least three significant differences between my work and Steele’s. First and foremost, the sum of what is presented in the chapters that follow is *not* a literary analysis but rather, a traditional biography. In other words, its purpose is to reveal *the man*

*behind the work* — as well as to illustrate how he affected, and in turn, was affected *by*, the times in which he lived — rather than to scrutinize his literary yield for its deeper meaning, as Steele has already done so very well. While Reid’s career as an author is most certainly central to any study of his life, within the bounds of the present study his literature is viewed principally in its historical context. This is to say the greater part of the literary commentary found herein originates with Reid’s contemporaries rather than with modern-day critics or me. Having made this point, an anecdote concerning “Lincoln’s Definition of Biography,” seems fitting:

[Abraham] Lincoln had been reading a few pages of the life of Edmund Burke, when, throwing it on the table, he exclaimed, “No sir, I’ve read enough of it. It’s like all the others. Biographies as generally written are not only misleading, but false.

“The author of that life of Burke makes a wonderful hero out of his subject. He magnifies his perfections, and suppresses his imperfections. He is so faithful in his zeal, and so lavish in his praise of his every act, that one is driven to believe that Burke never made a mistake or failure in his life.”<sup>22</sup>

The reason I have included this little story is to assure my readers that if their notion of an ordinary or traditional biography is similar to Lincoln’s, they will hopefully not have the same reaction here as he did with the Life of Burke. While I most certainly believe that Mayne Reid was a remarkable character and that his writing offers interesting insights into his own psyche, as well as the times in which he lived, I do not consider myself a fawning admirer who sees his subject as some sort of saint. Neither I have written this work for the purpose of dismantling him. What I have tried to do is stick to what is known, to portray Reid as a human being who, like most people, had both commendable and lamentable traits. Having said this, I must admit to some prejudices. For instance, I share his dislike of inherited privilege, which to my way of thinking (and Reid’s), are antithetical to true

democracy. For this reason the outspoken author's affecting a lifestyle that imitated the landed gentry, while simultaneously proclaiming his sympathy for England's working poor, is troubling to me. However, despite my uneasiness with this contradiction, as well as some other aspects of his personality, I have refrained from being judgmental. Of course, being separated from the object of my study by over a hundred years is a great aid to objectivity. Certainly, it is far easier to be impersonal in your appraisal of someone you never met. In any event, I sincerely hope that when my readers put down this work, they will be not be able to say I exaggerated my subject's qualities and downplayed his shortcomings, singing his praises so loudly that it seems he never made a mistake or experienced a failure in his life.

Another noteworthy difference between my work and Steele's lies in the documentation that enabled us to craft our respective studies. Although we both sought out and used additional sources as much as possible, instead of looking to Charles Ollivant, Steele depended largely on Elizabeth Reid's two books to guide the biographical portion of her work — even though she (Steele) faulted Mrs. Reid as an untrustworthy source. One of the complaints she expressed is that the widow Reid frequently quoted letters and articles printed in newspapers, but without revealing the date or in some cases, even the name of the paper, thus making it impossible to corroborate the veracity of the item in question. Another thing that annoyed Steele was Mrs. Reid's habit of quoting from some of her late husband's works of fiction, which I do not necessarily agree is problematic. Finally, and most importantly, as Steele pointed out in both the acknowledgements and endnotes of her book, the greater part of what the widow Reid published was plagiarized from Charles Ollivant's manuscript.<sup>23</sup> Steele's reliance on Elizabeth Reid is understandable in the case of her

dissertation; at that time, she had not yet gone to Ireland and probably had no idea that Ollivant's or Mollan's manuscripts existed. But continuing afterward to depend on a source she deemed unreliable as well as one she knew to be derived from another primary document to which she had access is puzzling.

I also must say that I do not completely agree with Steele's assessment of Elizabeth Reid as a source. Yes, she is maddeningly vague at times and she also made some mistakes. All the same, she *was* married to the subject for nearly thirty years and thus had knowledge of some matters to which neither Mollan nor Ollivant was privy. Nor was she always as "inaccurate" as Steele contends. A case in point is Mrs. Reid's description of her then-future-husband's residence in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from late 1842 to early 1843. Although Steele briefly noted this period of the Irish author's life in her dissertation, for some unknown reason it is completely missing from her book, replaced by conjecture about which of two western exploring parties Reid might have joined. Yet Mrs. Reid's statement that Pittsburgh was the improbable place where the young Ulsterman began his first "efforts to make a livelihood by his pen" is an important observation. This Pittsburgh sojourn was thus no inconsequential episode. Moreover, the available evidence suggests that Reid was unlikely to have gone adventuring at this particular time. Steele also paid scant attention to Reid's Mexican War service — undoubtedly the most defining experience of his life. In the process, she completely overlooked the accidental killing of one of his own men by the young lieutenant, despite the fact that this shocking occurrence, which official military court martial records corroborate, is described in both Mrs. Reid's book as well as Ollivant's manuscript.

In addition to the four sources discussed in the preceding paragraphs, this study also

looks to Mayne Reid himself, who claimed (as previously noted) that some of his early novels were based on actual occurrences in his life. For that reason, portions of his work that are purely descriptive of places or that give the appearance of being biographical in nature, even if they cannot be corroborated, have been cited. All such sources are identified in the text, however, so that the reader may know which parts are questionable. Steele, in contrast, was reluctant to utilize Reid's works, pointing out that one of the chief problems encountered by anyone researching his life is separating fact from fiction. This is certainly true. Although the eccentric author wrote what appears to be a reliable reminiscence of his military service before he died, the particulars of his Wild West adventures are certainly more difficult to ascertain. For Steele, this situation was particularly exasperating. Owing to what she termed "contradictory and ambiguous sources," she concluded that the Irish author's "first several years" in the United States would be "forever shrouded in uncertainty."<sup>24</sup> But in her frustration Steele overstated the case. In point of fact, Reid's whereabouts in the United States during the 1840s can be accounted for with some degree of certainty for all but a single year. However, to be fair, it must be conceded that unless some previously unknown evidence comes to light, precisely what Reid was doing during that particular twelve-month period might always be "unknowable," as Steele contends.

A collection of personal letters written by Reid to Charles Ollivant, many of which are extensively quoted in his manuscript, also proved useful to this study, revealing a much more human picture of the author than might otherwise be known. These too are in the care of PRONI, which provided me with copies by mail (although at a much greater cost than the microfilmed manuscripts). These letters are problematic, however. As Charles Ollivant was

only too well aware, Reid had notoriously bad handwriting, particularly when he was not feeling well. Fortunately, as already noted, Ollivant included transcriptions of many of these letters in his manuscript, but not all of them. Consequently, I had no choice but to use many valuable hours transcribing the others. It was a challenging task and in the process I became well acquainted with not only with Reid's handwriting but also, in a manner of speaking, I got inside his head. What I mean by this is that when Reid wrote a letter, at least to someone like Ollivant, with whom he felt comfortable, he simply thought, or in this case, *wrote* "out loud."

I sincerely hope that my decision to quote extensively from Reid's correspondence, as well as from Charles Ollivant's unpublished manuscript and other primary sources, will not be misconstrued by any of my readers, academic or otherwise, as some sort of "short-cut," or to use a no-longer-popular phrase from the 1960s, a "cop out." The late historian Stephen E. Ambrose, in his book Citizen Soldiers (1997), revealed that two of his mentors, William B. Hesseltine and T. Harry Williams, taught him "to let my characters speak for themselves by quoting them liberally." As Ambrose writes:

They were there. I wasn't. They saw with their own eyes, they put their own lives on the line. I didn't. They speak with an authenticity no one else can match. Their phrases, their word choices, their slang are unique — naturally enough, as their experiences were unique.<sup>25</sup>

I agree. Who is better able to speak for people who lived in times past than themselves? After all, as Ambrose points out, they were there. We were not.

Although I feel confident I could have assembled a worthwhile piece of work relying on such documentation alone, my research was furthered by a trip to England, which gave me the opportunity to visit several sites associated with Reid in both Buckinghamshire and

London. The result was the acquisition of a nebulous but nonetheless important “sense of place” that could not otherwise be obtained. While there, I took photographs to serve as both souvenirs and research tools. At the British Library in London I not only examined some rare Reid-related items but also made some interesting discoveries. I was particularly surprised to learn that Mrs. Reid, following the death of her husband, had tried her own hand at novel writing. No other Reid biographer has ever mentioned this.

In London, I also visited the Family History Centre in Islington, where I pored over British census records with the hope they might provide some further data pertaining to Reid and his wife. I was particularly interested in learning whether the couple had any children. It appears they did not. I also obtained copies of Reid’s will, as well as his widow’s and Charles Ollivant’s, at the Family Justice Centre. Finally, after looking for some of the central London addresses where Reid lived and worked, to see if any were still standing (they were not), I made a “pilgrimage” to the author’s gravesite in Kensal Green Cemetery.

I was astonished to learn during my visit to England that Reid is as forgotten in the country where his literary career took root and flourished as he is in the United States. Not one person I met, even in the British Library, had ever heard of this man who was once one of the country’s most celebrated authors. Likewise, no one in the handful of antiquarian bookstores I chanced to visit had heard of him either, nor did I find any of his novels for sale.

One of the highlights of my trip was a visit to Gerrard’s Cross, Reid’s home for more than a decade, as well as neighboring Chalfont St. Peter — a journey I made in the company of my wife and eldest son, and an old friend, an Englishman whom I had not seen in over twenty years, who cheerfully chauffeured us around the countryside. Prior research revealed

that the twenty-acre site of Reid's mansion, which he called "The Ranche," was still open land — identified, remarkably, on present-day British Ordnance Survey maps as "The Rancho." I knew the house had been demolished about 1890, but I wanted to see its location all the same. As expected, there really wasn't much to see — just trees and a fence with a locked gate that prevented us from actually setting foot on the spot. Nevertheless, it was something of a thrill to be there and to imagine the author, more than a hundred years earlier, strolling the grounds arm-in-arm with his wife or riding through the now-demolished lodge gates astride his horse.

The village of Gerrard's Cross, located only a short distance from the site of Reid's "Ranche," has grown considerably in size since the mid-nineteenth century, although it still maintains its rural charm. I was especially keen to see the village common, one of Reid's favorite spots and the place where he and his devoted friend Charles Ollivant first met. I expected it to be mostly open land with a few scattered trees, but it was thickly wooded. Whether this was the case when Reid lived there or whether the timber growth is a modern phenomenon I do not know. The parish church of St. James, which lies adjacent to the common, is still standing — now looking very ancient, although it only dates to the mid-nineteenth century, when the Reids were regular worshippers.

Chalfont St. Peter, not far from Gerrard's Cross, is a small village in Buckinghamshire where John Milton was once the most illustrious inhabitant. There, I hoped to catch sight of something that was quite unique — the remnants of Mayne Reid's four-poster bed, which had been sold at auction in 1867, now being used to support the roof of a local resident's front porch! Thanks to a helpful staff member at Milton's Cottage, to whom I



had sent an email a few weeks earlier, and a sketch of the porch, which I found in a book, we located the singular porch almost immediately. Although we arrived unannounced, the owner of the house made us welcome, inviting us inside for a chat and granting me permission to take photographs of the property. I was surprised to learn that until my arrival, she had been under the mistaken impression that her porch supports had come from the bed of Capt. James Cook, rather than Captain Mayne Reid!

While visiting London, I chanced to pass by the former American Express Office at 6 Haymarket, which lies midway between Piccadilly Circus and Trafalgar Square. During the late 1970s, as an American Express employee, I worked there in a large upstairs room that appeared to have once been someone's parlor. Remembering that there was a "blue plaque," a historical marker heralding the name of some previous important resident, on the back wall outside the window overlooking Suffolk Street (a window out of which I had often gazed), I took a look to refresh my memory. I was surprised to learn (or rather, to re-learn), that I had once worked in Richard Cobden's house. Cobden, a Liberal Member of Parliament, had been one of Mayne Reid's close friends. At that moment it suddenly occurred to me that I might have once worked in the very room where Cobden and Reid sat around the fireplace, drinking brandy, and discussing British politics long before I heard of the Irish author or had any interest in him!

Accompanied by my son, I also traveled to London's Kensal Green Cemetery where I visited Reid's gravesite and took photographs of his unique monument, erected after his death by his widow. It was not an easy journey. Unfortunately, the author's final resting place is quite some distance from central London and the cemetery, an old Victorian burial

ground surrounded by an imposing and very tall brick wall, darkened by decades of coal smoke, is enormous. Thankfully, a map provided by the cemetery office enabled us to locate the gravesite without too much difficulty, although there was a lot of walking involved. Moreover, the weather that day was unseasonably warm, making me feel as though I were back home in Texas.

While my journey across the Atlantic was productive, it was far too short. The difficulties inherent in making one's way across a large crowded city by public transportation, the limits imposed by the policies and procedures and operational hours of the various facilities I visited, along with other distractions and diversions, prevented me from achieving all I had planned to do. For instance, I never got to visit the British Library's newspaper library, which is located on the far outskirts of the city. On the whole, however, the trip was worthwhile and I have no doubt that my work is the better for it.

Although this study is largely biographical in nature, it concludes with a discussion of how Reid's work helped shape the popular image of the American "Wild West" — particularly in Europe and Great Britain, how he influenced other authors, and also how his tales of adventure appear to have shaped the lives and careers of two prominent figures on either side of the Atlantic, who as schoolboys were eager readers of his books. One is Theodore Roosevelt, who as President of the United States is best remembered today for his dedication to the cause of conservation. The other is Lord Baden-Powell, the English Boer War hero whose love of the outdoors led him to found the international Boy Scout movement. Reid's continuing popularity in Russia along with the question of whether or not he was guilty of plagiarism, which Joan Steele held was a persistent problem

“throughout...his professional life,” are also examined in the final chapter.

Before bringing this introduction to a close, I feel compelled to state that while I have not hesitated in the preceding paragraphs to draw attention to the shortcomings of some of my sources, I maintain no illusions about the imperfection of my own work. No historian is immune to making mistakes, although I feel confident that most do their best to keep errors to a minimum. Sometimes, when our informants are vague, incomplete, or conflicting, we chroniclers of the past must do what archaeologists, who work with entirely different materials, do all the time — make an educated guess (and acknowledge it as such). From time to time we later learn we were wrong. I am inclined to believe, however, that most of the deficiencies of the present study are more likely errors of omission rather than fact. Limited by both shortages of both time and financial resources, I have not been able to delve as thoroughly as I would have liked into some of the intricacies of my subject’s life and career. I was not, for example, able to travel to Northern Ireland at all nor to stay in London for more than a few days. Nor did I visit Herefordshire, where Reid spent most of the last years of his life. I was particularly disappointed when time constraints prevented me from traveling to the British Library’s newspaper archives, which are now located in a distant London suburb rather than the central repository in the city. I am hopeful, however, that should some publishing house show an interest in making this work available to the general public in the future, I will first have the opportunity to conduct the research necessary to make me feel more certain I have covered all the bases.

I should also point out that some omissions are not accidental. Mayne Reid was a prolific writer. In addition to his more than fifty books, he wrote an untold number of

articles, stories, letters, and editorial commentary that found its way into a wide variety of magazines and newspapers published in both the United States and Great Britain — and perhaps some other countries besides. Unless they were exceptional in some way, I have chosen not to include the titles of all these pieces in the text of this study, but rather in an appendix — as complete as I could make it — where they will be available for those who are interested. I have even left some book titles out of the text, but mainly the less known and less popular of Reid's juvenile works.

## CHAPTER TWO

### AN IRISH CHILDHOOD

Erin, I love thee! though thy sunken cheek  
Is pale with weeping, and thy hollow eye,  
With many a stifled groan, and rending shriek,  
Reveals dark tales of bitter agony;  
That I have pitied thy sad misery.

— Captain Mayne Reid, “The Land of Innisfail,” 1845<sup>1</sup>

Northern Ireland, or Ulster as it is also known, is one of the most historic parts of the United Kingdom. It was here that the celebrated Saint Patrick, whose venerated remains lie buried in County Down, landed in A.D. 432 and began his Christian missionary work. Ulster is also the ancestral home of no fewer than four U.S. presidents — Andrew Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, Chester A. Arthur, and Woodrow Wilson.<sup>2</sup> Millions of ordinary Americans can also trace their “roots” to this storied province.

Belfast, located in County Antrim, is the country’s largest city and most important port. Southeast of Belfast lies County Down, where in the southern part the twelve humplike peaks that make up the Mourne Mountains stand like tall green sentinels over the gently rolling land. Each summit reaches more than 2,000 feet above sea level and on a clear day, from the desolate crest of the tallest, *Slieve Donard*, the Isle of Man, lying more than fifty miles east in the middle of the Irish Sea, is plainly visible. In the opposite direction, the shoreline of *Lough Neagh*, Northern Ireland’s great inland sea, can also be viewed. Modern day maps of the British Isles label this region an “area of great natural beauty.”<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1. Mayne Reid's birthplace in Northern Ireland. From Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures (London: Greening & Co., Ltd., 1900).

Between the mountains and the sea lies a deep green, undulating, nearly treeless expanse divided into a patchwork collection of townlands having colorful Irish names such as Cloghskelt, Leitrim, and Ballymaginaghy. The largest town in this part of Ulster is the old port of Newcastle — today a popular seaside resort where locals and visitors alike enjoy yachting, fishing, golf and other outdoor pursuits.<sup>4</sup>

As elsewhere in Northern Ireland, this region is steeped in history. One of its best-known sites is Ballynahinch, the spot where the final battle of the abortive 1798 Irish uprising took place. Another is the birthplace of Patrick Bronte, father of the three famous sister novelists — Charlotte, Emily, and Anne. Today, the Bronte Interpretative Center, housed in the church and school over which the Reverend Bronte held sway before removing to Yorkshire, England, attracts visitors interested in Great Britain's literary heritage.<sup>5</sup> Remarkably, and in contrast to the attention given the patriarch of the Bronte family, no one today seems to take any notice of places associated with another noteworthy native son, a literary figure who was not only a contemporary of the Bronte sisters but born quite literally within sight of the Mourne Mountains — a colorful and accomplished Ulsterman whose book sales rivaled better remembered authors and whose name was once a household word on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

Thomas Mayne Reid, better known to the world as Captain Mayne Reid, was born at Ballyroney, County Down on April 4, 1818, the sixth child and eldest son of a Presbyterian minister bearing the very same name. Reid's father was himself the offspring of a Scottish clergyman named John Reid, whose wife was a daughter of the Rev. Thomas Main (also spelled Maine or Mayne), a churchman who immigrated to Ulster from Scotland in 1749.<sup>6</sup>

Although Thomas Main was twelve years in his grave when his once-famous namesake was born, it is not beyond the scope of possibility that tales of his military experiences sparked his great-grandson's lifelong interest in martial affairs. Born in Lanarkshire in 1727, Main was on the threshold of manhood when Bonnie Prince Charlie landed in Scotland, hoping to reclaim the British crown for the house of Stuart. At the 1745 Battle of Prestonpans the eighteen-year-old Lowland Scot served as a soldier in the army of King George II, under the command of Gen. Sir John Cope. The battle, one of the briefest conflicts in the history of Scotland, resulted in a humiliating defeat for government forces. It was believed by Main's descendants that he also fought at the 1746 Battle of Culloden, a bloody affair that ended the lives of a thousand Highland Scots as well as the Jacobite pretender's hopes of regaining the throne.<sup>7</sup>

More than a century after his death, family members recalled that while Main's military service was brief and that he afterward traded his musket for a Bible, "the soldier spirit of him still glowed in later years." It was said that during the Irish rebellion of 1798, when the Battle of Ballynahinch was raging nearby, the elderly churchman "stood for hours on the hilltop by his home." There, "bareheaded, the wind tossing his silver hair," he listened "with intense excitement to the sounds of the fighting, and from his knowledge of warfare telling the neighbours who gathered around him, how the contest was progressing and which side was winning." It was further remarked that the "correctness of his judgment was proved when weary stragglers from the battlefield, toiling homeward at nightfall, told the tale of the fight."<sup>8</sup>

Main was about twenty-two years of age and probably fresh out of divinity school



when he crossed the North Channel that separates Scotland from Ulster. His initial posting was “at Donnaghcloney, near Banbridge.” Afterward, he was called to preach “at Drumgoodland Church, in the townland of Closkilt, about three miles from Balleyronev.” He evidently made a good impression on the worshippers, who “were notable for their keen, often critical intelligence, sober outlook on life, and, despite the sternness of their days, an apt humour.” In 1749 the young cleric received the appointment he would hold for the remaining fifty-seven years of his life when Drumgooland parishioners were called upon to vote “in the primitive fashion then in vogue; those in favor of Mr. Maine going to a room upstairs, while those in favor of his opponent remaining below.” Yet for some time afterward, he continued also to minister to the “shepherdless flock” at Donnaghcloney, a town located some twelve miles away from his own parish, oftentimes preaching “in an open field until a minister was appointed there.” Unfortunately, this “double duty” put the young churchman at risk. In addition to the “hostile bitterness...afire in the country,” there was danger from “footpads and highway men [who] infested the roads,” which “were few, the bridle paths narrow, lonesome, and unprotected.” Fearing for their safety, people typically “rode in armed companies.” Traveling alone, the Reverend Main was fortunate in that he never came to harm.<sup>9</sup>

Shortly after his arrival in Ulster, the young minister took up residence in *Mourne View*, “a long one-storey building of grey stone, common to Ireland at that period.” The structure’s name was derived from its location “on an eminence facing the Mourne Mountains, at the base of which lies the town of Newcastle, a favourite seaside resort, and the beautiful Bay of Dundrum, with its wild and rocky coast, abounding in legendary lore.” It

was here, in this very same house, located a mile or two from Ballyrone village, that the future author first saw the light of day nearly three-quarters of a century later.<sup>10</sup>

Although church members held Main in high regard throughout his long office, the Presbyterian minister's "independence of mind, and obedience to his conscience in preference to mere formalities," combined with a streak of republicanism — traits that seem to have been inherited by his celebrated great-grandson — occasionally landed him in hot water with both ecclesiastical and civil authorities. On one occasion, in 1767, he was censured for "marrying a couple with only one Sabbath's proclamation." In the 1790s, when radical "New Light Presbyterians" were agitating for reform in Antrim and Down, both he and a son-in-law were very nearly arrested as rebels by the acting Chief Secretary of Ireland, Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh. According to family lore, Castlereagh had a change of heart after one of the old man's daughters, a "very tall dignified woman" who "made the most of her inches," proceeded to give him "her unabridged opinion of his actions and character as to then and other times" when he arrived with soldiers to take both her husband and father into custody. Whether "the white mask" of Castlereagh's face was tinged with shame, as the venerable churchman's descendants liked to think, "no arrests were made" either "that day nor on any other."<sup>11</sup>

If the Reverend Main, or "Mayne" as he afterward came to spell his name, held out any hope that his only son would follow in his footsteps, he was sorely disappointed. As it turned out, the lad (whose name has been lost to history) came of age "with a strong aversion to walking 'in the good old way'" and was sent, said a Main descendant, "to America, the land of hope and promise of redemption for prodigal sons." However, upon arrival, the

young man disappeared, never to be heard from again. When Main's son-in-law John Reid died at an early age, his widowed daughter returned to her parents' home, bringing her children with her. Thereafter, Main "adopted" the grandson who had been named for him, "in place of his only son." In 1802, to assure that the first Thomas Mayne Reid would become his grandfather's "successor as minister of Drumgooland," the aged gentleman sent the sixteen-year-old youth "to college in Scotland, to be educated for the ministry."<sup>12</sup>

On June 1, 1806, while young Reid was away at divinity school, his seventy-nine-year-old grandfather died. The Reverend Main's funeral was reportedly befitting a Highland chieftain — only "the mournful heart-rending lament of the pipes...was missing." "From far and near," it was said, "people came to do him final honour" and "all classes and creeds joined in forming the close-filed procession, extending for more than a mile from his home, the end of it only leaving his own door as the coffin was carried in through the gateway of the churchyard." Afterward, a stone slab was placed over his grave, upon which was carved a poem attesting to the love and respect that Main's parishioners felt for him.<sup>13</sup>

That they thought as highly of their departed pastor's grandson is evidenced by the fact that "during the two years needed to complete his college course...the people of Drumgooland determined to wait" for Thomas Mayne Reid to be graduated, refusing "to have anyone else as their minister." Having "grown up amongst them," they "knew him intimately and judged him keenly." To their way of thinking, young Reid, who was finally ordained at the same age as his grandfather — twenty-two — "no one could be so well fitted to fill the vacant place in their lives as this chip of the old block."<sup>14</sup>

From all accounts, he more than met their expectations. Described as "calm,

dignified, [and] urbane,” the orderly young minister’s “placid disposition” and courteous demeanor continued throughout his long life to justify the deeply held affection his parishioners felt for him. A large man both “physically and mentally,” he possessed a “cultured, restrained, yet very dominant mind,” speaking slowly and articulately, whether “in the pulpit or on a public platform.” Trusting their minister implicitly, some church members not only “confided in him their joys and sorrows” and but also made him “custodian of their most private and precious documents.” Reportedly, the local Catholics had an equally high regard for this extraordinary churchman who was said to be so considerate he “would speak even the devil fair if he met him.” As a further mark of the esteem in which Reverend Reid was held, he was also “appointed Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, a post of honour in what had become an important body of men helping to mould Ulster life anew.”<sup>15</sup>

From time to time, Reid’s parishioners demonstrated their “active appreciation” of his ministry by coming forward “when any special manual work had to be done.” On one occasion, when “the old thatched roof of his church, on the hillside of Drumgooland, needed to be repaired,” a “sturdy band of volunteers” showed up to help him “modernize it with slates.” In short order, the men were “working like bees in time of honey-flow.” When an “outsider” passing by remarked that he thought they would have the old roof “stripped by night,” their minister confidently replied: “If I wished it they would have it off in an hour.”<sup>16</sup>

While the future author’s father was so polite he “would bow to the ducks,” his mother, Helena Rutherford, could not have been more opposite in temperament. Physically, she was a “small, but well-proportioned” woman who had “vivid” auburn hair and when

young, possessed a “full share of the proverbial characteristics of her race and name.”<sup>17</sup> Her father was the Rev. Samuel Rutherford, a Presbyterian minister whose family settled at Newbliss, County Monaghan in 1750. She traced her ancestry to “one of two brothers” who were granted “town land” in Ireland by King William of Orange, as a royal reward for military service rendered at the 1690 Battle of the Boyne. Family members claimed also that they were descended from “the ‘hot and hasty Rutherford’ mentioned in Sir Walter Scott’s ‘Marmion.’”<sup>18</sup> Throughout his life, Captain Reid, who was noted for his impulsive, outspoken nature, frequently boasted that he had “all the talent of the Reids and all the deviltry of the Rutherfords.”<sup>19</sup>

Although Helena Rutherford Reid was said to have been “a most admirable and exemplary Christian woman,” her reputed proclivity for “action more than argument” was occasionally displayed in an unexpected manner. One evening Reverend Reid was at home playing chess “with his close friend and croney [sic], the Rev. Thomas Tighe, Rector of Drumballyroney” when his wife let her “hasty temper” get the better of her.

It was a game they loved and played as true devotees should play it, with silent concentration. The slow puffs of her husband’s pipe, the unfrequent and only word “Check” made the quiet of the upper sitting room oppressive. As time ticked on the absorption of the players goaded her. It became too much for Rutherford blood. Going swiftly between the players, with one sweep of her little hand she cleared the board, and probably left them to recover from their astonishment, and pick up the scattered pieces from the floor.<sup>20</sup>

When their first son arrived in 1818, Reverend and Mrs. Reid already had five daughters — Helena (named for her mother), the twins Margaret and Jane, Nancy, and Letitia. In short order, six more children followed: John, Samuel Edgar, Eliza, James, Ebenezer, and Archibald George.<sup>21</sup> While all six of the girls “grew up and married,” two of

Reid's brothers died young: Ebenezer — named for a deceased fiancé of one of his older sisters — at age two; and Archibald George — a “promising youth” who succumbed to the ravages of tuberculosis at the relatively tender age of twenty-five. Ever afterward, his grieving family was convinced that the unfortunate young man had “laid the seeds of this insidious disease by an unwise exposure on the cricket field, several years prior to his death.”<sup>22</sup>

Although none came close to the fame he would enjoy as a novelist, each of Reid's three surviving brothers achieved some measure of success in life. James, a lifelong bachelor who reportedly “displayed great aptitude for business,” became a successful merchant and founding partner of “the wholesale woolen house of Miller, Boyd, and Reid” in Belfast, before dying at age forty.<sup>23</sup> Brother John studied in Belfast and Edinburgh, returned home, married, and started a family. He was afterward “appointed assistant to his father at Drumgooland Church,” a post he held “until his death, June 5, 1864 — of consumption.” Samuel Edgar, also married with a large family, apparently never left the family farm he inherited following the demise of his elderly father in July 1868.<sup>24</sup>

Mourne View, where Reid and his siblings grew up, was a larger-than-ordinary farmhouse that “stood on the top of a gentle rise” where “from every side the view spread wide and beautiful.” In the distance could be seen other farmhouses, surrounded by trees, along with “white dots of labourers [sic] cottages undulating away to the changing glory of the mountains.” At the bottom of the hill was “a miniature lake with a tiny islet in the centre,” which “intrigued imaginative childhood.” The dwelling, described as “long, low, and deeply thatched,” was approached “from the road by a straight and steeply-ascending

avenue.” Many years later, the old homestead was fondly remembered as a place that smelled “of apples, wholesome home-made bread, and that essence...of home, the incense of the turf fires.” It was there, on “that breezy hill-top with open country to the far horizon,” that the future novelist came of age “amidst surroundings that helped to foster in him the romance and poetry for which he was afterwards distinguished.”<sup>25</sup>

From all accounts, Reid’s childhood home was not only a place where “happiness abode and sorrow only sojourned,” but also where “was no danger of the hinges of [the] front door clogging from want of use” — nor the back door latch either, which “lifted to a finger touch.” Recalling those halcyon days, a relative remarked: “Life was simple in material things; rich in all that mattered.” All who came to call, whether friends, family or neighbors, were “were sure of finding a welcome, good company, [and] good talk.” The “packman” or peddler was especially welcome, “his jocund greeting the prelude to an hour of enjoyment” for Mrs. Reid and her daughters.

With alluring opulence he would spread the contents of his pack, using every art of flattering eloquence to gain custom. “I hev the very muslin here for Miss Nancy. Look at them pink rosebuds. They just match the bloom in her cheeks. An’ this wan wi’ the innocent wee dots for Miss Jane; she’s so nate an’ canty. Miss Letitia, I min’, favours blue; an’ there’s wan was dyed for herself. An’ don’t they set wan an’ other off quare and well.” As he billowed them up together on the clean scrubbed table. “Ye could boil them, and they’d come out every time as clear and fresh as their own purty eyes. An’ what about yourself Mem? Take that length of puce tabinet, y’couldn’t be bate in it. If ‘hed it on you’d be tuk for the sister of these young ladies, growin’ up so quick about you. Here’s a ribbon too for strings f’your bonnet, for I ken weel y’like things to match.” Nor was the maid servant left out. “Here’s a linsey-woolsey would last Peggy Anne her lifetime; and mebbe she’s needin’ a petticoat. Look at the lovely stripes in that plaidin’. An’ I hould y’me darlin’ ye’ll not hev t’whistle for the boys t’follow you if y’hev a gown of yon laylock cotton made for Easter Sunday.”<sup>26</sup>

Even the “itinerant beggar woman” was warmly received at the Reid’s backdoor — for she brought “news of the countryside, far and wide, gathered in her profitable

wanderings.” Warming herself at the peat fire of the kitchen, in between bites of proffered food, the barefooted woman held forth while Mrs. Reid, her daughters, and Peggy Anne listened intently. And when she left, “she was given gopens (handfuls) of oatmeal, farls of bread, potatoes, or anything that came handy, to pouch in the voluminous pockets slung around her.”<sup>27</sup>

Although her “hot and hasty” temper occasionally came to the fore, on the whole Reid’s mother was remembered as a “warm” and “light hearted” person who possessed “a very definite ideal of a woman’s simple duty as a wife and home maker” — standards of behavior she imparted to each of her daughters, who were “taught...out of her deep spiritual faith; her life amongst them the best proof of its value. She was the mouth to be obeyed; also playmate, friend, and good companion to be loved.” Making sure that her girls were well prepared for domestic life, she taught them that all household duties, even those that seemed “despicable,” were equally important. To keep them busy, each sister “had her spinning wheel, and pleasant rivalry existed as to which could spin the finest yarn.” Forsaking store-bought clothing, the girls made their own, “adorning it with embroidery and individual charm.”<sup>28</sup>

As they reached marriageable age, Reid’s sisters did not lack for male suitors. A neighbor woman who was sometimes hired to help out in the minister’s home recalled there were so many eager young men coming to call that the girls “could thatch houses with the big ones and scollop them with the wee ones!” Not all the would-be husbands met with their parents’ approval, however. When daughter Helena was being courted by a fellow whose family tree included an antecedent “hanged for sheep stealing,” her father refused to allow



the match. Ultimately, all but two married Presbyterian ministers.<sup>29</sup>

On the whole, Reid and his brothers and sisters formed a “merry crew,” who lived in a remarkable household where pillow fights were not uncommon and as “long as fundamental and necessary rules of conduct were adhered to there was no embargo on personal expression.” Eliza’s future husband, who grew up in a home “where a somewhat dour Scotch sobriety forbade any overflow of celtic [sic] vivacity,” was pleasantly surprised when he first began to court her and was introduced to her family. Years later, he recalled their witty banter, saying: “Their gaiety, their freedom of speech astonished me. Why, even their father and mother were not left out of the fun and game making.”<sup>30</sup>

Owing to a belief then prevalent — that nearly constant movement was an expedient to their physical development — even infants were included in the family’s circle of activity. When they were babies, Reid and his siblings were “Danced and dandled through all their waking hours; cuddled, tickled, and kissed; tossed high and caught in strong arms.” If a child became “fretful” and cried, it was taken up “into the crook of whatever feminine arm was available [and] the infant’s attention was vigorously directed to every bright and shining object” in order to stop its tears, “for even babies can be bored.”<sup>31</sup>

In early nineteenth century Ireland, it was not unusual for the parents of little boys to dress their infant sons in feminine attire. Reid himself wore petticoats until he was six years old, “not because his parents had any belief that the fairies frequently stole small boy children, and that by dressing them as girls the fairies were deluded,” but rather, because it had merely become the custom and...everyone adhered to it.” On one occasion, however, the child’s garb led to an unfortunate accident:

The local carpenter was at work in the yard. The chips and scraps of wood that lay around him attracted the boy. Catching up his skirt he filled it with as many bits of wood as he could carry and made off with them to some secret lair of his own, or new adventure in his ceaseless activities. His mother watching saw the danger he was about to incur in taking his pouched burden over a broken gap in a stone wall. She ran to save him, but was too late. A loose stone strayed the nimble feet of the child. He fell, breaking one of his legs.<sup>32</sup>

Reverend Reid, who had “been permanently lamed owing to the careless treatment of a hip joint dislocated in schoolboy play,” was particularly distraught by this occurrence and did all within his power to assure that “his son would not suffer from a similar defect.” To the concerned father’s relief, “no after effects of the hurt put the slightest brake on the boy’s more than ordinary agility.”<sup>33</sup>

As a youth, Reid was described as physically “slim, but muscular and closely knit,” with “promise of great latent strength, which was amply fulfilled later in life.” His complexion was “dark,” the tone of his skin “rather sallow,” and his hair was “silky and of a deep brown shade.” He observed the world through hazel eyes. With “a firm mouth and prominent chin; a straight nose; and...a square contour of face,” it was said that none could rightfully call him handsome. But that didn’t seem to matter. Fortunately, the young man “possessed such a charm of manner that the comparative plainness of his features were forgotten.”<sup>34</sup>

In character, the youthful Reid was said to be “manly and self-reliant, as well as a recognized leader among his playmates, whom he excelled in all feats of agility and strength.” Whether “games, running, leaping, or any physical contest,” the fair-minded but highly competitive lad “was never beaten.” It was claimed: “If any boy showed signs of foolish conceit in his own performance of anything, the bubble was soon pricked by the

question; ‘Can you beat Tom Reid at it?’”<sup>35</sup>

Not surprisingly, as the oldest son of a respected Presbyterian minister, Reid was held to a higher standard of behavior than his friends. As their acknowledged “ringleader,” any complaints about the boys’ behavior were generally directed to his mother, with the result that more often than not, “he got full blame for all the misdemeanors of his companions.” On one occasion his oftentimes-exasperated parent found him “leading a band of bare-footed youngsters along the public highway.”

It was the drumming season in Ulster. One of the band proudly swaggering, beat out riotous noise from an old tin can. Mayne Reid had taken off his own socks and shoes, so as not to appear in any material way, superior to his followers. His mother called him to accompany her home. With accustomed obedience, after dismissing his company he followed her. When out of earshot of the boys she reprimanded him. It was not seemly for Mr. Reid’s son to behave in that way; going bare-footed and encouraging disorder on the public highway. There was no hesitation in the response of the young revolter; —

“I would rather be Mr. Drum than Mr. Reid.” It was not told how she dealt with the matter. Her blood may have given an avative [sic] leap, checking further reproof.<sup>36</sup>

Although the exuberant youth was no stranger to mischief, none of “the tricks played by the prankish boy on the neighbours and their live stock,” such as putting mud on the heads of turkeys in order to change “their mawkish placidity into aggressive fury,” were considered “cruel or bad.” Indeed, it was said that some of the boy’s victims, “content with threats of personal retaliation” — “It’s that deil’s imp young Reid. If I catch him at it again, I’ll brak’ his neck!” — actually held a grudging admiration for the imaginative youth. It was said: “He had a way with him.”<sup>37</sup>

From an early age, Reid demonstrated a passion for natural history, resulting no doubt from the “ample opportunities for studying Nature in her various aspects” on his family’s farm. It was said that on numerous occasions, he constructed “some ingenious contrivance

for the trapping of birds and animals,” often assisted “by one of his father’s old servants — Hugh M’Ivoy,” a man who was apparently held in high esteem by young Reid on account of such talents as the ability to “stroke a trout.”<sup>38</sup> Wintertime was best for “bird snaring” and the inventive Reid reportedly constructed his traps out of “horsehair and old barrel hoops.” During one particular season, he and his friends managed to capture a total of “three hundred larks, besides many friendly robins and other birds,” releasing them unharmed after taking “only the trophy of a single tail feather from each bird.”<sup>39</sup>

Reid as a youth was also remembered as “a fearless rider and a good shot” who spent countless hours alone or with friends roaming the Down countryside. Indeed, it was said, “he was never happier than when out tracking game.” The ingenious boy didn’t always have to go far. The small lake at the bottom of the hill on which his family’s house stood was reportedly “a haunt of wild duck.” On one particularly cold winter day, with the water in the pond frozen over, “the ardent young sportsman...took cover on the little island, hoping to get a good shot.”

His patience was wearing thin when he saw a fine wedge of duck approaching. They lighted at the extreme edge of the lake, beyond the range of his gun. Not a vestige of cover lay between. A smur of snow had fallen. He noticed that the keen wind had swept a track bare across the ice in the direct line of the ducks. Out of his pocket store came knife and string. Cutting some fuzzy bushes from the underwood he tied them together and cautiously pushed the bundle out into the wind’s path. The surface was like glass and the bit of camouflage was blown close to the flock. At first they rose alarmed, but broken off branches had been seen before, though perhaps this had a somewhat eccentric appearance. Sensing no real danger they settled down again. The trick was repeated a couple of times to ease their minds. Then making a bigger bundle he crept, on hands and knees behind it, till easy range was reached. A good bag was carried home, and the tale of his wood-craft told with graphic glee.<sup>40</sup>

Although Reid reportedly “had the true sportsman’s caution,” on one occasion his love of hunting resulted in a potentially “unpleasant episode.” While shooting at a bird in

some bushes he accidentally wounded another schoolboy hunter who “chanced to be the son of a neighbouring Roman Catholic parish.” Although the boy’s injury was slight — “a few pepper corns had grazed the youth’s ear” — there were very real fears that due to “a strong enmity between the Roman Catholics and Protestants in Ireland,” some people might view the incident as something more sinister than an unfortunate miscalculation. Fortunately, “the Rev. Mayne Reid, owing to his extreme amiability, was much respected by the members of every denomination” and in the end he “prevented any bad blood arising.”<sup>41</sup>

Reid’s family was fond of sharing a story about “what might be termed an equestrian feat” involving “not a horse,” but instead a rather impatient donkey. On occasion, the inventive youth and his friends would hold an impromptu Irish rodeo in the Mourne View farmyard, by spreading hay on the ground, after which “a pan of oats [was] set on it, and the ass brought out.” As the unsuspecting donkey ate the oats, “the game was for each entrant to spring upon the animal’s back, face to the tail, and remain there as long as he pleased.” The donkey’s job, of course, was “to unseat them quickly.”

The winning of the game ought, in all fairness to have been accorded to the ass. With varying degrees of swiftness he tossed each boy on to the hay. All but one, Mayne Reid. Never once, and very often there was a repeat performance, was he unseated. Not even when the resourceful animal attempted to lie down and roll. Promptly he was made to change his mind, and content himself with thinking out some new method of buck-jumping.

So fiercely did some of the aspirants strive to cling on there was a patch, with all the hair rubbed off, above the animal’s tail.

The other members of the household and any chance visitors usually watched the performance, and always found fresh cause for amusement. The ass never failed to perform his part well, always contriving some fresh caper to free his back from the troublesome burdens. Mayne Reid alone, with perfect poise and balance was ready for every twist and jerk.<sup>42</sup>

Just as Reid’s ability to stay atop a bucking donkey was legendary, so too was his

way with horses. It was said he was “a born equestrian” who had the knack of achieving “the perfect understanding that is mutual between the true horseman and his animal.” A family member recalled one summer day when the lad rode some distance from home, not paying much attention to his surroundings. After a while, he realized he was lost and stopped to ask a farmer for directions. When the man pointed in the general direction Reid needed to go, describing “all the turns he should take to reach the direct road home,” the impetuous youth startled him by suddenly spurring his mount across the fields “in the exact line of the pointing finger...taking every fence safely.”<sup>43</sup>

On another occasion Reid astonished a crowd of onlookers by winning an impromptu race, riding a horse that was blind in one eye. Another time, he rode a pony to Rathfriland, “that veritable ‘city on a hill,’” located on the west side of the Mourne Mountains. Clip-clopping his way up a steep street, he chanced to notice “a friend’s hall door open.”

Narrow stone steps, running sideways against the wall, led up to it, with a very small landing stage on top. The vacant open door invited to a prank. Instantly he rode onto the footpath, up the steps, and turning with circus skill on the narrow top, rode in through the door, down the hall into the kitchen. Betty the elderly maid servant was scrubbing the floor. Leaping clean over her, with a gay shout of laughter, he went out and away through the back door, Betty vociferating that he had taken the breath from her body and the light from her eyes.<sup>44</sup>

Growing up in a house full of books “and the lovers of books” (each of his parents reportedly read by candlelight in bed at night), the youthful Reid no doubt got a head start on the education he was later provided by a succession of tutors, who “found in him an apt pupil” owing to a seemingly inherent love of learning. The Rev. Samuel Priestly presided over the first school the future author attended, in a Balleyronee “meeting-house.” Later, along with two friends who kept him company as he walked to school, Reid became “a pupil

of the Rev. David McKee, who kept a classical school at Katesbridge,” located about two miles from Balleyrone. After he became a successful author, Reid dedicated one of his books, The Plant Hunters, to McKee, no doubt for encouraging the lad’s interest in natural history.<sup>45</sup>

In 1834, owing to “the earnest desire of both parents that their eldest son should enter the Church,” sixteen-year-old Thomas Mayne Reid was enrolled in the Royal Academical Institute at Belfast, where from all accounts he excelled in almost everything but theology, taking “prizes in mathematics, classics, and elocution” and distinguishing himself “in the college athletic sports.” Not unlike the son of his great-grandfather, who was sent to America and disappeared, young Reid appears to have had no interest whatsoever in following either his father’s footsteps or those of a “collateral ancestor” with the same name as his maternal grandfather — “the Rev. Samuel Rutherford, at one time minister of Anworth, Scotland” and later “Rector of St. Andrew’s College; famous alike for his supreme piety and cultured eminance [sic]” — who was held up to him as an “example to be followed.” Frustrated, the youth “was heard to say: ‘My mother would rather have me settle down as a minister, on a stipend of one hundred a year, than know me to be the most famous man in history.’” As proof of his unsuitability for a religious life, when the reluctant ministerial scholar was asked to say a prayer in school, “he utterly failed, breaking down at the last few sentences.” Afterward, his classmates teased him about it, calling his disappointing performance “Reid’s wee prayer.”<sup>46</sup>

From time to time, whenever he chanced to be in Belfast, Reverend Reid would unexpectedly drop in on his son, who shared a room with a cousin named Archie. The story

of one of his visits, which happened to coincide with the two young men's "preparations for attending an evening party," provides proof that the sometimes reckless spending for which Reid was later famed, was acquired early on.

...On the table lay a pair of curling tongs, and young Mayne was unfolding a paper parcel, displaying a pair of elegant patent-leather dancing pumps, when a step was heard on the stairs, which Mayne recognized as his father's, the old gentleman being slightly lame, and always using a stick when walking.

The curling tongs and dancing pumps were quickly hidden from sight under a corner of the carpet. But his reverence, soon after entering the room, unearthed the quarry, and holding up the curling tongs, said: "These belong to you, Mayne?"

The amount of pocket-money allowed was small, and the father regarded such luxuries as a great extravagance. Indeed, he was constantly lecturing his son on the vanity of personal adornment — especially so when the small bills were sent in to him. But in this case the curling tongs belonged to the nephew, and the pumps, a more expensive item, to his son.<sup>47</sup>

Although he showed little interest in theology and stumbled over prayers, Reid's "quick brain and fine retentive memory made class work easy." Philosophy "tickled his imagination" and poetry, particularly Byron's, "thrilled him." Digging "deep into the fountains of still older religions," he made "deductions for future conclusions." The future novelist's talent for impassioned oratory was especially noteworthy. "His voice, rounding to maturity, held many cadences," enabling him to "coax and curse with equal fervor." Reportedly, his classmates, who frequently "called upon [him] for recitations," were astonished when the youth who "could send a whisper to the furthest off listener, or thunder forth denunciations with convincing force" failed to win a gold medal in elocution. The apparent oversight was attributed by Reid to favoritism on the part of the judge.<sup>48</sup>

Not surprisingly, like many a young man away from home for the first time, Reid reveled in the freedom that college life afforded.

The midnight oil was freely burned, but at very different shrines. His other side



took a hand in the game. Many votive hours were given to the gay light-footed goddess [sic]. Supper parties were frequent. Bacchus [sic] looked in to see that the flowing bowl was duly replenished. Little Dan Cupid peeped round the door-cheek. A “gay Gordon” set the pace. The cocktail zip he gave to life appealed to the testing palate of flaming youth. Young Reid sampled the mixture with gusto.

On those festive evenings he was usually called upon for recitations. Mounted on a table, he never failed to thrill his companions and their guests with any poem or theme he chose. Grave or gay[,] humourous or tragic, it was all the same. He called forth the answering emotion. His declamation of a poem on slavery — a poignant theme in his own home — was long remembered as a tour de force in oratory.<sup>49</sup>

The “impishness” which characterized Reid as a child did not cease with his admission to college. “Now and again,” a family member recalled, “it inspired a sudden prank, or gave flavour of originality to some ordinary, even trifling occurrence.” It also continued to land him in trouble from time to time. On one occasion, the lively youth was fined a guinea (twenty-one shillings or one pound, one shilling) by one of his professors, for some transgression of college rules or “some...disturbance of college routine.” To pay it, he spent a day in Belfast either begging or searching for farthings — a small coin worth one fourth of a penny. The following day, “with smiling grace,” the cheeky lad presented the no-doubt-astonished academic with “a bag containing one thousand and eight of the mean little coins,” explaining: “The fine you imposed upon me sir.”<sup>50</sup>

College also saw Reid’s competitive nature undiminished. “Returning from a dance” one night, a group of students dared him to try to leap over “two of the college desks placed close together.” Reid accepted the challenge and after taking their bets, cleared the desks with apparent ease, although he knocked off one of the heels of a shoe in the process, producing a limp that momentarily made his companions think he had injured himself.<sup>51</sup>

Many years after his death, Reid’s wife Elizabeth asserted that her husband remained at the Royal Academical Institute for four years, implying that he completed the course of

study. She may very well have been sincere in this declaration. After all, Reid himself later claimed to be a graduate. The truth, however, is that in 1837, after only three years, Reid left college for good the day following the embarrassing “wee prayer” incident. A family member explained: “In the clerical course he could not excel, therefore he would not undertake.”<sup>52</sup>

Although Reid’s parents, particularly his mother, were greatly disappointed — whenever he came home on recess from college he never spoke of his lack of interest in religious studies — in time they seem to have become resigned to the fact that their eldest son “had no hereditary bias towards divinity as a career; nor did he possess the fundamental faith necessary for a spiritual guide and teacher.” While he was already beginning to feel the stirrings of a wanderlust that would eventually take him far from home, a sense of obligation toward his parents compelled the young man to consider some alternate way of earning a living. For a time, apparently, he considered becoming a costermonger — a sort of peddler. But, as a family member pointed out, “coster’s barrows did not stand along quiet Co. Down roadways awaiting unsuccessful divinity students to propel them.”<sup>53</sup>

Instead, and no doubt to his parents’ relief (and probably at their urging), Reid became a teacher, opening “a small day school” in “a house near Ballyroney.” Although he lacked a degree, the young man’s “college attainments, and being Mr. Reid’s son, were sufficient guarantees of his merit.”<sup>54</sup>

The pupils who were enrolled in Reid’s school were described as “Rough little colts from surrounding farmsteads.” Some, it was said, were “Shy wee lads with dormant ambitions” while “others were akin to his own boyhood, having a streak of devilry in them.”

Girls, some with a “spark of mischief” in their eyes, were also admitted. They came wearing “clean pinafores tied over stuff [sic] frocks; the women they would one day be writ plain in each rosy face.”<sup>55</sup>

The young schoolmaster quickly set himself apart from others of his newfound profession by a refusal to resort to corporal punishment. It was said this was due to his “somewhat quixotic belief in human dignity,” as well as “the respect [he felt was] due even to a child.” To Reid’s way of thinking, the use of the cane or the “tawse” — a “vicious little bunch of leather thongs” that “was, at that time, the popular implement for persuading naughty children of the value of truth and virtue” — “would have been a greater hurt to his own intelligence than any infliction it could bring on the physical inferiority of a child.” Instead, the non-conformist teacher kept order by “appealing to [each child’s] different characteristics.” Some were shamed into good behavior by ridicule — by having to wear a “fool’s cap.” Others had their playtime cut short while “idlers” were given “extra tasks.” It was also said that Reid’s own charming manner, an “illusive, but very useful gift,” went a long way toward winning his students’ respect.<sup>56</sup>

Although his school seems to have been a success, after about two years Reid began to thoroughly examine his life. He seemed particularly troubled by what he perceived as his “own utter uselessness.” A classical education, he concluded, had done little to prepare him for the realities of the world. Experiencing some sort of epiphany, he later described his feelings in one of his semi-autobiographical novels:

I could point to my desk and say, “There lie the proofs of my erudition; the highest prizes of my college class.” But of what use are they? The dry theories I had been taught had no application to the purposes of real life. My logic was the prattle of the parrot; my classic lore lay upon my mind like lumber. And I was altogether about as

well prepared to struggle with life — to benefit either my fellow man or myself — as if I had graduated in Chinese mnemonics. And oh! ye pale professors, who drilled me in syntax and scansion, ye would deem me ungrateful indeed were I to give utterance to the contempt and indignation which I then felt for ye; then, when I looked back upon ten years of wasted existence spent under your tutelage; then, when, after believing myself an educated man, the illusion vanished, and I awoke to the knowledge that I knew nothing.<sup>57</sup>

During this time, Reid also began to chafe at the sameness of life in County Down.

In the words of one who remembered him:

The old mellow flavour of home remained, fragrant with the incense of the turf. Wild duck still frequented the little lake; grouse crowed on the heather; partridge might be flushed as they went jukin' under the blue-green luxuriance of turnip fields; each wee bog had a wisp of snipe. But everything had become too familiar; the hills a barrier to all expansion. There was no adventure, no romance.<sup>58</sup>

As a result of the urges and sense of frustration he was feeling, Reid began to seriously think about leaving home and traveling abroad; but while “emerging from the walls of a classic college,” he “was far from tinctured with classic sympathies.” Unlike the sons of well-to-do families, for whom a continental tour was deemed essential for rounding out their education, “the crumbling walls of Athens and the ruins of Rome” held little attraction for the restive youth. Although he admittedly yearned “for the romantic” and “longed for the poetic and picturesque,” he did not hope to find it in Europe. “My steps,” he later remarked, “were not directed toward classic shores, but to lands of newer and more vigorous life.” For Reid, “the land of his dreams,” indeed, the “land of the hopes and dreams of so many of the hapless children of Ireland,” lay far and away on the other side of the wide Atlantic. Where Reid longed to go was America.<sup>59</sup>

Although the great Irish exodus that began with the Potato Famine was yet to come, the sons and daughters of Erin had been emigrating to North America for more than a century

— with the Protestant Ulster Irish, or “Scotch-Irish” as they were known on the other side of the Atlantic, so far forming the largest number. Yet apart from the fact that he was an Ulsterman, Reid was nothing like the typical Irish emigrant of the time. Most of those who went were either “pushed” by adverse economic conditions in Ireland or “pulled” by the hope of owning their own land in a country that seemed to abound in it — or both. As a member of a relatively well-to-do family, with parents who could afford to send him to college, Reid was hardly deprived. Moreover, he had as little interest in farming as he did in the ministry. Unlike so many of his peers, Reid’s motivation was more nebulous — a vague longing for adventure “in America, the famous land of promise,” especially “the Western United States, about which he had often read.” There, he hoped “to see for himself the vast prairies and deep forests” and “to mingle with the Indian and white hunter in their wild life.”<sup>60</sup>

## CHAPTER THREE

### A WANDERER IN AMERICA

Like other striplings escaped from college, I was no longer happy at home. The yearning for travel was upon me; and I longed to make acquaintance with that world, as yet only known to me through the medium of books.

— Captain Mayne Reid, The Quadroon, 1856<sup>1</sup>

“Yearning for travel,” Mayne Reid persuaded his father to book passage for him aboard a sailing ship, the *Dumfriesshire*, which left port in December 1839, bound for New Orleans. The then-future author later recalled standing on deck and “without a sigh,” watching as the green hills of his home sank “behind the black waves — not much caring whether I should ever see them again.”<sup>2</sup>

Before departure, Reid’s family furnished him with a “modest outfit; a not too heavy purse; [and] a supply of food, enough for a voyage the duration of which must be determined by weather conditions.” He also received letters of introduction, written by “friends of his father” to “influential citizens of the Crescent city.” When he learned during the approximately month-long voyage that there were “several young men from his neighbourhood” aboard the ship carrying similar letters “from the same source,” the disillusioned young man flew into a temper. Having “no use for favours promiscuously granted,” he went to the ship’s stern, where he tore the offending sheets of paper into pieces and tossed them overboard, watching bitterly as they swirled in the wind, then landed in the water “like a flight of white butterflies on the long green slope of an Atlantic wave.”

Afterward, he “joined the other passengers” wearing “a satisfied smile...swaying with easy grace to the swing of the boat.” We know nothing else about the crossing except that the former schoolteacher seemed to enjoy it. From all accounts, his “spontaneous gaiety helped [the other passengers] to bear the tedium of the voyage.”<sup>3</sup>

Chalmette Battlefield, where the forces of General Andrew Jackson crushed an invading British army on January 8, 1815, lies on the left bank of the Mississippi River, a few miles south of New Orleans. Ships routinely pass this storied ground on their way upriver from the Gulf of Mexico. It was there, Reid later remembered, that the ship’s “polite skipper,” who had brought him across the Atlantic, “landed me in his gig,” allowing the future novelist for the first time “to set foot upon the soil of the New World — upon a spot stained with English blood.” The young Irishman remarked that he was especially curious to see “the field of this decisive action” owing to an inherent “inclination for martial affairs.” Moreover, he explained, “I then held an opinion deemed heterodox — namely, that the improvised soldier is under certain circumstances quite equal to the professional hireling, and that long military drill is not essential to victory.” Clearly, the outcome of the Battle of New Orleans gave weight to such an opinion. Reid added that his own military exploits later confirmed him in this belief.<sup>4</sup>

The *Dumfriesshire* reached New Orleans on Thursday, January 16, 1840. The following day, the vessel’s arrival was reported in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*. Although the ship carried twenty-six passengers, several of whom were Irish, the passenger manifest prepared by Capt. James Gowan (or Cowan) does not include Reid’s name nor is there anything remotely like it.<sup>5</sup> There are a number of possible explanations. The simplest is



Figure 2. Chalmette Battlefield, near New Orleans, where Mayne Reid first set foot in the United States. Photo by the author.



that by some oversight the future novelist was simply left off the list. Another is that the young man made his way across the Atlantic as a member of the ship's crew rather than as a paying passenger — although that seems unlikely if, as he claimed, he left Ireland with his parents' blessing. It is worth noting that during the voyage across the Atlantic, Reid was said to have “amused himself by learning a little sailing.”<sup>6</sup> Was the learning of “a little sailing” a condition of his passage? Unfortunately, there seems to be no way of knowing.

Another possible explanation for the absence of Reid's name on the passenger manifest of the *Dumfriesshire* is that he arrived aboard a different ship; or perhaps he made the journey earlier than has heretofore been supposed. There is some slight evidence to support this view. The earliest published biography of Reid states that he left for New Orleans in 1838, not 1839.<sup>7</sup> In any case, it appears that one way or another, Mayne Reid did in fact make his way from Ireland to New Orleans, where, the famed novelist later proclaimed, he found the romance he was seeking, “in its most attractive form under the glowing skies of Louisiana.”<sup>8</sup>

For Reid's observations of New Orleans, we are indebted to The Quadroon, a novel composed at the height of the Irish author's creativity in the mid-1850s. Although principally fiction, it draws heavily on the writer's own experiences as an impressionable young man let loose in a city the likes of which he had never seen before. New Orleans was certainly a far cry from Belfast — the only urban center with which Reid was familiar prior to arriving to the United States. Indeed, Belfast's only resemblance to the so-called “Crescent City” was the fact that both were busy ports and of the two, New Orleans was by far the larger, with a population in 1840 of 80,000, compared to 53,387 for Belfast, with shipping that annually

exceeded the Irish port's by some 55,000 tons.<sup>9</sup> In addition to its considerably warmer climate, the Louisiana capital (the state government was not moved to Baton Rouge until 1849) also possessed a more ethnically diverse population, not to mention a wide range of enticing activities that might appeal to a young man far away from home for the very first time in his life. It is hardly surprising that during his first six months in New Orleans, Reid later remembered, he “acquired an experience of the world more extensive, than in any six years of my previous life.”<sup>10</sup>

Within an hour of his visit to Chalmette, the *Dumfriesshire* docked and in short order Reid “was wandering through the streets of the Crescent City, no longer thinking of military affairs.” More than a decade later, he looked back and wrote: “The social life of the New World, with all its freshness and vigor, was moving before my eyes like a panorama; and despite my assumption of the *nil admirari*, I could not help *wondering as I went*.”<sup>11</sup>

The young Irishman quickly learned that New Orleans was “composed of two distinct cities — a French and an American one” and that Canal Street divided them. The *Vieux Carré's* Rue Royale, he recalled, was “the favourite promenade of the gay Creole-French,” whereas St. Charles Street, on the west side of Canal, was the place “for the fashionable Americans.” He correctly attributed this civic duality, as well as “the peculiarity of the population,” to Louisiana's long history, during which the French and the Spanish alternately held sway — until finally, in “the best bargain Brother Jonathan has ever made,” the territory was sold in 1803 to the United States by Napoleon for \$15 million. He observed further that the city in fact had a third, though smaller, ethnic district, “a Spanish quarter with a character distinct from either [the French or American], and where you may see on the corner...the

Spanish designation “Calle,” as the Calle de Casacalvo, Calle de Obispo, &c.”<sup>12</sup>

Besides the denizens of the “three nations [that] form the [chief] elements of its population,” observed Reid, it was also possible in New Orleans “to meet with representatives of most other civilized, and of many savage people.” Among these, he counted, were: “The Turk in his turban, the Arab in his burnouse, the Chinaman with shaven scalp and queue, the black son of Africa, the red Indian, the swarthy mestize, the yellow mulatto, the olive Malay, the light graceful Creole, and the not less graceful Quadroon.” All these, he remarked further, “jostle each other in its streets,” mingling with “the red-blooded races of the North, the German and Gael, the Russ and Swede, the Fleming, the Yankee, and the Englishman.” All in all, he thought, the city’s population formed “an odd human mosaic — a mottled, piebald mixture.”<sup>13</sup>

Reid also noticed that the distinctiveness of “the three [principal] nations” were not only evident in the city’s “streets, in its houses, [and] in the features, habits, and dress of its citizens,” but also “in the different styles of architecture.”

In the American quarter you have tall brick buildings, several stories in height, their shining fronts half occupied with rows of windows, combining the light and ornamental with the substantial and useful. This is typical of the Anglo-American. Equally typical of the French character are the light wooden one-story houses painted in gay colors, with green verandah palings; windows that open as doors, and a profusion of gauzy curtains hanging behind them.

Equally a type of the grand solemn character of the Spaniard are the massive somber structures of stone and lime, of the imposing Moorish style, that are still seen in many of the streets of New Orleans. Of these, the great Cathedral is a fine specimen — that will stand as a monument of Spanish occupancy long after both the Spanish and French population has been absorbed and melted down in the alembic of the Anglo-American propagandism.<sup>14</sup>

The region’s low water table necessitated another style of architecture peculiar to New Orleans. Because water could be struck only two or three feet below the surface of the

ground, the city's deceased citizens were typically interred in above ground tombs or mausoleums. These were found in the city's main cemetery, which lay just beyond the "Rue des Remparts [sic]...outside the limits of the city." The Quadroon includes a detailed description of a nighttime visit to the cemetery, in which the author's fictional alter ego, accompanied by a friend, reached the burial ground by passing "up the Rue Royale," then turning "along Canal Street in the direction of the Swamp" that lay on the northern edge of the metropolis. There, the novelist wrote in his characteristic style:

Some buildings appeared beyond, but they were not houses — at least not dwelling places for the living. The numerous cupolas crowned with crosses — the broken columns — the monuments of white marble, gleaming under the moon, told us that we looked upon a city of the dead. It was the great cemetery of New Orleans — that cemetery where the poor after death are drowned, and the rich fare no better, for they are baked!

The gate stood open — the scene within invited me — its solemn character was in unison with my spirit. My companion made no objection and we entered.

After wending our way among tombs, and statues, and monuments; miniature temples, columns, obelisks, sarcophagi carved in snow-white marble — passing graves that spoke of recent affliction — others of older date, but garnished with fresh flowers — the symbols of love of affection that still lingered — we seated ourselves upon a moss-grown slab, with the fronds of the Babylonian willow waving above our heads, and drooping mournfully around us.<sup>15</sup>

Further contrasting the French and American districts, Reid noted that "each had its Exchange distinct from the other — a distinct municipal court and public offices" and that both had their centers "of fashionable resort — its favorite promenades for the flaneurs [i.e., aimless men-about-town], of which the South-western metropolis can boast a large crowd — its own theatres, ball-rooms, hotels, and cafés." "Crossing Canal Street," he observed further, was akin to "being transferred from Broadway to the Boulevards."<sup>16</sup>

The commercial activities of the two groups were also dissimilar, Reid commented. "The Americans deal in the staples of human life," he wrote, and "the great depots of



Figure 3. A New Orleans cemetery, such as the one described by Reid in his novel, The Quadron. Photo by the author.

provisions, of cotton, of tobacco, of lumber, and the various sorts of raw produce will be found among them.” In contrast, he observed, “the finer fabrics, the laces, the jewels, the modes and modistes, the silks and satins, and all articles of bijouterie and virtù, pass through the lighter fingers of the Creoles — for these inherit both the skill and taste of their Parisian progenitors.” He added, “fine old wine merchants, too, will be found in the French part, who have made fortunes by importing the wines of Bordeaux and Champagne — for claret and champagne are the wines that flow most freely on the banks of the Mississippi.”<sup>17</sup>

One deplorable consequence of the city’s dual character, regretted Reid, was “a feeling of jealousy...between the two races.” Whereas “the strong Kentuckian affects to despise the gay, pleasure-loving Frenchman,” he wrote, “the latter — particularly the old Creole noblesse — regard with contempt the bizarrerie of the Northern.” The all-too-frequent result was “feuds and collisions” that escalated into dueling. Reid continued:

In all matters of this kind the Kentuckian finds the Creole quite his equal — his full match in spirit, courage, and skill. I know many Creoles who are notorious for the number of their duels. An opera singer or danseuse frequently causes half a score or more — according to her merits, or mayhap her demerits. The masque and quadroon-balls are also frequent scenes of quarrel among the wine-heated bloods who frequent them. Let no one fancy that life in New Orleans is without incident or adventure. A less prosaic city it would be hard to find.<sup>18</sup>

Despite this violent aspect of the city’s character, Reid fell in love with New Orleans. “In truth,” he trumpeted, it was “a great metropolis, more of a city than places of much greater population, either in Europe or America.” Impressed by its remarkable lack of provinciality, he declared further:

Its shops exhibit the richest goods of best workmanship. Palace-like hotels appear in every street. Luxurious cafés invite you into their elegant saloons. Theatres are there — grand architectural temples — in which you may witness the drama well performed in French, and German, and English, and in its season you may listen to the soul-moving

music of the Italian opera. If you are a lover of the Terpsichorean art, you will find New Orleans par excellence, the town to your taste.<sup>19</sup>

Gambling was an activity for which the city was notorious and “at that period,” he commented, “there was no concealment required in such matters.” Although “the municipal authorities...had taken some steps” to stifle it in the American quarter, Reid reported, “their laws had no force on the French side of Canal Street” where “Creole police had far different ideas, as well as different instructions.” The “principal gambling hells,” he observed, were located in the vicinity of the Rue de St. Louis. “As you passed along Rue Conti, or St. Louis, or the Rue Bourbon,” Reid remembered, “you could not fail to notice several large gilded lamps upon which you might read ‘faro’ and ‘craps,’ ‘loto’ or ‘roulette,’ — odd words to the eyes of the uninitiated, but well understood by those whose business it was to traverse the streets of the First Municipality.”<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, Reid divided gamblers into two groups, contrasting the “meanness” and “cowardice” of the “seedy scamps” and “hungry vultures” that bet on horse races with the “bold ringer of dice” who “has something almost noble in him.” To Reid, the man “who stakes his gold onzas on a single throw of the ivory” or the one who “risks his doubloons on each turn of the cards” were “to some extent, dignified by the very boldness of their venture.” But of all the gamblers he admired, wrote Reid, “the sportsman of the Mississippi Valley is perhaps the most picturesque,” possessing “a certain chivalresqueness of character which distinguishes them from all others of their calling.”<sup>21</sup>

A visit to one of these New Orleans gambling establishments, described in The Quadroon, may be based on Reid’s memory of an actual occurrence:

We entered the saloon. The game *voilà!* At one end was the table — the bank. We could see neither bank nor dealer; both were hidden by the double ring of bettors, who encircled the table — one line seated, the other standing behind. There were women,

too, mingled in the crowd — seated and standing in every attitude — gay and beautiful women, decked out in the finery of fashion, but with a certain braverie of manner that betokened their unfortunate character.

D’Hauteville had guessed aright — the game was at its height. The look and attitudes of the bettors — their arms constantly in motion, placing their stakes — the incessant rattling of the ivory cheques, and the clinking together of dollars, — all told that the game was progressing briskly.

A grand chandelier, suspended above the table, cast its brilliant light over the play and the players.

Near the middle of the saloon stood a large table, amply furnished with “refreshments.” Cold fowls, ham and tongue, chicken salad, and lobsters; cut-glass decanters filled with wine, brandy, and other liquors, garnished this table. Some of the plates and glasses bore the traces of having been already used, while others were clean and ready for any one who chose to play knife and fork for awhile. It was, in fact, a “free lunch,” or rather supper — free to any guest who chose to partake of it. Such is the custom of an American gambling house.<sup>22</sup>

Whether the adventurous youth frequented the city’s gambling saloons on a regular basis during his sojourn in New Orleans is uncertain but he admitted in his semi-autobiographical novel, The Quadroon that after indulging himself for weeks on end “in the alembic of the cafés, theatres, masquerades, and ‘quadroon’ balls,” he had only twenty-five dollars left in his purse, “after paying my hotel bills.” Even if he took the disagreeable step of writing home to ask his father for money, he grumbled, it might take as long as three months to receive an answer, “for I am talking of a time antecedent to the introduction of Atlantic steamers.”<sup>23</sup> There seemed to be only one solution: find a job. Although the young Irishman’s fictional counterpart in The Quadroon complained his classical training had failed to prepare him for gainful employment, and that “in all that busy city I could find no office that I was fitted to fill,” the real Reid “secured a situation with a large commission house, where he remained for a time.”<sup>24</sup>

The job Reid found “was clerk in a corn factor’s warehouse. Neither its location nor the name of his employer is known. However, a New Orleans city directory from this period



lists several “commission merchants” on Magazine Street, a bustling thoroughfare located in the heart of the city. Only a single businessman, an M. Du Bose, is identified as both a “*factor*” and a “commission merchant.” While there seems to be no way of ascertaining whether Du Bose was Reid’s employer, he seems the most likely candidate.<sup>25</sup>

Although hired as a bookkeeper, another of Reid’s “principal duties” was to “look after his employer’s dark-skinned slaves.” In all likelihood, he had never seen any black people prior to arrival in New Orleans. Almost certainly, this was his first direct contact with the South’s “peculiar institution.” By his own account, he found it “distasteful.”<sup>26</sup>

The location of the city’s slave market, Reid later remembered, was the “Rotundo” of the St. Louis Exchange, which was situated adjacent to the St. Louis Hotel. He condemned the vaulted enclosure of the Exchange, calling it “desecrated ground — desecrated by acts of the deepest infamy.” Here, he railed, “was the place where human bodies — I might also say human souls — were bought and sold!”<sup>27</sup>

In The Quadroom, Reid described the “Rotundo.” It was, he wrote, “a circular hall, of large extent, with a flagged floor, an arched ceiling, and white walls.” There were no windows, he remembered, “for the hall was lighted from above.” To one side, “near the wall, stood a desk or rostrum upon an elevated dais, and by the side of this a large block of cut stone of the form of a parallelopipedon [sic].”<sup>28</sup> It was atop this block that individual slaves were forced to stand while being auctioned off to the highest bidder. “A stone ‘kerb,’ or banquette,” Reid added, “ran around one portion of the wall,” providing a place for the remainder of the slaves being sold to sit while waiting their turn.<sup>29</sup> Recounting his experience of a slave auction, he wrote:



Figure 4. A slave auction scene from Reid's The Quadroon.

The hall when I entered was half full of people. They appeared to be of all ages and sorts. They stood conversing in groups, just as men do when assembled for any business, ceremony, or amusement, and waiting for the affair to begin. It was plain, however, from the demeanour of these people, that what they waited for did not impress them with any feelings of solemnity. On the contrary, a merry-meeting might have been anticipated, judging from the rough jests and coarse peals of laughter that from time to time rang through the hall.

There was a group, however, which gave out no such signs or sounds. Seated along the stone banquette, and standing beside it, squatted down upon the floor, or leaning against the wall in any and every attitude, were the individuals of this group. Their black and brown skins, the woolly covering of their skulls, their rough red “brogans,” their coarse garments of cheap cottonade, of jean, of “nigger cloth” died [sic] cinnamon colour by the juice of the catalpa-tree, — these characteristics marked them as distinct from all the other groups in the hall — a distinct race of beings.<sup>30</sup>

The slaves, for whom Reid seems to have had a genuine sympathy, “were silent, or spoke only in whispers.” The majority, he observed, “seemed ill at ease,” adding:

Mothers sat holding their “piccaninnies” in their sable embrace, murmuring expressions of endearment, or endeavouring to hush them to rest. Here and there big tears rolled over their swarthy cheeks, as the maternal heart rose and fell with swelling emotions. Fathers looked on with drier eyes, but with the stern, helpless gaze of despair, which bespoke the consciousness that they had no power to avert their fate — no power to undo whatever might be decreed by the pitiless wretches around them.<sup>31</sup>

Surprisingly, wrote Reid, a few of the younger slaves, “both boys and girls,” seemed “indifferent to their future.” “Some,” he observed, “even seemed happy — laughing and chatting gaily to each other, or occasionally exchanging a light word with one of the ‘white folks.’” Reid thought this was because their master was harsh and “a change...could not be such a terrible idea, after the usage they had lately had.”<sup>32</sup>

The buyers, he remarked, “were all of my own sex, but of every variety.” One of the more prevalent types, he noted, “was the regular ‘negro-trader,’ a tall, lathy fellow, with harsh, horse-dealer features, careless dress, loose coat, slouching broad-brimmed hat, coarse boots, and painted quirt of raw-hide, — ‘cowskin’ — fit emblem of his calling.” Another,

strongly contrasting with the first, wrote Reid, “was the elegantly-attired Creole, in coat of Claret or blue, full dress, with gold buttons, plaited pantaloons, gaiter ‘bootees,’ laced shirt, and diamond studs.” Then there were the American merchants “in dress coat of black cloth, vest of black satin, shining like glaze — trousers of like material with the coat — boots of calf-skin, and gloveless hands.” Others in the crowd included the “dandy clerk of steam-boat or store,” “the snug smooth banker,” “the consequential attorney,” “the captain of the steam-boat,” “the rich planter of the coast,” and “the proprietor of the cotton press.”<sup>33</sup>

While the newly arrived young Irishman seems to have felt a genuine compassion for enslaved blacks in general, there may have been some instances when his feelings reached a deeper, more personal level. The title of Reid's book, The Quadroon, was drawn from a term in common usage during the nineteenth century, particularly among the Creoles of Louisiana. It referred to a person of mixed race. Whereas a “Mulatto” was someone with one white parent and one black parent, explained Reid, a “Quadroon” (also known as a “Quarteron”), was “the progeny of a mulatto woman and a white father — often as white as the male parent himself.”<sup>34</sup> In The Cotton Kingdom, Frederick Law Olmsted's celebrated study of the antebellum South, the future landscape architect corroborated Reid's explanation in his remarks on the Creole system, which he learned about during a visit to New Orleans in the 1850s. “The various grades of the coloured people are designated by the French,” Olmsted discovered, “according to the greater or lesser predominance of negro blood.” There were also a number of sub-categories, he added, “such as Anglo-Indian-mulatto,” which “experts pretend to be able to distinguish.” He concluded, in a remark reminiscent of Reid's observations regarding the city's ethnic diversity: “Whether distinguishable or not, it is

certain they all exist in New Orleans.”<sup>35</sup>

Other comments made by Olmsted regarding New Orleans’ people of mixed race seem to echo another sentiment expressed by Reid. “Many of the quadroons of New Orleans are the most beautiful women in the place,” he wrote, adding: “In this respect they are quite as distinguished as the Creole ladies, who are themselves justly distinguished for great personal beauty.”<sup>36</sup>

It is interesting to note that The Quadroon is the story of a young white man who falls in love with Aurore, a beautiful woman who, as a consequence of being one quarter African, is a slave on a Louisiana plantation. In the book’s preface, Reid claims not to be the “hero” (although his widow, in her biography of the late novelist, indicated otherwise). At the same time, he wrote: “Some of the scenes, and many of the characters that figure in these pages are *real*, and there are those living who will recognize them.”<sup>37</sup> Could this mean that the character of Aurore was based on an actual person whom Reid knew in New Orleans? That despite his disclaimer, he was not only the “hero” of the novel but that he was in love with a quadroon? Again, there is no way of knowing, but from all appearances Reid seems to have had a predilection for dark-haired, dark-eyed women.<sup>38</sup>

During the six months he worked in New Orleans, young Reid was encouraged by his employer “to look down upon [the slaves] as dumb cattle” and directed to get from them “as much work as possible.” To accomplish the latter, he was “told to freely use the lash...as otherwise, the slaves would not work.” For a former schoolmaster who could not even bring himself to whip naughty children, this was simply too much to ask. In college Reid had railed against slavery in one of his impromptu recitations and at home, his entire family, out of

conscience, had “cut sugar out of their household items because of the slave trade.” It was later written by an admirer: “His free spirit, accustomed to the greatest liberty at home, revolted at the cruel dictum; and he inwardly resolved that come what would, to spare the lash, even if he ruined the slaves.”<sup>39</sup>

It is doubtful Reid whipped any slaves at all, however reluctantly. Rather than argue with his boss, he simply “set about his duties in his own way.” Reportedly, he learned in short order that the blacks working under him were “far more amenable to kindness than harshness,” making use of the lash “quite unnecessary.” When his employer eventually confronted him, repeating his earlier order to use “the inhuman cowhide,” Reid “did his best to convince his master of its inutility.” It was to no avail. The young Irishman’s boss was adamant: Either whip the slaves or leave. Reid left.<sup>40</sup>

At some point during the future author’s sojourn in New Orleans, it was rumored that Mexico was about to mount an invasion of Texas and it is said that Reid “joined a volunteer party for the purpose of repressing this outrage.”<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, this information cannot be confirmed — but it is possible. In 1840 Texas was a sovereign nation, having won its independence from Mexico only four years earlier. Yet Mexico would not let Texas go quietly. Refusing to recognize the sovereignty of its former province, successive Mexican leaders vowed to regain control over what they viewed as an errant province with a rebel government. In September 1842, when Sam Houston was serving a second term as president of the Republic of Texas, the Mexicans came close to accomplishing that goal when General Adrian Woll reentered San Antonio de Bexar at the head of an army of a thousand men. But Woll retreated and after two skirmishes with Texas militia, retired beyond the Rio Grande,

which the Texians considered the boundary between the two nations.<sup>42</sup>

Although no Mexican invasion of Texas actually occurred in 1840, the fear that one would materialize was apparently widespread throughout the Southwest, fueled by rumors and misinformation. On March 7, 1840 the New Orleans Times-Picayune no doubt added to the apprehension then prevailing when it published a portion of “a letter from a gentleman at Austin, Texas, dated February 1st, 1840, received by his friends in Fredericksburg,” which reported “gen. [sic] Filasola, with an army of 9,000 men, is on his march to invade Texas, after subduing a small body of federal troops now on the east side of the Rio Grande.” A similar report, published three weeks later contained essentially the same information.<sup>43</sup> Both rumours proved, however, to be false.

In July, the Times-Picayune again played to everyone’s fears when it published “an express from San Antonio [that] had reached Austin, bringing a confirmation of previous accounts, that Arista was advancing towards Texas at the head of the Mexican army.” The report added: “The last accounts represent his force as being much less numerous than the first — say for the last, one thousand men.” This time, however, the paper added its opinion that Arista’s forces were not intended for Texas but rather that they had been sent to attack and “cut up” federalists forming on the Texas border.<sup>44</sup>

That a band of volunteers might have been raised in New Orleans to assist the Texans following either of these reports is entirely possible. New Orleans was the nearest U.S. port to the Republic of Texas and had already figured in its history as a funnel for men, money, and supplies. During the Texan Revolution, a group of men who styled themselves the “New Orleans Grey” made their way to the Alamo, where on March 6, 1836 they perished with all

the other defenders. (Their flag, now residing in Mexico's national history museum, is the only one known to have flown over the embattled fortress.) And following the Battle of San Jacinto, Gen. Sam Houston went to New Orleans to have his wounds treated. Reid no doubt heard about the "New Orleans Greys" while living in Louisiana. About 1856, he composed a short account of their experiences, which he included in a book called Wild Life; Or, Adventures on the Frontier, a romantic tale of adventure set in Texas during its War for Independence.<sup>45</sup>

By whose authority a company of volunteers for Texas would have been raised in 1840, however, can only be conjectured. Owing to official U.S. government policy then prevailing, which was to steer clear of any military affairs involving Texas and Mexico, it was highly unlikely to have been the United States Army. In all likelihood, the company was raised privately, in much the same manner as the ill-fated "New Orleans Greys" had been organized nearly five years earlier. That the 1840 group enlisted in response to one of the stories published in the Times-Picayune seems to be supported by the story of Reid's brief military career as a volunteer for Texas, which concludes: "The report [of a Mexican invasion of Texas], however, turned out to be unfounded, and the company was disbanded."<sup>46</sup>

Reid's aborted military career may have coincided with the start of the annual "epidemics of the summer," which according to one report, "sweep off strangers by the hundreds, and the chance of surviving a season is sometimes considered as only 1 in 3." In The Quadroon, the Irish author, in the guise of his fictional alter ego, described how both he and many other New Orleans denizens hoped to escape the "insalubrity of the city."<sup>47</sup>



The weather had become intensely hot, and every day the mercury mounted higher upon the scale. It was already dancing in the neighbourhood of 100° of Fahrenheit. In a week or two might be expected that annual but unwelcome visitor known by the sobriquet “Yellow Jack,” whose presence is alike dreaded by young and old; and it was the terror inspired by him that was driving the fashionable world of New Orleans, like birds of passage, to a northern clime.

I am not more courageous than the rest of mankind. I had no inclination to make the acquaintance of this dreaded demon of the swamps; and it occurred to me, that I, too, had better get out of his way. To do this, it was only necessary to step on board a steamboat, and be carried to one of the up-river towns, beyond the reach of that tropical malaria in which the *vomito* delights to dwell.<sup>48</sup>

Although the semi-fictional hero of The Quadroon boarded a riverboat bound for St. Louis when the dreaded “Yellow Jack” season came, Reid did not travel that far. We next find him in Nashville, Tennessee, where a popular gazetteer of 1840, the same year the young Irishman arrived there, described the city thusly:

The city of Nashville, in West Tennessee, is the largest town in the State, and the seat of government. It stands on the south bank of Cumberland River, in a pleasant situation, near some high bluffs, and is much frequented during the hot months, by the inhabitants of the lower country. The river is navigable by steamboats to this place. The eminences, rising with a gentle inclination, afford many agreeable seats for the elegant mansions of the opulent citizens. The houses are generally neat and tasteful, and among the public buildings are the court-house, lunatic asylum, a penitentiary conducted on the Auburn system, 6 churches, the halls of Nashville University, &c.<sup>49</sup>

The author went on to announce that “trade and business” were “extensive” in this rapidly growing city whose 8,000 inhabitants were reputed to be “favorably distinguished for their intelligence and refinement” and that in addition to its equally extensive river traffic, which included “steamboats...beside great numbers of keel-boats,” Nashville boasted several “manufacturing establishments” such as “brass and iron founderies, rolling mills, tanneries, &c.” It was also remarked that the town’s “educational institutions” were “numerous and well supported.”<sup>50</sup>

While it seems that fear of Malaria, or the “Yellow Jack” as it was euphemistically known, impelled the youthful Irishman to leave New Orleans, what prompted him to choose Nashville as his next destination is uncertain. A relative wrote that Reid simply found his way there by “chance.” The method by which he traveled is equally unknown. Although he could have journeyed by steamboat as far as Memphis, continuing on to Nashville by stagecoach, it is more likely he came down the Cumberland from the Ohio aboard one of the fifteen steamboats that provided the Tennessee capital with regular service. However he came to be there, “The City of Bluffs,” wrote a family member, “pleased him.”

In its elevated situation, and varied surroundings, stretching afar, he found what seemed a natural expansion of his homeland. Not that any qualms of home-sickness troubled him. Rather was it like a new suit of clothes, better cut, better tailored than the old accustomed ones. He would put them on, and trust fate to honour the occasion. As was ever the way of life with him, he was soon in a centre of warm regard.<sup>51</sup>

In Nashville Reid found, perhaps to his own surprise, that the classical education he previously denounced as “useless” was in demand. Sometime shortly after his arrival, probably sometime between June and mid-September, he accepted a position as tutor to the children of a wealthy Tennessee planter, Dr. Peyton Robertson (whom other biographers have misidentified as “General” or “Judge” Robertson).<sup>52</sup>

Fifty-six-year-old Robertson, a successful and respected physician, was scion of a long established Nashville family. His Virginia-born father, Revolutionary War General James Randolph Robertson, is often called “the Father of Tennessee.” In 1779, on behalf of Richard Henderson’s Transylvania Company, and aided by frontiersman James Donelson, the elder Robertson established a settlement on the Cumberland River, within the bounds of territory then claimed by the State of North Carolina. They called the collection of rude log

cabins surrounded by a wooden stockade Fort Nashborough. Over the years Robertson helped sustain and develop the community that in time became the city of Nashville and when Davidson County was created, he was elected its representative to the North Carolina legislature.<sup>53</sup> Born in 1787, only eight years after the city's founding, the younger Robertson was named for a brother who, along with a companion, were surprised by Indians one day while "tapping maple trees for syrup." Tragically, the brother, age twelve, was beheaded while the other boy, whose name was Johnston, was taken captive.<sup>54</sup>

About 1835 Doctor Robertson and his family took up residence in an elaborate Italianate mansion called "Bellfield," located on the Charlotte Turnpike about twelve miles from Nashville.<sup>55</sup> They were living there still in the summer of 1840. The federal census for that year, in which only heads-of-household were named, offers compelling evidence that Reid had most certainly arrived by that time. In addition to Dr. Robertson himself, the record shows there were five other males in the household: one aged 5 and under 10; two aged 10 and under 15; one aged 15 and under 20; and one aged 20 and under 30. This last was probably Reid, who was twenty-two years old in 1840. The others were Robertson's son Alex, age 9, sons James Peyton and John Blount, ages 12 and 14 respectively, and son Flavius Josephus, age 16. The two females listed — one under 5 and one aged 30 and under 40 — were daughter Alice, age 3, and Robertson's wife Ellen, age 36. Further evidence suggesting that the otherwise unknown young male was the recently hired Irish tutor can be found in the fact that in the Robertson household, under "occupations," a single individual is listed as working in a "learned profession."<sup>56</sup>

In both “temperament and tastes,” Reid seems to have “fitted in” well with the Robertson family, quickly becoming “a favourite with both pupils and employer.” It is said the four boys liked him because he “had a happy way of clothing the dry bones of learning with meat; of freeing the hours of study from the blight of drudgery or monotony.” The young tutor’s “somewhat original method and the result” also “won the...entire approval” of his employer, “to which was added his warm, personal friendship.”<sup>57</sup>

Accompanied by his four young charges, Reid spent his spare time galloping over the Tennessee countryside either “hunting wild animals,” or simply “for the pure pleasure of the exercise.” Reportedly, all the young men “rode fearlessly, often vying with each other in daring feats,” but it was said that the boys’ teacher “did not permit foolhardiness.” Instead, he “taught them to sense danger, and to brave it only in so far as it heightened enjoyment.”<sup>58</sup>

The esteem with which Reid’s pupils are said to have regarded their young Irish teacher was no doubt genuine. Two decades after his sojourn in Tennessee, Reid made it the setting for one of his adventure novels, The Wild Huntress. While it appears to contain far less autobiographical material than some of his other books, it is interesting to note that one of its characters is a man named “Blount,” who is identified by the author as “the grandson of that gallant leader, who, with a small band of only forty families, ventured three hundred miles through the heart of the ‘bloody ground,’ and founded Nashville upon the bold bluffs on an almost unknown river!”<sup>59</sup> Reportedly, John Blount Robertson, who fit the description of the man in this passage, wrote to his old tutor several years later in New York, urging him to return to Tennessee and make it his permanent home. Although Reid, who was then on the

eve of returning to Europe, declined to do so, the heartfelt invitation from his old pupil must have been very much appreciated.<sup>60</sup>

Although two of Reid's early biographers claim that he remained in Robertson's employ for about a year and that the doctor implored him to stay when the young tutor eventually gave his notice, this does not appear to be the case. Peyton Robertson died on September 17, 1840 of "congestive fever," obviously only a few weeks or months after engaging Reid, and was buried in the family cemetery at Bellfield. (His remains, along those of two sons, were removed in 1860 to Mount Olivet Cemetery in Nashville, where Mrs. Robertson was also buried following her death in 1874.).<sup>61</sup>

In all likelihood, Reid stayed on as tutor for his deceased employer's children immediately following Robertson's death but within two months of that event he apparently decided to branch out on his own. On November 19, 1840 the young Irish teacher, using his entire name "Thomas Mayne Reid," began advertising in the *Nashville Union* seeking pupils for a "new English, Mathematical and Classical School" that he planned to open on December 1 in the city. Although a friend later wrote that classes were held in "a simple wooden structure" erected by the young Irishman expressly "for that purpose," in truth Reid's school was established "in the office opposite the Episcopal Church, formerly occupied by Madame Roche" — apparently a dance instructor who previously operated a dance academy on the site. In advertisements that ran weekly through January 7, 1841, Reid offered courses in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, English Grammar, Geography, History, Reading, Writing, Elocution, and three languages — Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. Although there seems to be no evidence that he actually finished school, the young instructor boasted

that as a “graduate of the Royal College, Belfast, Ireland” he was qualified him “to teach any of the above-named subjects” — a slight deception he no doubt thought no one would ever bother to investigate. To further bolster his credentials, he offered the names of four Nashville citizens as references: Dr. Felix Robertson (brother of Reid’s deceased former employer), as well as B. Sharpe, J. Horton, and W. K. Stevenson.<sup>62</sup>

Apparently Reid was successful in enrolling some students and was able to open his school as planned, although the number of active pupils may have dropped off after a month or so, prompting him to run his advertisement again. Once again, it was published in the Nashville Union, appearing each week from March 8 through June 14, 1841. Regardless, the school operated continuously for seven months, until July 1, 1841, when Reid announced in the paper that in response to some of his “early students...calling loudly for a short respite” he was granting them a two-week vacation. He also boasted of some of his students by name — Shirley, Cunningham, Fogg, Walker, Gaines, Chester, and Clarke — whose progress and proficiency in Mathematics “would have borne off the palm [an award, apparently] in many schools in which I have been myself instructed, and in many colleges with which I am acquainted.”<sup>63</sup>

Those who remembered Reid from this period of his life later recalled that the young tutor was,

Not over twenty-five, well-built, about five feet ten inches in height; with a face of classic mould, not full, but with prominent points, that made a good impression on all who knew him. In conversation he was bright, and in manner winsome. He was fond of poetry, and would repeat from favourite authors by the hour to a coterie of companions, lolling about the banks of Richland Creek, or sitting at night with a friendly set.

During the time he taught school he enjoyed great popularity. He was much given to horseback riding, possessing a superb animal which he rode with great daring. As an

**A NEW ENGLISH, MATHEMATICAL  
AND  
CLASSICAL SCHOOL,**

**W**ILL be opened on the first of December in the office opposite the Episcopal Church, formerly occupied by Madame Roche.

Instructions will be given in the following subjects:

*Mathematics, viz:* Elements of Geometry, Plain and Spherical Trigonometry, Algebra, Mensuration, Surveying, and Arithmetic, &c.

*Natural Philosophy, viz:* Laws of Motion, Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Hydraulics and Astronomy.

English Grammar, Geography, History, English Reading, Writing and Elocution.

*Classics, viz:* Greek, Latin and Hebrew.

The course of studies shall depend on the request of the parent or guardian. Should any person wish his son to receive a liberal English Education, he may rest assured that particular attention will be paid to that department; also I propose giving a classical education to any English scholar in the course of twelve months without subjecting him to the study of Greek or Latin, equal if not superior to that which he could acquire in five years by the ordinary method.

I am a graduate of the Royal College, Belfast, Ireland, and my degree qualifies me to teach any of the above mentioned branches.

Terms of tuition \$5 per month, payable with the right to withdraw quarterly. No vacation during the year.

**THOMAS MAYNE REID.**

*Reference.*—DR. FELIX ROBERTSON,  
B. SHARPE, ESQ.,  
J. HORTON, ESQ.,  
V. K. STEVENSON, ESQ.

Nov. 19, 1840.—*tf.*

Figure 5. Advertisement for Mayne Reid's Nashville school. From the Nashville Union, November 23, 1840.

instance which showed the recklessness of his nature, it is told that he could with difficulty be restrained from having himself lowered into an unexplored cave out on Harpeth River, twelve miles from town, and was only deterred by his companions refusing to have anything to do with the project. He grew to be very fond of his surroundings and the people here. The attachment was reciprocated, the fondest recollections existing of him to this day.<sup>64</sup>

As in Ireland, Reid “rarely used the cane” on his students. His method of teaching, “called ‘Kirkham’s system’ — that being the name of the American who first formulated it,” was equally unorthodox. Declaring it a waste of time to teach from a standard grammar book — what he termed the “fossilized formularies” of “Lindley Murray,” Reid advocated using a “well-written book” instead. Furthermore, “the lesson should be taught viva-voce.” “In this way,” he added, “the whole system, or rather philosophy of grammar, may be learnt in six — we were going to say hours — but certainly in six lessons.”<sup>65</sup>

It was “just the same with other languages,” declared Reid, “as with our own.” An “adult commencing to learn a foreign language,” he observed, “is precisely in the same category as the child with his own.”

Were we to embark tomorrow for the acquirement of Chinese, we should first try to talk Chinese — however ungrammatically — and when the time came, look to the correction of our grammar.<sup>66</sup>

Reid was also critical of the teaching of Latin as a “foundation” for “the study of the English language.” After enduring “ten years stiff drilling; and throughout a long and somewhat varied experience since,” he could not “recall a single instance” in which his Latin lessons had done him “the slightest practical service.” In his opinion, a better foundation was “the study of the English language itself.”<sup>67</sup>

Although Reid declared his school would reopen on July 14,<sup>68</sup> apparently it did not, for reasons that remain unclear. In his July 1 notice he announced that he would not accept



any students “for a shorter period than 6 months.” Perhaps he was simply unable to find a sufficient number willing to commit to such a length of time and therefore, decided not to reopen. One proffered explanation, although deceptively simple, is equally plausible: “Mayne Reid soon grew tired of the still life in a school-house, and it was not long before he went in quest of some new adventure.”<sup>69</sup>

After leaving Nashville the restless former schoolmaster “bent his steps back to the Mississippi, thence descending that mighty stream till he reached the mouth of the Red River.”<sup>70</sup> From there, he traveled by steamboat approximately two hundred miles upstream until he reached Natchitoches — the oldest settlement in the state of Louisiana. What drew him to this spot is unknown but a few years later Reid made Natchitoches the setting for his first published short story, “The Belle of Red River.” Apart from a difference in the date of arrival (April 1838 as opposed to July or August 1840), the unnamed narrator’s description of his arrival at “this thriving little village” was almost certainly based on Reid’s own remembrance:

I can never forget my impressions of this beautiful village, as I first looked upon it from the hurricane deck of the steamboat “Houma.” I had been led to expect a parvenu city, hewn out from the forest, but what was my surprise at beholding a romantic old town — old enough in appearance to be deemed coeval with the Conquest...I can recal [sic] the scene as though it were yesterday. The clean little French houses peered forth from their verdant drapery, and seemed to smile welcome and hospitality. A beautiful girl with dark hair, standing upon a balcony, was gazing at us from a pair of the most liquid eyes I ever beheld. A group of Indians, leaning upon their rifles, and dressed in picturesque costume, with silver bands and plumes, stood upon the summit of the bluff. Half a dozen hungry looking vultures were perched upon the old wooden cupola of the market place. On the opposite side of the river a planter, dressed in sky blue cottonade, dashing along at a swinging gallop. A boat with white awning was crossing over, containing a party of gaily dressed ladies and gentlemen; and close by the water’s edge, an old white-haired negro, in blue jacket and Guayaquil hat, was paddling his skiff, and quietly placing his baits for the finny tribes of the river. He completed the picture.<sup>71</sup>



Figure 6. Front Street, Natchitoches, Louisiana. Photo by the author.

Founded in 1715 by a French Canadian named Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, the town of Natchitoches had once been “the terminus of the old Spanish trail from Monterey, Chihuahua, and Santa Fé, by San Antonio, to the States.” Although the present narrow waterway dividing the settlement’s old section from the newer one on the east bank is now known as “Cane Lake,” the town, which formerly “had a considerable military and commercial importance,”<sup>72</sup> was then almost entirely situated on the west bank of the Red River, which changed its course only a few short years after Reid passed through. (Anticipating that this would happen led the Irish adventurer to predict, incorrectly, that “if so, the thriving little village will be deserted.”) Precisely what drew him to this frontier outpost is a complete mystery but from all accounts, he found it to his liking — at least for a time. In his 1874 novel The Death Shot, Reid remembered Natchitoches with a familiarity born out of intimate personal experience:

About two hundred miles from the mouth of the Red River — the Red of Louisiana — stands the town of Natchitoches. The name is Indian, and pronounced as if written “Nak-e-tosh.”

Though never a populous place, it is one of peculiar interest, historically and ethnologically. Dating from the earliest days of French and Spanish colonization, on the Lower Mississippi, it has at different periods been in possession of both these nations; finally falling to the United States, at the transfer of the Louisiana territory by Napoleon Bonaparte. Hence, around its history is woven much of romantic interest; while from the same cause its population, composed of many different nationalities, with their distinctive physical types and idiosyncrasies of custom, offers to the eye of the stranger a picturesqueness unknown to northern towns.

Placed on a projecting bluff of the river’s bank, its painted wooden houses, of French Creole fashion, with “piazzas” and high-pitched roofs, its trottoirs brick-paved, and shaded by trees of sub-tropical foliage — among them the odoriferous magnolia, and *melia azedarach*, or “Pride of China,” — these, in places completely arcading the street — Natchitoches has the orthodox aspect of a *rus in urbe*, or *urbs in rure*, which ever way you wish it.

Its porticoes, entwined with parasites, here and there show stretches of trellis, along which meander the cord-like tendrils of bignonias, aristolochias, and orchids, the flowers of which, drooping over windows and doorways, shut out the too garish

sunlight, while filling the air with fragrance. Among these whirr tiny humming birds, buzz bumble bees almost as big, while butterflies bigger than either lazily flout and flap about on soft, silent wings.

Such sights greet you at every turning as you make promenade through the streets of Natchitoches.<sup>73</sup>

If Reid seemed taken by the antique charm of this sleepy riverside settlement, its women were even more fascinating to him. “Within these same trellised verandahs,” he wrote, “you may observe young girls of graceful mien, elegantly appareled, lounging on cane rocking-chairs, or perhaps peering coyly through the half-closed jalousies.” Their eyes were “invariably dark brown or coal black” and “the marble forehead above” was frequently “surmounted with a chevelure in hue resembling the plumage of the raven.” This plethora of dark hair and eyes, he explained, was due to the fact that “these demoiselles are descended from the old colonists of the two Latinic races” and “not a few with some admixture of African, or Indian.” Blue-eyed blondes, he remarked, were a rare sight in Natchitoches.<sup>74</sup>

Reid also commented on the “polish” and manners displayed by the residents of the town. “It is the custom,” he observed, when meeting “these same young ladies on the street,” to “take off your hat, and make a bow.” Every gentleman “does this deference,” he remarked, “while every woman, with a white skin, expects it.” Remarking further, he wrote:

On which-ever side the privilege may be supposed to lie, it is certainly denied to none. The humblest shop clerk or artisan — even the dray-driver — may thus make obeisance to the proudest and daintiest damsel who treads the trottoirs of Natchitoches. It gives no right of converse, nor the slightest claim to acquaintanceship. A mere formality of politeness; and to presume carrying it further would not only be deemed a rudeness, but instantly, perhaps very seriously, resented.<sup>75</sup>

In his narrative, Reid also recalled an inn where he may have passed the time of day with the locals — the Planter’s Hotel, a “pleasant snugery,” he wrote, “of the true Southern States type — weather-board walls, painted chalk-white, with green Venetian shutters to the

windows; a raised verandah — the piazza — running all around it; a portion of this usually occupied by gentlemen in white linen suits, sky-blue “cottonade” pants, and Panama hats, who drink mint-juleps all day long.” A less reputable establishment, he remembered, was the Choctaw Chief — a tavern situated on “the outskirts of town, in a suburb known as the ‘Indian quarter;’ also called ‘Spanish town,’” where travelers could get a meal and lodging for the night with no questions asked “beyond a demand of payment before they have either eaten or slept under its roof.”<sup>76</sup>

Several years after his death, Reid’s niece recalled that her uncle occasionally exhibited “a strange little impish quirk” that “impelled him to seek some strong contrast, some episode at variance with his normal or natural way of living.” It was this idiosyncrasy, she wrote, that explained why, after arriving in Natchitoches, he became “an assistant to a provision dealer” who specialized in bacon and hams.

There was a streak of youthful vanity in such impulses. He believed that with ease he could negotiate any of the ordinary remunerative occupations of humanity. Without a single scrap of business training or experience, in this instance, he made good his bit of self appreciation. Sure anyone could cut up bacon and hams, weigh and parcel up desired commodities.<sup>77</sup>

Charles Ollivant tells us that Reid “made himself very useful to his employer...attracting many customers to the store by his urbane and polite manners, and prompt attention to their wants.” Perhaps to save money (or to be sure he wouldn’t be late to work), the young man “slept on the premises, usually making his bed on sacks of coffee or flour, roughing it in true Western fashion.” In short order, the enterprising young storekeeper “rapidly rose in the estimation of his master, who...promoted him to be foreman of the store, with a good salary.” For the first time in his life, his niece speculated, the industrious lad had

a very real “possibility of gaining wealth,” conjecturing that if he had stayed put, in time “he might have forestalled Lipton as a food-providing millionaire.” But Reid was restless, wrote Ollivant, and “the long hours and arduous labours did not suit the young Irishman, who longed for a freer and less confined life.”<sup>78</sup>

From all accounts (even his widow’s, which erroneously placed him in Natchez, Mississippi rather than Natchitoches, Louisiana), it was at this moment in his life that Reid “made the acquaintance of an old trapper who invited him to join a trading expedition preparing to start across the plains to New Mexico — at that time a terra incognita seldom frequented except by trappers and Indians.” The name of this “newly found friend,” wrote Reid’s niece, was “Bill Garey” — a mountain man who figured in three of the Irish author’s novels, The Scalp Hunters (1851), The Desert Home (1852), and The War Trail (1863) — a character who may have been based on an actual frontier trader named William Guerrier, whose base of operations was Bent’s Fort on the Santa Fe Trail.<sup>79</sup>

At this point in his narrative, instead of revealing whether Reid accepted the old trapper’s invitation, Ollivant launched into a long, rambling discourse, full of vagaries and contradictions (doubtless the kind that confounded Joan Steele), writing:

From this date (1841) he disappeared from human ken for a space of more than a year, spending the time in the then almost unknown country extending west of the Mississippi to the Pacific, making many excursions with the Indians and trappers up the Red River, and also the Missouri and Platte, tracing the former to its source. From the interest he displayed in the wild denizens of forest and prairie, they christened him the “hunter-naturalist.”

Here he led a life of wild adventure, for the record of which I must refer the reader to his [Reid’s] own writings. For many of the marvelous incidents so graphically narrated therein are simply reproductions of his own experience at this time.

In these sublime solitudes he studied the nature and habits of the animal world in all their varied aspects, laying the foundation for that intimate knowledge of animated nature displayed in his books. And though he always selected the most extraordinary

traits for illustration and delineation, he was most careful to give such an account of their habits as could be relied upon for the strictest accuracy in every detail. It was here that he studied human character, in the form of trappers and Indians — the unbridled Ishmaelites of the Plains. The prototype of “Old Rube,” was no doubt met in person, and his peculiar characteristics noted carefully for future delineation.

But it is idle to speculate as to the life which Mayne Reid led here. All that can be definitely ascertained is that here he spent nearly eight months of his life. For the exact particulars are shrouded in mystery, deep as that involved in the Egyptian sphinx — and must forever remain so.<sup>80</sup>

The comments of Reid’s niece on this segment of her eccentric uncle’s life, which were clearly modeled on Ollivant’s earlier work (and in some parts copied word-for-word), are equally indefinite and confusing. The principal difference between them is Mollan’s claim that Reid spent “a year and a half” in the wilderness, rather than eight months.<sup>81</sup>

Reid himself probably told Ollivant that the specifics of his experiences in the West could be found in his writings, although precisely where the line between fact and fiction was drawn still remains unclear. Several of the Irish author’s novels, including three of the earliest — The Scalphunters (1851), The Desert Home (1852), and The Hunter’s Feast (1855), are supposedly based on his experiences during his western sojourn, the length of which was later exaggerated, both by the author and others. For instance, Reid himself wrote in the introduction to The Hunter’s Feast that he had “spent *some years* in the ‘Far West’” and in a brief biography that prefaced a later edition of The Desert Home, editor R. H. Stoddard claimed the Irish novelist had traveled among the hunters, trappers, and Indians of the West for no less than five years.<sup>82</sup>

Sorting out these conflicting accounts was especially troublesome to Joan Steele, who complained that “the confused and circuitous relationship between Reid’s fiction and his life” made it “a tortuous and nearly impossible puzzle to solve.” She was particularly vexed by an

assertion, made by Reid's widow, that on one particular occasion none other than the esteemed naturalist John James Audubon accompanied the young Irishman on one of his hunting expeditions through parts of the western United States.<sup>83</sup> Clearly, Mrs. Reid acquired this notion, if not directly from her husband, then most certainly from The Hunter's Feast, which recounts the adventures of a group consisting of ten men, one of whom is quite obviously based on the author. According to the book's narrator (Reid), the party set out from St. Louis, Missouri late one year, in search of bison and other wild game. In the very first chapter, he described each of the expedition's members and gave their names, with the exception of a naturalist "who had already acquired a world-wide fame; whose name was as familiar to the *savans* of Europe as to his own countrymen." Continuing, Reid wrote:

He was already an old man, almost venerable in his aspect, but his tread was firm and his arm still strong enough to steady his long, heavy, double-barrelled rifle. An ample coat of dark blue covered his body; his limbs were enveloped in long buttoned leggings of drab cloth, and a cap of sable surmounted his high, broad, forehead. Under this his bluish grey eye glanced with a calm but clear intelligence, and a single look from it satisfied you that you were in the presence of a superior mind. Were I to give the name of this person this would be readily acknowledged. Suffice it to say, he was one of the most distinguished of modern zoologists, and to his love for the study we were indebted to his companionship upon our hunting expedition. He was known to us as Mr. A — the "hunter-naturalist."<sup>84</sup>

In case the reader somehow missed the inference, an illustration in the book depicted a young man resembling Reid and an older gentleman who looked remarkably like John J. Audubon sitting knee-to-knee in camp, examining what appears to be drawings of wild animals.

In Captain Mayne Reid, Steele pointed out that Audubon explored the west in 1843, when Reid was present in the United States, thus making the claim that the two men traveled together not altogether implausible. At the same time, she maintained that if the naturalist and future novelist were in fact companions on the same expedition, it was more likely that





Figure 7. A scene from Reid's *The Hunters' Feast*, showing the author conferring in the background with a character who strongly resembles the naturalist John J. Audubon.

the renowned Audubon was the one being “accompanied” and not the other way round. But Steele doubted the two men joined company at all. In her view, it was far more probable that the restless young Irishman would have attached himself to the expedition of Sir William Drummond Stewart, an Englishman who toured the Far West in search of wild game at about the same time Audubon was making his trip up the Missouri River in search of specimens for his forthcoming book Quadrupeds of North America. Steele based this notion on her belief that Reid would not have liked “shipboard life” (Audubon traveled by steamboat). Yet she offers no evidence of any kind to refute Mrs. Reid’s claim nor any proof he went with Stewart instead. Steele’s somewhat unsatisfying conclusion is that owing to the “annoyingly vague and circuitous” material contained in Reid’s books as well as the biography written by his widow, “it is impossible to verify his whereabouts during these early years.”<sup>85</sup>

In point of fact, it is highly unlikely that Reid accompanied either Audubon or Stewart. First of all, Reid’s presence on either expedition cannot be substantiated. Secondly, his association with the famed naturalist is only implied in The Hunter’s Feast (and is probably the work of the author’s imagination). Moreover, there doesn’t seem to be any mention of Stewart or anyone like him in any of the Irish author’s works. Finally, there is ample evidence that the future novelist was living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania by the fall of 1842, where he regularly contributed poems to the Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle, the last one being published in the issue of March 21, 1843.<sup>86</sup> Although the aspiring young writer had a brief window of opportunity — from Pittsburgh, he could have taken passage on a steamboat down the Ohio River and then up the Mississippi to St. Louis, from where Audubon’s expedition set out on April 25, 1843 — it is doubtful he took advantage of it.

After reaching the head of the Yellowstone River in mid-summer, Audubon did not return until October 26, when newspapers reported his arrival at Cincinnati, Ohio — the same city Stewart’s party, “amounting to about twenty men,” reached “on board the steamer Omega” in early November. The case for Reid not participating in either endeavor is further strengthened by the fact that he sent his father a letter in 1848, in which he recalled that he had last written to the elder Reid from Pittsburgh (after traveling there from the West) and that from there he had gone on to Philadelphia, with no mention of any intervening western adventures.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, Reid’s first literary work in a Philadelphia publication appeared in August 1843, which places him in that city long before either Audubon’s or Drummond’s expedition returned to civilization.

But what about the two trading expeditions up the Red River that Reid is said to have made? These trips may have occurred. As the crow flies, Indian Territory lay only about 300 miles northwest of Natchitoches. Following the Red River north through Louisiana and Arkansas, past the great “raft” of logs that then blocked a substantial length of the Red, the adventurous young Irishman and any trapper friends who invited him to accompany them could certainly have made two short journeys in a matter of months. Yet curiously, Reid does not seem to have incorporated an expedition of this type into the plot of any of his novels — a practice he employed with many of his other travels. In short, it is impossible to know if these alleged excursions into the wilderness took place or not.

Although the evidence is scant and arguably unreliable, there is more reason to believe that Reid, instead of accompanying Audubon or Stewart or going on trips up the Red River, went instead on a trading expedition to Santa Fe, New Mexico during the year or so

that passed between his leaving Natchitoches (which may have occurred as late as the spring of 1842) and his arrival in Pittsburgh. First, there is Ollivant's straightforward statement, previously noted, that Reid "made the acquaintance of an old trapper who invited him to join a trading expedition preparing to start across the plains to New Mexico." Second, there is the fact that Reid described such a journey in both The Scalphunters and its sequel, The Desert Home, the plots of which he characterized as "truth poetically coloured," adding that when writing the first book, he "endeavoured to paint scenes of a strange land as they are painted on my memory."<sup>88</sup> Thus we have the author's own assertion that these two books are semi-autobiographical. As further evidence, we have a statement, included in a review of The Desert Home, in an 1852 issue of the London Globe, in which it was specified that the "second, third, and fourth chapters, and part of the last, relate to one of the trading trips made by the author from St. Louis, Mo., to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and thence to Chihuahua, Mexico" — information that could only have been supplied by Reid himself.<sup>89</sup> This means that if Reid can be taken at his word, then the seeming uncertainty regarding his whereabouts during most of 1842 is no mystery at all, for in the opening paragraphs of the second chapter of The Desert Home, he writes quite clearly:

Some years ago, I was one of a party of "prairie merchants" who crossed with a caravan from St. Louis, on the Mississippi, to Santa Fé, in New Mexico. We followed the usual "Santa Fé trail." Not disposing of all our goods in New Mexico, we kept on to the great town of Chihuahua, which lies farther to the south.<sup>90</sup>

The greatest problem we have with this scenario is that sifting fact from fiction is a difficult chore fraught with uncertainty. On the whole, it comes down to guesswork. We must ask ourselves: What seems plausible and what is clearly embellishment? (Or outright fiction?) While this process does not seem to lend itself to good history (or in this case,

biography), we may recall that in the absence of conclusive documentary evidence, archeologists and anthropologists make educated guesses all the time. Trying to determine Reid's whereabouts during the greater part of 1842 requires a similar sort of exercise.

The first part of Reid's supposed journey, at least as narrated in The Scalphunters, begins on April 10 when "Henry Haller," a character clearly based on the novelist himself, arrives in St. Louis, Missouri, bearing a letter of introduction from one Luis Walton (a fictional character who may be based on an actual person), dated April 3 in New Orleans, and addressed to none other than Ceran St. Vrain, the well-known Missouri trader and partner of William Bent, who is also named in Reid's book. Unfortunately, when "Haller" inquires after St. Vrain, he discovers the trader "had gone up the Missouri River, several days before" but was "expected back in less than a week." In the interim he takes a room at the Planter's Hotel, an actual establishment that was built in the late 1830s at the corner of Fourth and Chestnut streets, where he spends three idle pleasant days — smoking cigars on the hotel's "piazza," drinking "Sherry cobblers" in its saloon, "reading the journals in the 'reading room,'" and observing the other guests.<sup>91</sup>

When St. Vrain returns from his Missouri River excursion, he is pointed out in the hotel's dining room to "Haller," whom the trader warmly greets. In short order, St. Vrain introduces him not only to his partner William Bent but also fur traders William L. Sublette and Jerry Folger (who, like Bent, were real people) — all of whom welcome "Haller" into their circle. In due course, they invite the young man to join them on their spring caravan. "Haller" accepts, of course, asking their advice on how best to spend the \$10,000 he just happens to have in a St. Louis bank on merchandise to carry to Santa Fe. The next day, the

four men take him shopping, where by evening “Haller” has “invested nearly all [his] disposable funds in printed calicoes, long knives, and looking glasses, leaving just money enough to purchase mule-wagons, and hire teamsters at Independence,” the caravan’s “point of departure for the ‘plains.’”<sup>92</sup> Accordingly, “Haller” and his newfound friends take a steamboat up the up the Missouri River to Independence, where they spend a week getting outfitted. Finally, near the end of April or early May, the group departs in a caravan consisting of a hundred wagons.<sup>93</sup>

Here, the question arises: Could Reid have actually joined such a caravan at this time? The answer is: possibly, yet it is unlikely he accompanied Bent, St. Vrain and Company. Caravans of various sizes, bound for Santa Fe, had been leaving Missouri annually each spring since 1822. One of the largest was the 1831 expedition, which consisted of 320 men with 130 wagons carrying a quarter of a million dollars worth of goods. The one that started in 1842, the largest since 1839, was made up of 70 wagons carrying \$160,000 worth of merchandise. 120 men accompanied it and there seems to be no reason why Reid could not have been one of them; however, it is very doubtful he was among the fifteen merchants to whom the goods belonged, a number that included some seven or eight Mexican citizens.<sup>94</sup> Unlike his fictional counterpart, the former schoolteacher almost certainly did not bring with him anything like the \$100,000 that “Henry Haller” invested in the journey. If Reid did make the journey, he was far more likely to have come on his own (and was therefore responsible to no one but himself) or as a working hand of some sort.

That notion that Reid accompanied Bent and St. Vrain and Company in the spring of 1842 is further discounted by the fact that the two partners had a caravan coming in the

opposite direction, that is from the west, that very same season. In all likelihood, it passed the one headed east out of Independence. Headed up by William Bent himself and accompanied by famed frontier scout Kit Carson, it arrived at Independence in May 1842 (at about the same time Reid has “Haller’s” caravan leaving), “bringing 283 packs of buffalo robes, 30 packs of beaver pelts, 12 sacks of buffalo tongues, and one pack of deerskins.”<sup>95</sup> Perhaps the most likely, and simplest, explanation is that Reid simply threw the names of these well-known traders into his story to add some cache or “flavor” to his story. Whether he actually met them or not is unknown, although certainly he could have seen them or had them pointed out to him when they passed the caravan he may have accompanied.

“Haller’s” (Reid’s) account of the journey west along the Santa Fe Trail is full of adventure and excitement. Improbably, he escapes death twice, once by leaping on to the back of a bison at the forefront of a stampeding herd and another time by extricating himself from quicksand while out hunting antelope. Remarkably, considering Reid’s reputation for detailed description of geographic features, etc., there is no mention of well-known landmarks or milestones along the trail with the exception of the Arkansas and Cimarron rivers, where at the former, he wrote, “we saw mounted Indians disappearing over the swells.” Identifying them as Pawnees, “Haller” noticed “for several days clouds of these dusky warriors hung upon the skirts of the caravan” but “kept at a wary distance from our long rifles.”<sup>96</sup>

At Santa Fe, Reid’s fictional counterpart and the other merchants find rooms at La Fonda, a fine old hotel that still stands to this day. Later, “Haller” attends a fandango, where he meets a mysterious stranger who presses him (unsuccessfully) to sell his horse.

Predictably, the young traveler dances with an attractive señorita before the initially festive affair turns into a deadly brawl in which he is wounded by a well-thrust knife.<sup>97</sup>

After three days, when it turns out there is no market for their goods in Santa Fe, the merchants continue their journey, hoping to sell their merchandise in Chihuahua. Too weak to travel on account of his wound, “Haller” remains in the New Mexican capital for several more days until, distressed by the inhospitable nature of the place, he leaves in the company of a new companion, a Canadian named Godé,” and a couple of heavily-packed mules.”<sup>98</sup>

Following the Rio Grande or “Del Norte” out of Santa Fe, the two men travel southward where along the way, “Haller” comments on the Rocky Mountains visible on both sides and the “picturesque costumes” of the people they see “in the villages and along the highways.” Finally, after five days they reach “the wretched little ‘pueblo’ of Parida” but finding it “a ruffian sort of place,” continue their journey after acquiring the services of a guide, “a coarse, shaggy-looking customer” who upon reaching Socorro steals the mule the two travelers allowed him to ride. The inhabitants’ fear of “Los Apachés” makes it impossible to find a replacement guide in Socorro. Finally, after spending the night “among the ruins of Valverde,” an abandoned settlement where a future Civil War battle would take place, “Haller” and Godé embark for Fray Cristobal, a river crossing campground located at the beginning of the dreaded *Jornada del Muerte* — the “Journey of Death.”<sup>99</sup>

At Fray Cristobal, the two men filled their “‘xuages’ with care” and gave the “animals as much as they [would] drink” before setting out. “Haller” (Reid) noted that the dreaded route, which took travelers south to El Paso del Norte (present-day Ciudad Juarez), lived up to its name:



...Scattered along the path we see the bones of many animals. There are human bones too! That white, spheroidal mass, with its grinning rows and serrated sutures — that is a human skull. It lies beside the skeleton of a horse. Horse and rider have fallen together. The wolves have stripped them at the same time. They have dropped down on this thirsty track, and perished in despair, although water, had they known it, was within reach of another effort.

We see the skeleton of a mule, with the alpareja still buckled around it, and an old blanket, flapped and tossed by many a whistling wind.

Other objects that have been brought there by human aid, strike the eye as we proceed. A bruised canteen, the fragments of a glass bottle, an old hat, a piece of saddle-cloth, a stirrup red with rust, a broken strap, with many like symbols, are strewn along our path, speaking a melancholy language.

...Shall we leave such souvenirs?<sup>100</sup>

From this point forward, the story almost certainly becomes almost wholly fictional: After running out of water and enduring whirling clouds of dust and sand, the two thirsty men seek the *Ojo del Muerto* (Deadman's Springs), where they hope to find relief. Instead they come across the aptly named *Laguna de Muerta* (Lake of Death), the briny waters of which are unpalatable. Soon, a desperate "Haller" begins having deliriums and imagines he sees a shining river in the distance, which he tries to reach. Suddenly, he wakes up to find himself lying in bed in a house, where, remarkably, he is being cared for by the wife of the same mysterious stranger he met in Santa Fe, who found him, delirious, hanging from a tall cliff by a rope tied to his horse.

Whether Reid ever actually experienced even a small fraction of the amazing and improbable adventures that make up the remainder (and the largest portion) of The Scalphunters is a mystery. In all likelihood the account is mostly, if not entirely, fanciful. However, if he did in fact make a journey to Santa Fe (and also possibly Chihuahua), it is not outside the realm of possibility that he encountered some of the frontier types he describes, men such as Bill Garey and Old Rube.

The Desert Home, Reid's first juvenile novel, is the sequel to The Scalphunters, taking up the tale at the point where the first left off. In the second chapter "Haller" (Reid) writes that after he and his companions "settled our business [in Chihuahua]," someone in the group "proposed...that we should explore a new "trail" across the prairies." All were hopeful that they might find "a better route than the Santa Fe road" and "expected that such a one lay between the town of El Paso on the Del Norte River, and some point on the frontiers of Arkansas." After arriving at El Paso del Norte, the group "sold our wagons, and purchased Mexican pack mules — engaging at the same time, a number of 'arrieros,' or muleteers, to manage them."<sup>101</sup>

Altogether, wrote "Haller" (Reid), there were "twelve of us — traders, and a number of hunters, who had agreed to accompany us across the plains," as well as a copper miner and "four Mexicans — the 'arrieros,' who had charge of our little train of pack mules." Naturally, he added: "We were all well armed, and mounted upon the best horses we could procure for money."<sup>102</sup>

The party's route took them in a northeasterly direction, toward the present-day city of Las Cruces, New Mexico and through the Organ Mountains, "so-called," remarked "Haller" (Reid), owing to their "fancied resemblance which is seen in one of their cliffs to the tubes of an organ." Atop one of the peaks was a "remarkable phenomenon," Reid added in the schoolmasterly tone and style for which he became celebrated — a phenomenon that no one could explain: "A lake, which has its tides, that ebb and flow like the tides of the ocean," where "the wild animals of the country, and deer and elk are found in great numbers around its shore."<sup>103</sup>

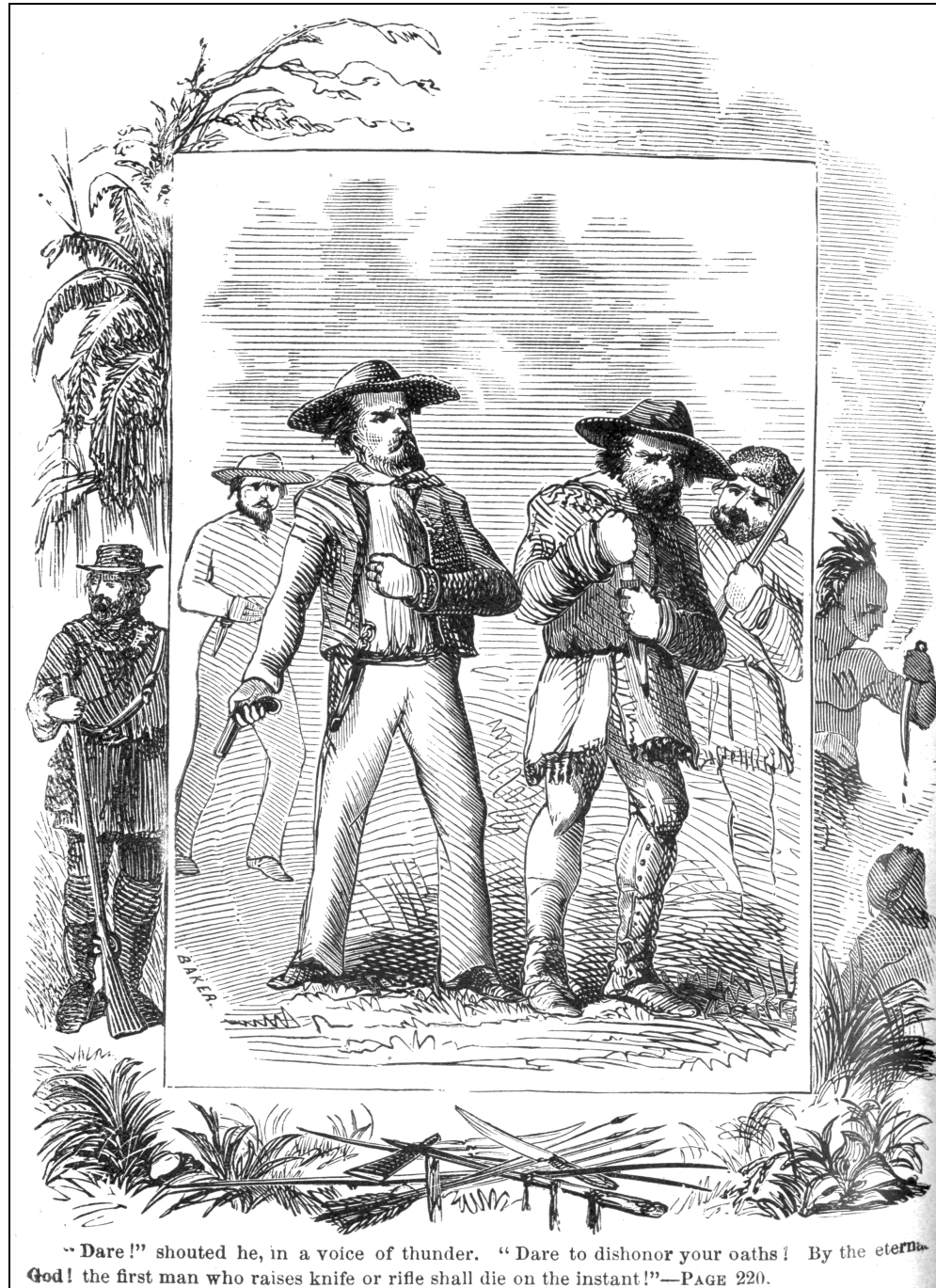


Figure 8. An illustration from a later edition of The Scalp Hunters, Reid’s most popular novel.

“Our party,” wrote “Haller” (Reid), soon “found an easy pass through the range, which brought us out into an open country on the other side.” Then, “after travelling several days through the eastern spurs of the Rocky Mountains,” the intrepid explorers “struck upon a small stream, which we followed downward.” It took them to “the celebrated Pecos, or as it is sometimes called, the Puerco.” At this point they were near present-day Carlsbad. From here, the group “crossed the Pecos, and travelled for some days up its left bank, in hopes of reaching some other stream that might run into from the east, which we could follow.” But, he continued: “No such stream appeared; and we were forced at times to leave the Pecos itself, and take out into the open country for a distance of miles, before we could get back to its waters.” The problem, “Haller” (Reid) explained, was the river’s “deep channel which the river — working for long ages — had cut through hills that opposed its course, leaving on both sides vast precipices for its banks.”<sup>104</sup>

At this point, having “got further to the north” than they wanted to go and having given up hope of finding a westward flowing stream, the travelers filled their canteens, watered their horses and mules, and with no little trepidation, struck out across “a wide desert, with neither hill, mountain, nor any other landmark in view.” There was hardly “a trace of vegetation,” wrote “Haller” (Reid). All the men saw were “patches of stunted sage bushes and clumps of thorny cactus, but not a blade of grass to gladden the eyes of our animals.” From all appearances, it had not rained there in a long time. “The soil was as dry as powder, and the dust kicked up by the hoofs of our mules and horses hung around us in a cloud as we marched.” It was also extremely hot “and this, with the dust and fatigue of travel, brought on an unquenchable thirst, that soon caused us to drink up the contents of our water

gourds.” In short order, both men and animals were suffering. At this point in the narrative, the little band of travelers is saved from certain death when they spot, in the distance, a snow-capped mountain peak where, after a two-day march, they find a cool mountain stream in a tree-lined ravine at its base.<sup>105</sup>

Although it is alleged that the second, third, and fourth and part of the last chapters of The Desert Home are based on fact, this mysterious mountain, which is mentioned in the second chapter and which “Haller” (Reid) places about one hundred miles east of the Pecos River, cannot possibly be anything but fanciful. In New Mexico, the land east of the Pecos is part of the fabled *Llano Estacado* (the Staked Plains), which also encompasses a substantial portion of West Texas and the Texas Panhandle. There are ravines and canyons, to be sure, but no mountains. At this point in the book fact and fiction clearly part company as “Haller” (Reid) and his companions discover an English-American family living, *a la* Swiss Family Robinson, in this imaginary “valley oasis.” Following a number of wild adventures that make up the bulk of the book, this family accompanies the “prairie merchants” back to St. Louis, where they arrive in May of an unidentified year.

Although Reid’s books with Southwest settings claim to be based on his own experiences, in the absence of any corroborating evidence we cannot discount the possibility that they are completely products of his vivid imagination; that he may have borrowed ideas from other writers or simply related the tall tales he overheard, either while working in Natchitoches or elsewhere — St. Louis perhaps? American newspapers of this period abound with similar fanciful tales. Or could it be that Reid simply collected clippings, which he later drew upon for inspiration throughout his long career?

CHAPTER FOUR  
THE POOR SCHOLAR

I frequently sent you papers and magazines containing my productions, generally, I believe, under the *nom-de-plume* of ‘The Poor Scholar.’ Have these missiles ever reached you?

— Mayne Reid, in a letter to his father, 1848<sup>1</sup>

According to Charles Ollivant, Independence, Missouri was the place where Reid ended his “backwoods wanderings” in the early summer of 1842 and “decided to return to civilized life.” Accordingly, the young man is said to have “struck across that State for St. Louis, [from] whence he found his way to Cincinnati, Ohio — the ‘Queen City of the West.’”<sup>2</sup> There, his widow later recalled, “he joined a company of traveling actors, but very soon convinced himself that play-acting was not his forte.” She further remarked that her husband “was anxious to keep this episode of his life from the knowledge of this family in Ireland” on account of their being strict Presbyterians who “looked upon actors as almost lost to the Evil One.” Although “the fact leaked out some years later,” she added: “of all his varied adventures, Mayne Reid would never tell us of his failure in this one line of business.”<sup>3</sup>

Reid’s reluctance to reveal his short acting career to his Presbyterian father and mother is understandable but why he declined to discuss it with his wife is puzzling. In any event, it is very likely that at around this same time the young Irishman became acquainted with an up-and-coming schoolteacher-turned-lawyer named Donn Piatt, scion of a wealthy

Logan County, Ohio family — a man who later went on to fame as a journalist, author, and army officer. Only a year younger than Reid, Piatt was the eighth son of Benjamin M. Piatt, a lawyer who settled in Cincinnati about 1800, entering into partnership with Nicholas Longworth and doing “much for the city in its young days.” Described as a man whose “sound sense and clear head soon made him the lead in public affairs,” Benjamin Piatt soon became a judge and in 1828 he and his Virginia-born wife and their children, including nine-year-old Donn, settled on a “large farm on the small stream which the Indians called Macochee, and on the spot where the Indian village of that name once stood.” There they built a log home known as the “Pioneer House,” which is still standing. The two so-called Piatt family “castles,” built after the Civil War by their sons Donn and Abram, were named “Mac-O-Chee” and “Mac-A-Cheek” respectively. Along with the parents’ home, these “castles” are today popular tourist attractions in Logan County, Ohio.<sup>4</sup>

In view of Donn Piatt’s occupation at this time, one cannot help but wonder if the initial relationship between the two men was one of lawyer-client. Perhaps Reid got into some scrape with the law in Cincinnati and Piatt defended him. This might explain his reluctance to reveal very much about this period of his life to his wife! It is equally possible that Piatt and Reid met in some saloon or other public place. In any event, the two men became fast friends. Even after Reid went back across the Atlantic, they maintained contact.

In the fall of 1842 the adventurous young Irishman left Cincinnati, drifting east to Pittsburgh, where in all likelihood he arrived as a passenger aboard one of the many steamboats that plied the Ohio River between Pennsylvania’s westernmost city “and various towns below.”<sup>5</sup> This was a momentous juncture in his life for it was at this most unlikely

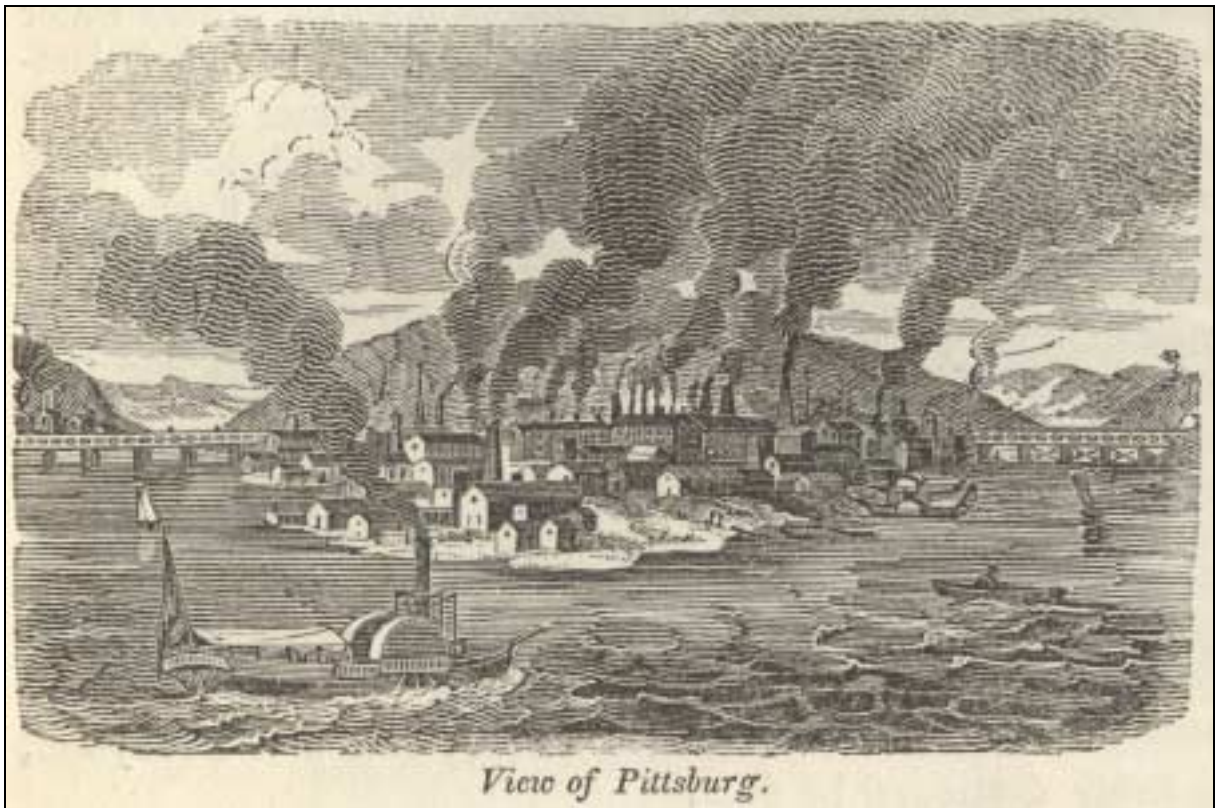


Figure 9. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as it appeared about the time that Mayne Reid began his writing career there. From S. G. Goodrich, A Pictorial Geography of the World (Boston: Otis, Broaders & Company, 1840).



place — a city situated on the western edge of the Allegheny Mountains, at the confluence of the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela Rivers — that Reid took his first tentative steps toward a literary career, contributing poetry on a semi-regular basis to the Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle. He also held another, more mundane job with the paper; as a carrier — delivering the Chronicle on a daily basis to some of its 1,500 subscribers. Neither position seems to have paid very well. Mrs. Reid tells us that her then-future husband only managed to survive the especially long, hard winter of 1842-1843 thanks to the kindness of some fellow Irish immigrants.<sup>6</sup> In view of his limited means, remarked Ollivant, the *nom de plume* Reid adopted at this time — “The Poor Scholar” — “was not inappropriate.”<sup>7</sup>

All things considered, this city — which then had a population of 40,000 people (including suburbs) — seems an unlikely place for a sensitive young poet to begin his career. Although there were “several handsome buildings in the city,” Pittsburgh’s generally “disagreeable” appearance could not be more unlike the dreamy, exotic isles that were the settings of most of the poems the ambitious young Ulsterman wrote while living here. The “surrounding country,” wrote one observer, was “exceedingly rich in bituminous coal” and its “constant use” caused “a perpetual cloud of black smoke to hang over the place.” Someone who had visited England, the same writer suggested, “would imagine from the dingy aspect of the houses, which are blackened with smoke; from the constant smell of burning coal, and streams of smoke which are ascending from the furnaces in every direction, that he was in one of the great manufacturing towns of that country.” Charles Ollivant concurred, calling Pittsburgh the “Wigan of America.” Certainly, the city ranked as one of the most heavily industrialized centers of commerce in the United States. Altogether, it

boasted “130 steam engines, 30 iron founderies and rolling mills, 10 cotton factories, and as many glass works and tanneries, in all, 300 manufacturing establishments,” the annual production of which, at that time, was valued in excess of \$12 million.<sup>8</sup>

Adding to the city’s generally unpleasant character was its “helter-skelter architecture,” where modest cottages stood side-by-side with “imposing structures” and its unpaved streets, which were oftentimes “seas of polluted mud where hogs and dogs ran wild.” At other times, Pittsburgh’s thoroughfares were impassable owing to “building contractors, auctioneers, livestock salesmen, merchants, and draymen [who used them] as parking places, to the great inconvenience of passers-by.” Other inconveniences, or in some cases outright dangers, included sewers that “were left open” and “cellarways...built without covers so that the unwary were subject to hazard of life and limb,” particularly in view of the fact that the streets were mostly unlighted.<sup>9</sup>

Reid’s Pittsburgh employers were J. Heron Foster and William H. Whitney, joint-editors of the Morning-Chronicle. R. G. Berford owned the paper, the offices of which were located in the heart of the city, at No. 85 Fourth Street, between Fourth and Market.<sup>10</sup> Reid’s residential address during this time is unknown.

The youthful bard’s earliest known published work consists of a series of poems collectively titled “Scenes in the West Indies.” The first of these, “Visit to La Soufrière,” appeared on the front page of the November 10, 1842 issue of the Morning Chronicle, running the entire length of the right-hand column. The florid language of “Visit” tells the story of a young man who risks life and limb to climb the heights of an active volcano on an unnamed Caribbean island, where he “dares to descend” the “crater's cup.”<sup>11</sup> Reid held that

some of his novels were based on certain life experiences. One cannot help, therefore, but wonder if he toured the Caribbean at some point in his life. But when would he have had the opportunity? Did the *Dumfriesshire*, the ship that carried Reid to the States in 1839, call at other ports, such as Havana, before going on to New Orleans? Although Reid's 1883 obituary in the New York Times claims he visited the West Indies,<sup>12</sup> it seems unlikely. Equally puzzling is the question: To which island does the poem refer? There are active volcanoes bearing the name Soufrière on at least four islands: Montserrat, Guadalupe, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent.

The next poem in the series appeared in print on Tuesday, November 15, 1842. Consisting of fifteen stanzas, it took up both the entire right-hand column of the first page and most of another column on the paper's second page. Although the poem mentions sailing westward from the island of "Hayti," the verses are almost entirely an ode to "The Ocean," which was its title.

Three days after "The Ocean" was printed in the Chronicle, another Reid poem, completely unrelated to the first two, appeared on the second page of the newspaper. It was titled "On the Death of an Only Daughter." Providing us with one of the few possibly personal views of the author's life in Pittsburgh, an introductory statement to this "touching picture from the pen of Mr. T. Mayne Reid" explained it was "suggested by the death of Susan H—, a child of some promise, whose untimely end has been a source of sad sorrow to the bereaved parents." One cannot help but wonder: Were these "the kind friends" without whom, Mrs. Reid tells us, the youthful poet "would have fared much harder in the severe cold winter of that city," at a time when "he encountered many hardships in his efforts to

make a livelihood of his pen?”<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, we cannot be absolutely sure but the lines of the poem, a maudlin piece which speaks of a young mother and father bending over the fragile form of their dying daughter, expecting the worst but praying nonetheless for her recovery, suggest that Reid knew this family well. Lending weight to this conjecture are the poem’s final lines:

I followed to the grave, the sorrowing band,  
 For she had many friends, — ay, though so young  
 Her kindness won all hearts — her little hand  
 Was ever stretched to welcome, and her tongue  
 In prattling accents, like sweet music rung! —  
 Alas! the earth hath won her! — she is gone! —  
 Her parents, friends, have o’er her coffin hung  
 And ta’en their last farewell! — beneath the stone,  
 That coldly shrouds her grave, she sleeps in silence, lone.<sup>14</sup>

Reid’s “Scenes in the West Indies” series resumed on November 28, nearly two weeks following “The Ocean,” suggesting that it was a work in progress. Unlike its predecessors, however, the third poem had no title of its own. Even more curious is a complete lack of reference to islands, the ocean, or anything remotely connected with the Caribbean. Instead, it is a self-absorbed, introspective piece that is actually somewhat suicidal in tone. Perhaps it was written when Reid, in a moment of despair, was wondering whether he had made the right career choice. The second stanza reads:

Behold the poet in his garret lone;  
 Along the heated page his hollow eye  
 Now scans the thoughts that from his soul have flown;  
 His cheek, his lips are pale — the agony  
 Of thought is on his brow; the long drawn sigh,  
 And anxious look, proclaim his doubts, his fears;  
 Say, shall those leav’n inspired verses die?  
 Shall unrewarded go the toil of years?  
 Shall he not live to gain that fame that life endears?<sup>15</sup>

If Reid, during the dreary winter months of 1842-1843, found cause to wonder whether he would ever succeed as a writer, he seems not to have remained glum for very long. A cheery New Year's Day poem — "Address of the Carrier of the Morning Chronicle to his Patrons at the Close of the Year 1842," was printed in the newspaper's issue of January 3, 1843. Although devoid of a byline, the poem's references to "wild winds" and "moaning seas," which were reminiscent of "Scenes from the West Indies," left little doubt to the author's identity; in any case, Ollivant assures us it was Reid's work.<sup>16</sup>

The early months of 1843 brought forth a torrent of poetry from the pen of Reid who now, instead of using his given name, adopted a pseudonym, "The Poor Scholar." The first of his works to appear under this byline was a sea epic in three parts called "The Storm," which appeared in the January 17, 18, and 19 issues of the Morning Chronicle. A religious piece titled "The Crucifixion," the only one of its kind that Reid is known to have written, was printed in the February 4 edition. This, in turn, was followed by three more Caribbean-themed works: "A Ship Under Sail" on February 17, "The West Indies" on March 7, and "Cuba-Night," Reid's final poem for the Morning Chronicle, which appeared in the issue of March 21.<sup>17</sup>

Ollivant tells us that during Reid's sojourn in Pittsburgh, he "ceased to correspond with his parents" but that he did mail clippings of his poetry to his father, who "religiously preserved" them.<sup>18</sup>

In the spring of 1843 Reid left for Philadelphia, where he would spend most of the next three years.<sup>19</sup> At that time, the city had a population exceeding 200,000, making it the second largest metropolitan area in the United States. In sharp contrast to sooty Pittsburgh,

wrote one observer, Philadelphia was “remarkably clean.” Owing to its rectangular streets, it was “probably the most regular and uniform city in the world,” boasting a large number of “handsome” buildings. By far the “handsomest” of these was Girard College, made of white marble and “entirely surrounded by Corinthian columns.” Another noteworthy structure was the United States Bank on Chestnut Street, also constructed from white marble, with “a front on the model of the Parthenon.” One wonders if Reid would have agreed with the comment: “It never fails to excite an agreeable emotion when first seen by a stranger.” A great admirer of the American form of government, Reid would probably have been more moved by the sight of the old State House, “a somewhat antiquated building” that was “chiefly remarkable for containing the hall in which the Declaration of Independence was signed.”<sup>20</sup>

Although Philadelphia was then “the fourth city in the Union” in “point of commerce,” the young Irishman was probably far less interested in the city’s “numerous large manufactories of cotton, iron, glass, &c.” or its “considerable” foreign commerce than the fact that publishing was “a flourishing trade,” and that the city boasted no fewer than “71 periodicals, newspapers, and monthly and quarterly magazines.”<sup>21</sup> Here, certainly much more so than in Pittsburgh, there were ample outlets for an aspiring young writer’s literary output. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in Philadelphia, for most of the next three years, Reid settled down, “devoting all his energies to literature.”<sup>22</sup> In short order, he became a regular contributor to several popular magazines, using his pen, as he later reported to his father in Ireland, to “earn a scanty but honourable subsistence.” It was almost certainly through his association with at least one of these periodical publications that he made the acquaintance of another up-and-coming writer, Edgar Allan Poe.

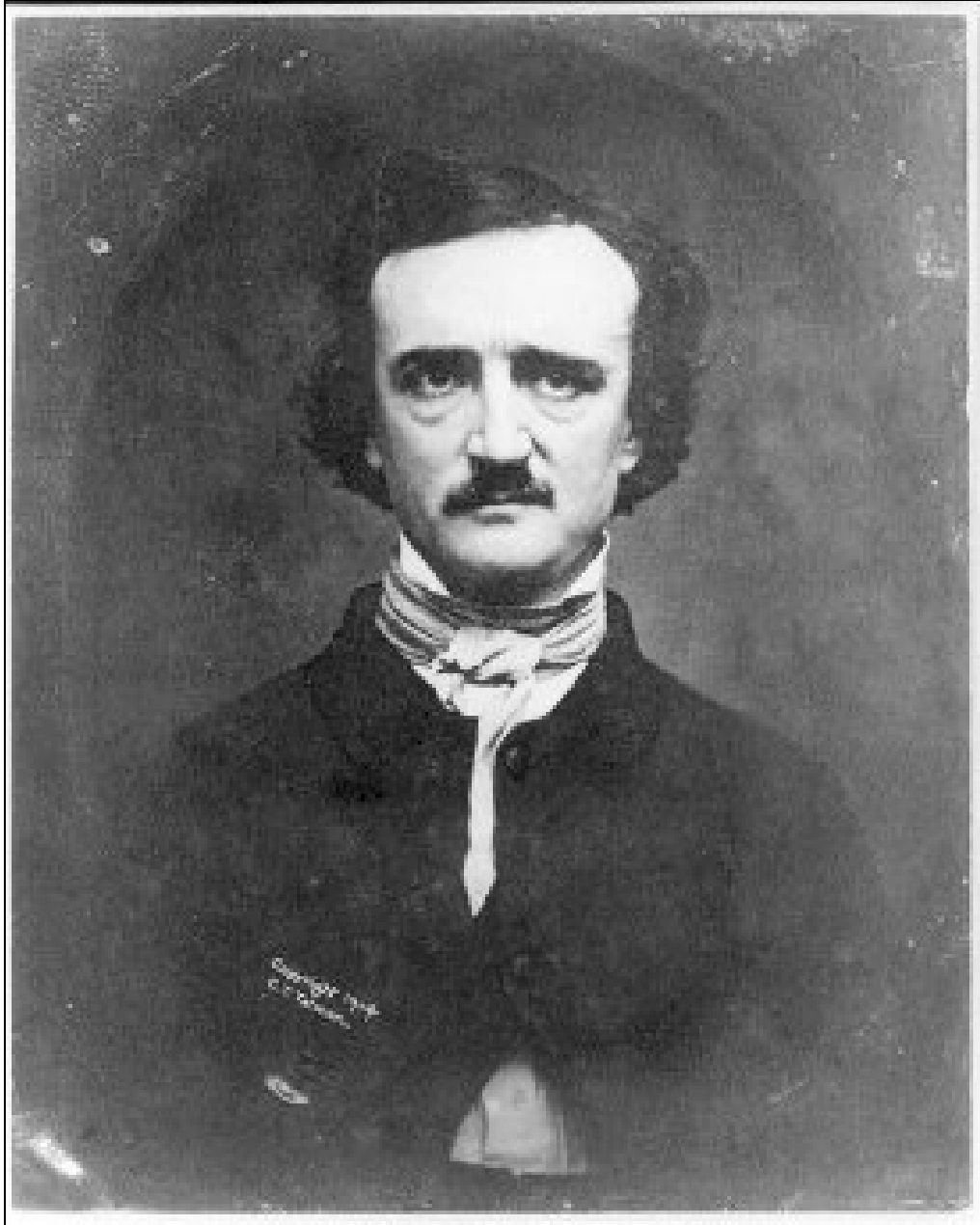


Figure 10. In Philadelphia, Reid became friends with the enigmatic Edgar Allan Poe. Photo from the Library of Congress.

Although, as others have pointed out, Poe never mentioned Reid in any of his own work, there seems no reason to doubt the Irish author's claim to have been his friend. "When I first became acquainted with Poe," Reid wrote many years later, "he was living in a suburban district of Philadelphia, called Spring Garden," which at that time was "a quiet, residential neighbourhood, noted as the chosen quarter of the Quakers." Although Poe was not himself a Quaker, remarked Reid, "he was next-door neighbour to one," a man who "dwelt in a splendid four-storey house, built of the beautiful coral-coloured bricks for which Philadelphia is celebrated." In stark contrast, he recalled, Poe "lived in a lean-to of three rooms — there may have been a garret, with a closet — of painted plank construction, supported against the gable of the more pretentious dwelling." Reid added that Poe's Quaker neighbor was also his landlord, a "dealer in cereals" who "rather looked down upon the poet — though not from any question of character, but simply from his being fool enough to figure as a scribbler and a poet."<sup>23</sup>

It was in Poe's "humble domicile," wrote Reid, that he "passed some of the pleasantest hours of my life — certainly some of the most intellectual," which were "passed in the company of the poet himself and his wife — a lady angelically beautiful in spirit." Reid seemed especially charmed by Poe's young wife, recalling further:

No one who remembers that dark-eyed, dark-haired daughter of Virginia — her own name, if I rightly remember — her grace, her facial beauty, her demeanor, so modest as to be remarkable, no one who has ever spent an hour in her company but will endorse what I have said above. I remember how we, the friends of the poet, used to talk of her high qualities. And when we talked of her beauty, I well knew that the rose-tint upon her cheek was too bright, too pure to be of earth — that sadly-beautiful light which betokens an early tomb.<sup>24</sup>

Reid also remembered Poe's mother-in-law, whom he described as "a woman of



middle age, and almost masculine aspect.” The struggling young writer found it remarkable, when he met her for the first time, that a woman with “a countenance that at first seemed scarce feminine” could be the mother of “that angelic creature who had accepted Edgar Poe as the partner of her life.” Yet despite her “man-like” appearance, wrote Reid, the woman possessed a “truly feminine nature” and he praised her as “a type of...grand American mothers — such as existed in the days when block houses had to be defended, bullets run in red-hot saucepans, and guns loaded for sons and husbands to fire them.” However, in the case of her daughter and son-in-law, wrote Reid, it was not Indians who threatened but rather, poverty, something that was just “as ruthless, as implacable, and almost as difficult to repel.” Explaining further, Reid wrote:

She was the ever-vigilant guardian of the house, watching it against the silent but continuous sap of necessity, that appeared every day to be approaching closer and nearer. She was the sole servant, keeping everything clean; the sole messenger doing the errands, making pilgrimages between the poet and his publishers, frequently bringing back such chilling responses as “The article not accepted,” or “The cheque not to be given until such-and-such a day” — often too late for his necessities.

And she was also messenger to the market; from it bringing back not the “delicacies of the season,” but only such commodities as were called for by the dire exigencies of hunger. And yet there were some delicacies. I shall never forget how, when peaches were in season and cheap, a pottle of these, the choicest gifts of Pomona, were divested of their skins by the delicate fingers of the poet’s wife, and left to the “melting mood,” to be amalgamated with Spring Garden cream and crystallised sugar, and then set before such guests as came in by chance.<sup>25</sup>

As for Poe himself, Reid praised his friend as a man of “rare genius” and “original character,” “a scholar of rare accomplishments” who often shut himself up “in his own house — the little ‘shanty’ supported against the gable of the rich Quaker — all the time hard at work with his pen, poorly paid, and hard driven to keep the wolf from his tightly-fastened door, intruded on only by a few select friends, who always found him, what they knew him to

be, a generous host, an affectionate son-in-law and husband; in short, a respectable gentleman.” Poe was not, Reid added, a man who possessed “those personal graces supposed to attract the admiration of women,” as was often alleged in biographical sketches of the author that were written after his death. “His was a face purely intellectual,” Reid recalled. “Women might admire it,” he added, “thinking of this; but it is doubtful if many ever fell or could have fallen, in love with the man to whom it belonged.” Furthermore, he remarked, “I don’t think many ever did.” “It was enough,” he concluded, “for one man to be beloved by one such woman as he had for his wife.”<sup>26</sup>

Representations of Poe as a “rake” were undeserved, wrote Reid. “I was his companion in one or two of his wildest frolics,” he later recalled, defending his friend’s reputation and ready to “certify that they never went beyond the innocent mirth in which we all indulge when Bacchus gets the better of us.” Of course, with Poe, “the jolly god sometimes played fantastic tricks — to the stealing away of his brain, and sometimes too, his hat — leaving him to walk bareheaded through the streets at an hour when the sun shone too clearly on his crown, then prematurely bald.” But if this was “one of Poe’s failings,” he added, it was not habitual; only occasional, and drawn out by some accidental circumstances — now disappointment, now the occurrence of a social crowd, whose flattering friendship might lead to champagne, a single glass of which used to affect him so much that he was hardly responsible for his actions, or the disposal of his hat.” In sum, wrote Reid, Poe “was no worse and no better than most men.”<sup>27</sup>

Reid’s claim to have been a friend of Poe was corroborated by Howard Paul, nephew of Thomas Cottrell Clarke, a well-to-do Philadelphian who gave monthly dinner parties to

which both Poe and Reid were occasionally invited. Comparing the two men, Paul observed, “Mayne Reid was a fluent, inexhaustible *raconteur*” who “shone to advantage when relating his adventures of travel.” In contrast, “Poe was at his best when critical, and in giving the results of his metaphysical reflections. A decade after Reid’s death, Paul recalled that when the two young writers were together at the dinner table “they would exchange opinions and argue in the most brilliant manner.”<sup>28</sup>

Poe’s particular *bête noir* at that time was Samuel Warren the novelist. I heard him say at one of these monthly dinners that Warren’s “Ten Thousand a Year” was written in slipshod English, and that the whole tone of the story was in the last degree tedious, mawkish, and inflated.

“But it was heralded with a flourish of trumpets,” pleaded Mayne Reid, who had stood up for Warren.

“No doubt, but they were penny ones,” was Poe’s crushing retort.

One night Bulwer Lytton was on the *tapis*. Poe had just risen from reading “Zanoni,” and though, as I have said, he admired the English novelist in many respects, this Rosicrucian romance did not quite capture his fancy.

Mayne Reid, who had read the book, pronounced it a Titanic conflict between the intellect and the heart.

“It should have been a poem, not a — what do you call it, Reid?”

“A novel, certainly.”

“It might have been put forth as a romance, or a mystery, or the Lord knows what,” continued Poe, “and by a man too, who sets up to be the High Priest of the Synagogue. A novel in the true acceptance of the name is a picture of real life. The plot may be involved, but it must not transcend probability.”<sup>29</sup>

“In those days,” remarked Paul, “Mayne Reid had not won his spurs as a romantic writer.” Apart from “a few short stories he had published nothing of importance.” Realizing, he “was no match for his friend in these critical discussions,” the budding writer “listened with profound attention to the words of the critic.” Even when he was wrong, commented Paul, “Poe...generally silenced his opponent, who, perhaps to maintain peace, affected to agree.”<sup>30</sup>

Like those who would later accuse the Irish writer of plagiarism, Poe seemed skeptical about the actual extent of Reid’s professed experience, harboring the view that he

“had an exuberantly inventive imagination when he talked of his own exploits.” Sometimes, after besting his friend in one of their dinner table debates, the enigmatic author of The Raven would say: “Now Reid, give us one of your Mexican adventures, and keep as near the truth as you can.” One evening, remembered Paul, Poe told Clarke in confidence that he thought Reid was “a colossal but most picturesque liar” who “fibs on a surprising scale,” adding, “but with the finish of an artist, and that is why I listen to him attentively.” Paul was himself among those who believed that Reid’s imagination outstripped his actual experience, recalling that on one occasion he listened intently and in amused silence as Reid told his dinner companions he had “been out West fighting Indians” when he knew full well that the young Irishman “had been boarding quietly at a farm house in New Jersey, where he retired to recruit his health, and to work at a story called, ‘The Beautiful Creole: A Romance of the Crescent City,’ which was published in a Philadelphia periodical.”<sup>31</sup> (The story to which Paul referred was actually entitled “The Cousins. A Tale of the Crescent City,” which was published under Reid’s pseudonym, “the Poor Scholar”, in the October 1844 issue of the Ladies’ National Magazine.)

Joan Steele remarked that it may have been Reid’s tendency to embellish his tales that accounted for some of the discrepancies, “such as descriptions and dates of Poe’s residences” that exist in the Irish author’s recollections of Poe. She was skeptical of his claim to have been an intimate of Poe for as long as two years and bemoaned the fact that “later biographers have taken him at his word.”<sup>32</sup>

Mrs. Reid opined that during this period of her late husband’s life “his best productions appeared in a monthly magazine of high class, called *Godey’s Lady’s Book*,”

which by the time Reid arrived in Philadelphia in 1843, was a well-established periodical (founded 1830) that in time would come to enjoy an antebellum circulation of 150,000. Published by Louis A. Godey, the magazine, as its name implied, targeted women as its principal audience. No doubt to assure that his readers would find the magazine's content to their liking, from September 1841 onwards, Godey employed female editors. Each issue was a collection of poetry and prose that also featured fashion plates hand-colored by an army of one hundred women. These illustrations, from all accounts, were highly prized by readers, who often removed them from the magazine and framed them. Godey is said to have paid his best-known contributors, such as Edgar Allan Poe and Harriet Beecher Stowe, very well but when it came to unknowns like Reid, he was far less generous.<sup>33</sup>

Reid's first published work, following his arrival in Philadelphia, was a poem that appeared in the August 1843 issue of Godey's. Attributed to "The Poor Scholar," "The Clime of the Creole, The Isles of the Ind." reflected the young Irishman's continuing fascination with the West Indies. So too did his second Godey's piece, "Ysla de Cuba," which was accepted for the September issue. A thematically similar poem, "The Polacca Marque: A Romance of the Isles," a rather protracted effort, made it into Godey's October issue.<sup>34</sup>

Another trio of verse, likewise attributed to the "Poor Scholar," followed several months later: "Estrella del Norte" (May 1844), "Oh Sing Me That Song" (June 1844), and "Tropic Land" (August 1844). Reid's next effort for Godey's was an ambitious epic, "La Cubana: A Romance of the Isles, which was published in three parts in the February, March, and April 1845 issues. In August 1846, a short story, "Anna Vincent. A Tale," was Reid's final pre-Mexican War contribution to Godey's.

In their biographies of Mayne Reid, neither Charles Ollivant nor Reid's widow mentioned that between 1843 and 1846 the budding young writer also contributed to no fewer than four other Philadelphia journals — Graham's Magazine, Arthur's Magazine, the Ladies Magazine of Literature, Fashion and Fine Arts, and the Ladies' National Magazine. He also contributed at least one piece to The Casket, a Cincinnati, Ohio publication. With the exception of Graham's, even Steele seems to have been unaware of this additional body of work. This may explain why she derided Reid's seemingly meager literary output during this time as being “of slight interest,” adding in an offhanded manner that it dealt mainly with “unrequited love and the beauties of nature.”<sup>35</sup>

Graham's Magazine was similar in many respects to Godey's (it also featured fashion plates, for example). The magazine was started in 1826 as Atkinson's Casket. The name changed in 1839 when George R. Graham bought the monthly and merged it with Burton's Gentleman's Magazine. Like Godey, Graham paid established writers well, in the process attracting luminaries such as James Fenimore Cooper and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Edgar Allan Poe was employed as the magazine's literary editor from 1841 to 1842. Clearly, the young Irish writer was in good company here as well.

“My Star Browed Steed,” the first of Reid's poems for Graham's Magazine, appeared in the November 1843 issue. Its stanzas form an ode to a valiant horse — black, with a white star shape on its forehead — shot to death during some unnamed battle. Although it is an unexceptional piece, it provides evidence that the florid style of writing for which Reid later became famed had formed long before he began his career as a novelist.<sup>36</sup> In August 1844, Graham's published “Song of the Avenger.” A year-and-a-half later, “The Death of Cordova:

A South American Story,” was printed in the February 1846 issue. In September of that same year, for reasons that are unknown, a second story, “The Husband’s Ruse,” was credited to “T. Mayne Reid” rather than the “Poor Scholar.”<sup>37</sup>

For nearly three years the Ladies’ National Magazine, published by C. J. Peterson, counted the “Poor Scholar” as one of its regular contributors. “Havanna de Cuba,” yet one more West Indian poem, appeared in the June 1844 issue. This was followed in August by a short story, “The Flower Girl. A Tale of the Crescent City,” which was no doubt inspired by Reid’s brief residence in New Orleans. Next came another poem, “My Own Dark-Eyed Adele,” in September 1844 and in October, another story set in New Orleans —“The Cousins. A Tale of the Crescent City.” More stories flowed from Reid’s pen: “The Lover’s Trial. An Incident of the West Indies” (March 1845); “The Cobra di Capello. A South American Sketch” (January 1846); “The Guajiro’s Courtship” (March 1846); and “Fight with the Zamboes” (May 1846).<sup>38</sup>

One of Reid’s earliest prose pieces — perhaps the first he ever wrote and almost certainly the first he ever saw published, was “The Belle of Red River,” which found its way into the pages of the June 1844 issue of the Ladies’ Magazine of Literature, Fashion and Fine Arts. It too was attributed to the “Poor Scholar.”<sup>39</sup>

The significance of “The Belle of Red River” is that it demonstrates, nearly a decade before he began churning out novels, Reid had settled on the basic framework for his storytelling that would in time lead to his success. Containing almost all the elements that characterized his work throughout his long career, this romantic adventure begins with a detailed description of the setting; in this case, Natchitoches, Louisiana. In later years Reid’s

ability to set a scene was almost universally recognized as his greatest talent (leading some critics to suggest he might have fared as well or better as a writer of travelogues). His stock characters — a dashing young man whose heart is captured by a youthful, dark-eyed beauty, faithful family members, and a villainous rival who will employ almost any subterfuge to get the girl — are also here and unfortunately, as one-dimensional as any that ever inhabited any of his more extended tales (a deficiency that his most devoted readers seemed not to mind but one that goes a long way toward explaining why his work has failed to stand the test of time). This story also reveals that long before he had much of a body of work to draw upon, the young Irishman was already recycling portions of his own material, as well as the names of characters. A verse from “The Polacca Marque” is here, along with characters called Henri and Adele — two names that turn up time and again in other Reid works.

Whatever its shortcomings, “The Belle of Red River” is full of the sort of romantic intrigue that one might expect to find in a modern motion picture. Indeed, if Reid had been born in 1918 instead of 1818, it would be easy to imagine him making his living as a Hollywood scriptwriter. The hero of the story is twenty-year-old Henri Perrott, a wealthy plantation owner’s son who has fallen in love with a dark-haired beauty, Josepha Carlino — the sixteen-year-old daughter of another prosperous planter. Fortunately for Henri, Josepha not only returns his affection but also agrees to marry him. Both fathers approve of the match. But lurking in the background is the unscrupulous Francis Gaston, a well-to-do merchant and landowner, who also hopes for Josepha’s hand in marriage and will do anything he can to undermine his unsuspecting rival.

When young Perrott leaves Natchitoches for a year’s internship with a New Orleans



law firm, Gaston seizes his opportunity. By some sinister machinations he manages to convince the two lovers that they have betrayed each other and before the year is over, thinking that her betrothed has been wed to someone else, Josepha reluctantly agrees to marry Gaston. However, when the deceitful planter's accomplice, an unemployed English printer named Hunter, is killed in a barroom quarrel in New Orleans and an incriminating letter is found on his body, Henri returns to Natchitoches just in time to unmask Gaston for the scoundrel he is, as he stands at the altar with Josepha. His dastardly deed exposed, Gaston disappears, never to return. In short order the reconciled young lovers wed and everyone lives happily ever after.

“The Flower Girl: A Tale of the Crescent City,”<sup>40</sup> which appeared that same month in the Ladies' National Magazine, was a romantic adventure similar in many respects to “The Belle of Red River.” Set in New Orleans, the hero of this piece is Capitaine Henry August Durand, a wealthy Frenchman, who falls in love and marries Natalie, the charming fifteen-year-old Creole flower girl of the title — but only after saving her from drowning in the Mississippi River and then sailing to Haiti to retrieve from under the noses of a band of armed revolutionaries a fortune Natalie's father left buried at his former plantation! To the more than casual observer, perhaps the most interesting thing about this work, apart from the fact that the main character's name was nearly the same as in “The Belle of Red River” (Henri in one and Henry in the other), is that this time the hero of the story held the rank of “Capitaine” — the same military title Reid took for himself after beginning his career as a novelist (and one to which he was almost certainly not entitled).

A short story, “Spoiling a Painter,” another love story featuring a wealthy heiress and a dashing young admirer (this time an American artist) was published in Arthur’s Magazine in September 1844. “The Marquis, the Tutor, and Their Sisters: or, Combined to Kill a Coquette. A Story of Parisian Life” followed in the December issue. Reid’s third and fourth prose pieces for Arthur’s were “The Mysterious Lady” (March 1846) and “The Duel That Didn’t Come Off” (April 1846). In the September 16, 1846 issue of The Casket, a Cincinnati publication, there appeared a mysterious poem, “The Death of Adele” — a name that would appear from time to time in some of the Irish author’s later pieces.

Although Reid clearly enjoyed some success during this period, insofar as having his work published, there were also long periods of time, oftentimes several months, during which nothing at all appeared under either his own name or any of his known *noms de plume*. Perhaps he authored some anonymous pieces. (A poem entitled “Monologues Among the Mountains,” published in two parts in the January and April issues of Graham’s, closely resembles the Irish author’s style of writing.<sup>41</sup>) But in a letter to his father, written in 1848, Reid complained that the reason his work was not more frequently seen in print was owing to his scruples. “Unfortunately for my purse,” he grumbled, “my genius...was not of that marketable class which prostitutes itself to the low literature of the day.” In order to make ends meet, he confessed, “I found I must descend to the everyday nothings of the daily press.” He was hopeful, however, that his fortunes would improve, writing:

My love for tame literature enabled me to remain poor — aye, even obscure, if you will — though I have the consolation of knowing that there are understandings, and those, too, of a high order, who believe that my capabilities in this field are not surpassed, if equalled, by any writer on this continent. This is the undercurrent of feeling regarding me in the United States; the current, I am happy to say, that runs in the minds of the educated and intelligent. Perhaps in some future day this undercurrent may break

through the surface, and shine the brighter fro having been so long concealed.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps another contributing factor to the dearth of material for months on end was the play Reid was busy writing while living in Philadelphia. Originally called “Fatal Love; or, The Husband,” “Love’s Martyr” — the title he finally settled on — was, recalled Charles Ollivant, “a Tragedy in five parts” that “contains some very striking incidents and fine writing.”<sup>43</sup> His widow later wrote that the play, which was set in Renaissance Venice, was finished at Philadelphia on November 20, 1846<sup>44</sup> but she may have been mistaken about either the date or place. From all indications, by the fall of 1846 Reid was living and working in New York.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE LAND OF ANAHUAC

AWAY over the dark, wild waves of the rolling Atlantic — away beyond the summer islands of the Western Ind — lies a lovely land. Its surface-aspect carries the hue of the emerald; its sky is sapphire; its sun is a globe of gold. It is the land of Anahuac!

— Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers, 1850<sup>1</sup>

The U.S.-Mexican War was the making of Mayne Reid. When hostilities erupted in the spring of 1846, the young Ulsterman had been struggling to make a living as a writer for nearly three years but with limited success. Frustrated and embittered, Reid railed at what he termed the “charlatanism and quackery of the age” that left him no choice but to “descend to the everyday nothings of the daily press” in order to earn his livelihood. Yet he remained hopeful. In a letter to his father in Ireland, he expressed equal amounts of disappointment and optimism, writing:

[In Philadelphia] I devoted myself to literature, and for a period of two or three years earned a scanty but honourable subsistence with my pen. My genius, unfortunately for my purse, was not of that marketable class which prostitutes itself to the low literature of the day. My love for tame literature enabled me to remain poor — aye, even obscure, if you will — though I have the consolation of knowing that there are understandings, and those, too, of a high order, who believe that my capabilities in this field are not surpassed, if equalled [sic], by any writer on this continent. This is the undercurrent of feeling regarding me in the United States; the current, I am happy to say, that runs in the minds of the educated and intelligent. Perhaps in some future day this undercurrent may break through the surface, and shine the brighter for having been so long concealed.<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the war, although he could not have known it at the time, Reid was much closer to the success that had so far eluded him. His wartime experiences, which he

chronicled as a correspondent for a New York newspaper, became the basis for his first novel. He also gained the title he would use for the rest of his life: “Captain Mayne Reid” (although he never actually ranked above First Lieutenant). Regrettably, he also acquired a serious wound, one that never completely healed and would have a deleterious effect on his health for the remainder of his relatively long life.

The war between the United States and Mexico began in May 1846. Its root cause was the annexation of Texas by the United States. Formerly, Texas was a part of Mexico, but in 1836, following a bloody revolution it won its independence — which for nine years the Mexican government stubbornly refused to recognize. In 1845, when the U.S. Congress extended an offer of annexation, most “Texians,” as the inhabitants of the Lone Star republic styled themselves, were happy to accept the proposition, which is what most of them had wanted all along. Almost simultaneously, they rejected a belated offer by Mexico to acknowledge their sovereignty, largely because it was conditional upon Texas agreeing not to join itself to another nation. Its national pride wounded, Mexico threatened war. Further exacerbating an already tense situation was a Texian claim to the Rio Grande as the boundary between the two nations. Yet, as Mexico rightfully pointed out, the Rio Nueces, nearly two hundred miles further north, was the traditional boundary. Thus, while annexation was at the heart of the conflict, the spark that ignited the powder keg was the subsequent sending of U.S. troops to the Rio Grande by President Polk to occupy the so-called “disputed territory,” a move that triggered (some say purposely) a Mexican attack on the north side of the river. This, in turn, led to a Congressional declaration of war.<sup>3</sup>

In light of Mayne Reid’s self-proclaimed interest in martial affairs, we may imagine

that the aspiring young writer relished the early reports of the war, in which General Zachary Taylor's forces — outnumbered, undersupplied, and fighting on unfamiliar terrain — won two major battles and occupied Matamoros. We might also assume that like many young “bo hoys” Reid longed to participate in the fray before it was over but curiously, although he would in time serve, the youthful Irishman was not among the thousands of eager enlistees who rushed to arms at the first call for volunteers. The cause for this delay is puzzling and one that Reid seems never to have addressed in any of his writing, published or otherwise.

Instead of donning a uniform, Reid spent the summer of 1846 at Newport, Rhode Island, which, as he later observed, was then fast becoming “a fashionable resort in summer for sea bathing.” As a correspondent for the *New York Herald*<sup>4</sup> the young Irishman stayed at the Ocean House, a tall, white, five-story wooden edifice he later praised in his novel The Child Wife as “that most hospitable of American hostelries.”<sup>5</sup> The reports he sent to his employers were mostly light reading — short essays that focused on Newport's social scene. It was the sort of drivel that he complained about to his father. Perhaps because he did not wish to have his real name attached to such work, Reid began at this time to try out a new *nom de plume*, “Ecolier,” a French version of his original pen name, “The Poor Scholar.”

Thus while shiploads of hastily trained volunteers landed at Brazos Santiago near the mouth of the Rio Grande, and languished in rattlesnake infested camps along the banks of that slow-moving stream, Reid was taking his ease on the balcony of one of Newport's most elegant hotels and penning articles such as “Life in the Ocean — A Tall Dinner,” which appeared on the front page of the August 15 issue of the *Herald*. It was typical of the sort of frivolous throwaway prose, which, if we believe the young writer's protestations,

circumstances forced him to produce at this time. “Why is it,” the youthful journalist complained, “that none of the heroes or heroines [of love stories] are ever represented as falling in love over a good dinner?” Was it, he asked, because “eating [was] considered anti-romantic?” In answer to this seemingly vexing if vapid question, he replied:

Nonsense. We have seen sly looks from behind a smoking sirloin, and burning glances over a plate of roast beef, that would utterly annihilate such a theory; and for our own part, we make more love during dinner than at any other hour in the day. It cannot be helped, for the unconscious waiter seats you next to, or perhaps, opposite a lovely creature, whose alabaster arm and tiny fingers, gracefully playing with a silver fork would call forth the admiration of an anchorite. How can you help looking up — you must speak to the waiter — and your gaze at last meets that of a pair of ebony eyes burning like a basilisk’s.<sup>6</sup>

Reid’s whereabouts during the fall of 1846 are shrouded in uncertainty. We can be reasonably sure he departed Newport at the end of the “season,” arriving in New York City on or before September 1.<sup>7</sup> There, he is supposed to have found a position with another newspaper, The Spirit of the Times — “A Chronicle of the Turf, Agriculture, Field Sports, Literature, and the Stage,” the offices of which were located at “1 Barclay Street, two doors from Broadway, directly opposite Astor House.” Yet none of the Spirit’s issues between September and December 1846 contain any writing either attributed to Reid or recognizable as his work. This suggests that either he was employed in some behind-the-scenes capacity such as associate editor,<sup>8</sup> that he wrote anonymously, or that he did not stay in New York. As observed in the preceding chapter, his widow claimed he was in Philadelphia when, on November 20, 1846, he completed the script for a play, a melodrama called “Love’s Martyr.”<sup>9</sup> Yet no matter where Reid spent the closing months of the year, it is unlikely he could have guessed that he was on the threshold of the greatest adventure of his life and that furthermore, he was only three short years away from the beginning of the long and fruitful

career for which he longed.

As 1846 drew to an end, the governor of New York, in response to a federal levy, issued a call for a regiment of volunteers to serve for the duration of the war. This time, the young Irishman responded. On November 23, 1846, three days after he reportedly put the finishing touches to his play in Philadelphia, the aspiring young playwright “flung down his pen” and, apparently without any hesitation, “tendered his services” in Col. Ward B. Burnett’s Second Regiment of New York Infantry, also known as the First Regiment of New York Volunteers for the War.<sup>10</sup> Reid was initially attached to Captain Stanley S. Gallagher’s Company F, with the rank of second lieutenant. On December 3 the entire regiment was accepted into federal service at Fort Hamilton, a heavily fortified citadel that still stands guard at the entrance to New York harbor. Lately improved by Army engineer and future Confederate general Robert E. Lee, the then-twenty-year-old bastion sat on the southwest shore of Brooklyn, where the Verrazano Narrows Bridge overlooks it today. Eight days after being mustered into service, the young officer’s commission, to date from November 28, was issued in Albany.<sup>11</sup>

On November 25, at the time the New York regiment was first being formed and only two days after Reid joined it, Gen. Winfield Scott, a seasoned veteran of the War of 1812 and several Indian wars who had been selected by the Polk administration to lead an invasion of central Mexico, arrived in New York on his way to the front. Not surprisingly, the presence in the city of “Old Fuss and Feathers,” as the spit-and-polish Scott was called by his troops, caused a sensation, which in all likelihood helped fill the ranks of the regiment with men whose patriotic sentiments were stirred by the news that the very man who would lead them



into battle was in their midst. During his brief sojourn, Scott wrote to General Taylor, informing him of the invasion plan, adding that he would need to requisition some of Taylor's troops. On November 30 the old soldier sailed for New Orleans<sup>12</sup> and we may imagine that as his ship passed through the Narrows past Fort Hamilton, Reid and his fellow New Yorkers cheered him as he passed.

The fact that Reid was a British subject had no bearing on his acceptability for service in the United States Army. According to one study, forty-seven percent of the troops then serving on the Rio Grande were European immigrants, with the majority being Irish or German.<sup>13</sup> As for the New York regiment, one recruit reported that of its eight hundred or so "rank and file," there were only three hundred Americans. "The balance," he observed, were "Dutch, Irish, French, English, Poles, Swedes, Chinese, Indian, &c." Furthermore, he added, "There were not one hundred men and officers ever born in the city of New York in the whole regiment." The same soldier remarked that on the whole, the organization was composed of "smart, active men." Unfortunately, he complained, the regiment also included "about two hundred totally unfit for service." This number, he observed, was made up in part of "rejected boys, men who were diseased and broken down, [and] some [who were] lame and blind in one eye." Worst of all, this number also included several street-hardened toughs — "'gentlemen' from the Tombs, ragamuffins from Blackwell's Island, Alms Houses, and a sprinkling of Five Pointers," unsavory characters who had been allowed to enlist solely to make up the required number of enlistees.<sup>14</sup>

Certainly, the soldier quoted above had every reason to question the suitability of these doubtful recruits. The "Tombs" was the term New Yorkers used to refer to their

distinctive city jail, built in 1838. Long, narrow Blackwell's Island (now Roosevelt Island), which lay between Queens and Manhattan, was infamous for its penitentiary and lunatic asylum, built in 1832 and 1839 respectively. (An almshouse would be added in 1847, while the New York regiment was away, fighting in Mexico.) Five Points, in lower Manhattan, was a particularly notorious working-class neighborhood located in the city's Sixth Ward — a place where recently arrived Irish immigrants, free blacks, and other social outcasts were thrown together in a rough and tumble world marked by poverty, crime, and misery.<sup>15</sup>

The company to which Reid was assigned may have included some of the so-called "Five-Pointers," who, owing to an anti-Irish sentiment prevailing in the United States at that time, were probably unable to find employment elsewhere and happy to have a private's pay of \$7 per month.<sup>16</sup> Although they and Reid originated from the same country, there is no reason to believe that any bond of fraternity existed between the young lieutenant and these men. Whereas Reid was a Protestant, it is likely that most (if not all) of the Irishmen in his company were Roman Catholics. Furthermore, Reid was well educated, the product of a relatively well-heeled family, and had come to America on a lark. In contrast, at least some of his men were almost certainly illiterate peasant farmers who had fled Ireland to escape starvation, a life of grinding poverty, or both. All this, added to the enmity that seems to naturally exist between officers and enlisted men in all wars, made it highly unlikely that there was any love lost between them.

To encourage enrollments, new recruits were promised a "bonus" of \$21, which was in fact an advance of three month's pay. Only a few enlistees actually received this money testified one disappointed soldier, who charged with some justification that enlistments were

being procured under false pretenses. Reportedly, promises of “‘roast beef and two dollars a day,’ ‘plenty of whiskey,’ ‘golden Jesuses,’ pretty Mexican gals, [and] ‘safe investments, quick returns’” were also held out as rewards for service. The same man also charged that while the regiment was being formed at Fort Hamilton, the City of New York appropriated \$5,000 for the “aid and comfort” of the troops but that none of the enlisted men ever benefited from this money. A pamphlet published after the war, which was highly critical of the way the regiment was organized and administered, suggested that Colonel Burnett either pocketed the money or that it was spent only on the officers.<sup>17</sup>

If Reid was not already working for The Spirit of the Times, he most certainly entered into an agreement with the paper after joining the ranks, to act as a correspondent reporting on the progress of the war in Mexico. It is partly through these reports, entitled “Sketches by a Skirmisher,” that we are able to follow the young officer’s military career. These “sketches” also proved useful to Reid himself, providing him not only with extra income at the time of their publication but also with a wealth of material he would later adapt into short stories and most importantly, his first novel.

Periodically during December 1846 and January 1847, brief items about the formation of the New York regiment appeared in city newspapers. Some seem to have been aimed at boosting enlistments. One story in The New York Herald announced that new recruits could expect to be sent directly to Fort Hamilton, “where good beef and hot coffee is plenty as rocks,” adding that in Mexico, an even better selection of fare awaited them. There, soldiers would “have a choice of fruit, green corn, and tortillas.” Treating the war as if it were some sort of frolic, the article’s writer concluded that going off to war in Mexico was

manifestly “better than spending the cold winter in idleness in New York.”<sup>18</sup>

A later story reported that the regiment was “now nearly completed and most of the companies have gone to Fort Hamilton previous to their departure for the seat of war in Mexico.” Readers were reminded, “There are still a few vacancies left, for filling up the ranks.” Calling them a “fine body of men,” the paper took especial note of Company F, announcing that its officers included “Captain Gallagher, 1st Lieut. W. Foray, [and] 2nd Lieutenants Charles Brower and Mayne Reid.” The aspiring young writer was no doubt flattered by the Herald’s description of him as “the well-known poet, whose lyrics &c. have gained him numerous admirers.”<sup>19</sup>

Not surprisingly, the newspapers failed to mention some of the less pleasant aspects of soldiering. One was a swift spread of lice among the New York regiment’s enlisted men. This problem, said one soldier, resulted directly from the “filthy condition” of several volunteers whose personal hygiene left much to be desired. In close quarters at Fort Hamilton, it was only a matter of days before nearly the entire regiment was bug-ridden. It was no wonder then, that on December 16, when new uniforms were distributed to the regiment, most of the troops rejoiced, grateful to have clothing that was not infested with “vermin.” One man joked that the volunteers’ old clothes were so lousy that as soon as they were thrown to the ground, the discarded items appeared to walk away under their own power.<sup>20</sup>

The issuance of the regiment’s new uniforms was very likely the occasion for the earliest known photograph of Reid — a daguerreotype that dates from the war. Showing the twenty-eight-year-old lieutenant wearing what appears to be newly issued garb, it was used

to illustrate a story of his life published years later by his widow. At the time of the U.S.-Mexican War, photography was in its infancy and daguerreotypes, photographic likenesses fixed on small copper plates coated with silver, were all the rage. In mid-nineteenth century New York City, all the best studios were located on Broadway. Chief among these was Matthew Brady's "Daguerrean Miniature Gallery," which was located at Broadway and Fulton Street.<sup>21</sup> Whether Reid's portrait was made at Brady's or at one of the studios of his several competitors is uncertain.

Wherever the image was created, the photographer must have asked Reid to sit down and angle his body toward the right. His head, however, is turned toward the camera, which he faces with a confident gaze — almost a stare. A forage cap sits atop his head at a rakish angle, with the leather visor covering most of his forehead. The tightly fitted uniform jacket's high collar covers his entire throat and a strap of some kind is thrown over his left shoulder. We see that he has already cultivated the mustache and "imperial" that he would wear for the rest of his life. His hair, which he generally kept long in later life, was shorter then, barely covering the tops of his ears. It is the sort of photograph that a proud young man would send as a keepsake to his sweetheart or parents. If Reid had the former at this time, her identity has been lost to history. In all likelihood, this particular photo was mailed across the ocean to his family in Ireland.<sup>22</sup>

During the six weeks the Second New York spent at Fort Hamilton, it appears that very little effort was made by the officers to prepare their men for war. Too often, complained one soldier, instead of being drilled, officers and men alike went "drinking, carousing, and visiting New York." In addition, many officers seemed to have little concern

for the general welfare of the enlisted men under their command. One noteworthy exception, recalled the same recruit, was Lt. Col. Charles H. Baxter, who was fated to fall at Chapultepec. There were others, he added, who also commanded respect<sup>23</sup> but whether Reid was among them or not is unknown.

While waiting to ship out, Reid must have been gratified by the publication of a short story, “A ‘Love’s Sacrifice,’” which appeared in the January 1, 1847 issue of the New York Illustrated Magazine of Literature and Art. It was a love story, similar to others he had written in the past, except that it was set in Mexico, “previous to the Revolution,” at Tacubuya<sup>24</sup> — a village located in the Valley of Mexico, a region in which the New Yorkers would be engaged in battle in only a few months.

On January 9, 1847, part of the regiment sailed for Mexico aboard the ship *Catherine* and the bark *Isabella*. The balance was transported to the seat of war aboard a second bark, the *Jubilee* and a brig, the *Empire*, which carried Company K —Reid’s company, and all or part of two others. Colonel Burnett also traveled aboard the *Empire*. During the voyage, recalled a veteran, there was “plenty of seasickness,” a common malady among soldiers unaccustomed to ocean travel. The unaffected may have spent their time fishing. Porpoises, oftentimes swimming alongside ships at sea, may have provided an amusing diversion. “After a passage of nineteen days,” remembered one man, the regiment arrived at Brazos Santiago, where General Taylor had established a military depot near the mouth of the Rio Grande. When the regiment’s officers went ashore to report for duty, the New Yorkers were told not to delay but to proceed at once to Tampico, which had been captured by the United States Navy in November 1846. They arrived after a voyage lasting three days.<sup>25</sup>



Figure 11. Lieut. Mayne Reid, 1847. From Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures (London: Greening & Co., Ltd., 1900).

At Tampico, General Scott was busy assembling a portion of an invading army that would eventually number some 10,000 troops.<sup>26</sup> The vessels bearing the New York regiment lay at anchor for several days. None of the enlisted men were allowed ashore. At length, the regiment received orders for Lobos Island,<sup>27</sup> where the South Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, and the First and Second Pennsylvania regiments were also gathering.<sup>28</sup> In a reminiscence of his military adventures, composed much later in life, Reid recalled the place where he first set foot on Mexican soil:

Lobos Islet lies off the Vera Cruz coast, opposite the town of Tuxpan, and about two miles. It is of circular form, and if I remember rightly, about a half-mile in diameter. Its availability as an anchorage comes from a surrounding of coral reefs, with a gap in its northern side that admits ships into water the breakers cannot disturb...

We found the island covered all over with a thick growth of chaparral; it could not be called forest, as the tallest of the trees was but some fifteen or twenty feet in height. The species was varied, most of them of true tropical character, and amongst them was one that attracted general attention as being the "India-rubber tree." Whether it was the true *Siphonica elastica* I cannot say, though likely it was that or an allied species.

The peculiarity of this isle, and one making it attractive to contrabandista and filibusters, is that fresh water is found on it. Near its summit center, not over six feet above the ocean level, is a well or hole, artificially dug out in the sand, some six feet deep. The water in this rises and falls with the tide, a law of hydraulics not well understood. Its taste is slightly brackish, but for all that was greatly relished by us — possibly from having been so long upon the cask-water of the transport ships. Near this well we found an old musket and loading pike, rust-eaten, and a very characteristic souvenir of the buccaneers; also the unburied skeleton of a man, who may have been one of their victims.<sup>29</sup>

Scott's purpose in landing the troops at Lobos Island, Reid explained, "was to give these new regiments an opportunity for drilling, such as the time might permit, before making descent upon the Mexican coast." However, he added, "there was no drill ground there, as we saw as soon as we set foot on shore — not enough of open space to parade a single regiment in line, unless it were formed along the ribbon of beach." Consequently, wrote Reid in an uncharacteristically straightforward style, one of the New Yorkers' first



tasks upon arrival was to create a space in which to drill and in due course there were “hundreds of uniformed men plying axe and chopper, hewing and cutting, even the officers with their sabres slashing away at the chaparral of Lobos Island.” It was a scene, he recalled, “of great activity, and not without interludes of amusement, as now and then a snake, scorpion, or lizard, dislodged from its lair and attempting escape, drew a group of relentless enemies around it.” Eventually, he concluded, “enough surface was cleared for camp and parade-ground,” and in short order “up went soldiers’ bell tents and officers’ marquees, in company rows and regimental, each regiment occupying its allotted ground.” Reid’s memories of Lobos Island, like many of his Mexican War experiences, would eventually find their way into some of his works of fiction, most notably The Rifle Rangers, Reid’s first successful novel and the only one that was unquestionably based, at least in part, on actual events.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it is interesting to compare the author’s somewhat plainly-written reminiscence of Lobos Island with the more imaginative prose he used to describe the same event, i.e., the clearing away of brush and the setting up of camp, in The Rifle Rangers:

After calling at Brazos Santiago, we were ordered to land upon the island of Lobos, fifty miles north of Vera Cruz. This was to be our “drill rendezvous.” We soon reached the island. Detachments from several regiments debarked together; the jungle was attacked; and in a few hours the green grove had disappeared, and in its place stood the white pyramids of canvas with their floating flags. It was the work of a day. When the sun rose over Lobos it was a desert isle, thickly covered with a jungle of mangrove, manzanel, and icaco trees, green as an emerald. How changed the scene! When the moon looked down upon this same islet it seemed as if a warlike city had sprung suddenly out of the sea, with a navy at anchor in front of its bannered walls!<sup>31</sup>

An exceptionally observant man, Reid’s recollections of Lobos Island include not only human activity but also plants and animals. In later life, detailed descriptions of a setting’s flora and fauna became a hallmark of his work. One of his most vivid Lobos Island

memories was of a chameleon, which sat on the ridgepole of his tent for several days, not moving. Seemingly “feeding on air,” the reptile’s ability to remain in the same position for an extended period of time amazed the observant young lieutenant so much that he remained impressed nearly four decades later. He also remembered having “trouble with insects, scorpions, and little crabs,”<sup>32</sup> working these creatures into a passage from The Rifle Rangers, in which he described his responsibilities as an officer:

These regiments were all “raw;” and my duty, with others, consisted in “licking them into shape.” It was drill, drill, from morning till night; and, by early tattoo, I was always glad to crawl into my tent and go to sleep — such sleep as a man can get among scorpions, lizards, and soldier-crabs; for the little islet seemed to have within its boundaries a specimen of every reptile that came safely out of the ark.<sup>33</sup>

Although Reid failed to mention it in any of his writing, General Scott, aboard the *Massachusetts*, arrived on February 21 at Lobos Island, where he learned to his dismay that many of the troops he expected to find there were still *en route*. To make matters worse, there was an outbreak of smallpox among three companies of the Second Pennsylvania regiment, who were kept aboard a ship anchored offshore to keep them from spreading the disease to others.<sup>34</sup> Also missing were the surfboats on which Scott was relying to carry his men from ship to shore. These had been specially constructed in sets of three, so as not to take up too much room on the decks of the transports that were bringing them to Mexico. The bottom boat of each set measured forty feet in length and twelve feet in width. The other two were successively smaller in size so that together the three formed a “nest.” Looking back on the event after the passage of nearly forty years, Reid recalled in error that the boats were “of two sizes” instead of three. He was also mistaken when he wrote that the larger boats were “built to carry two hundred men, the smaller half this number.” In truth, each one carried no

more than fifty soldiers, in addition to a crew of eight sailors. There is no reason, however, to disbelieve his recollection “that there had not been time to paint them, all appearing in that pale slate colour known to painters as the priming coat.” Furthermore, he remembered, none of the boats had any decking, “only the thwarts.” Although his figures were slightly off, Reid was close to the mark when he added that General Scott had “made requisition for 150 of these boats, though only sixty-nine arrived at Anton Lizardo in time to serve the purpose they were intended for.”<sup>35</sup>

The day following Scott’s arrival was Washington’s Birthday, a holiday which was then more widely and exuberantly celebrated in the United States than it is today. Unbeknownst to the men on Lobos Island, it was also on that day that General Taylor and his troops were battling Santa Anna’s army near a place called Buena Vista in Northern Mexico. In the end the conflict, although one of the bloodiest of the war, would result in a victory for the man whose troops referred to him as “Old Rough and Ready.” The outcome would also make Taylor a war hero, helping him to win the presidency in the election of 1848. But while their comrades-in-arms were fighting for their lives near Saltillo, the men encamped on Lobos Island were enjoying themselves — eating, drinking, and taking their ease in myriad ways. In The Rifle Rangers, Reid narrated a Washington’s Birthday celebration that took place on Lobos Island in the tent of a “Major Twing,” a character whose surname at least seems to a derivation of the name of Gen. David E. Twiggs. While in all likelihood the celebration actually occurred, General Twiggs could not possibly have been in attendance. He did not arrive at Lobos until February 26.<sup>36</sup> In any case, Reid’s description of the event offers an interesting view into the lives of United States Army officers in Mexico:

After tattoo we set out for the major's marquee, which lay near the centre of the islet, in a coppice of caoutchoue trees. We had no difficulty finding it, guided by the jingling of glasses and the mingling of many voices in boisterous laughter.

As we came near, we could perceive that the marquee had been enlarged by tucking up the flaps in front, with the addition of a fly stretched over an extra ridge-pole. Several pieces of rough plank, spirited away from the ship, resting upon empty bread-barrels, formed the table. Upon this might be recognized every variety of bottles, glasses, and cups. Open boxes of sardines, piles of ship-biscuits, and segments of cheese filled the intervening spaces. Freshly-drawn corks and glistening fragments of lead were strewed around, while a number of dark, conical objects under the table told that not a few champagne bottles were already "down among the dead men."

On each side of the table was a row of colonels, captains, subalterns, and doctors seated without regard to rank or age, according the order in which they had "dropped in." There were also some naval officers, and a sprinkling of strange, half-sailor-looking men, the skippers of transport brigs, steamboats, &c.; for Twing was a thorough republican in his entertainments; besides, the *day* levelled all distinctions.<sup>37</sup>

Reid's comment about the "republican" leveling of rank distinctions is an important one because such sentiments are yet another distinctive characteristic of the novels he later wrote. Although it is likely that his Ulster Presbyterian upbringing already inclined him to look with disfavor upon nineteenth century Britain's rigid class system, the young man's experiences in North America clearly reinforced and amplified such views. Yet if his description of the officers' Washington's Birthday feast is accurate, it was not entirely "republican" in nature. Among the enlisted men of the Second Pennsylvania regiment, wrote one man: "The principles of Temperance were strictly observed and we evinced our admiration for the 'Father of his County' by feasting upon dried apples and salt mackeral [sic]." Cooking softened the latter and while they "were edible," remembered another soldier, "it was perhaps difficult to distinguish whether they were stewed apples or lumpy tar."<sup>38</sup>

Although the wait for tardy troops and transports must have seemed interminable to General Scott, the army's stay at Lobos Island was relatively brief. By the beginning of March, the anxious general had enough of the men and equipment he felt were needed to

carry out his plans and so, after “a fortnight or so,” recalled Reid, during which time the “several regiments of green soldiers” learned “the ways of camp and campaigning life,” they were ordered by Scott to abandon their island encampment and join the invasion fleet, which “lay at Anton Lizardo, each day receiving increase from new arrivals.” There, some 15 miles south of Vera Cruz, the place where the troops were to be landed, they bided their time aboard a troop transport until “all that were expected had come to anchor there”<sup>39</sup>

Reid thought the planned attack was brilliant but he could not bring himself to believe that General Scott, for whom he seems to have had little regard, could have masterminded it.

In his memoirs he wrote:

While sweeping up the coast, I can perfectly remember what my own feelings were, and how much I admired the strategy of the movement. Who should get credit for it I cannot tell. But I can hardly think that Winfield Scott’s was the head that planned this enterprise, my after experience with this man guiding me to regard him as a soldier incapable — in short, such as late severe critics have called him, “fuss and feathers.” “The hasty plate of soup” was then ringing around his name. Whoever planned it is deserving of great praise. Its ingenuity, misleading our enemy, lay in making the latter believe that we intended to make landing at Anton Lizardo. Hence all his disposable force that could be spared from the garrison of Vera Cruz was there to oppose us. And when our ships hastily drew in anchor and went straight for Vera Cruz, as hawks at unprotected quarry, these detached garrison troops saw the mistake they had made. The coast road from Vera Cruz to Anton Lizardo is cut by numerous streams, all bridgeless. To cross them safely needed taking many a roundabout route — so many that the swiftest horse could not reach Vera Cruz so soon as our slowest ship, and we were there before them.<sup>40</sup>

On March 7, aboard the *Petrita*, one of the nine steam-powered vessels that accompanied the fleet (Reid recalled in error that there were only “two or three”), General Scott and Commodore Conner, in company with several staff officers, steamed within firing range of San Juan d’Ulloa, the Old Spanish fortress guarding the harbor at Vera Cruz. Their purpose was to see for themselves Collado Beach, the landing site proposed by Conner,

which lay opposite the island of Sacrificios. Of course the Mexicans inside the fort could not resist such an inviting target and at least one round fired from the fort came perilously close. One writer has pointed out that a successful shot might have seriously altered the course of history, for on board the tiny craft were men “who would become famous as the future leaders of the Civil War: Captain Robert E. Lee, Lieutenant George G. Meade, Major Joseph E. Johnston, and Lieutenant P. G. T. Beauregard.”<sup>41</sup>

Apparently satisfied with the results of his reconnoiter, Scott ordered the invasion to get underway and “at length,” as Reid remembered many years later, “the final preparations were made for descent upon the land of Montezuma, and all we now waited for was a favouring wind.” Indeed, the assault would have begun on March 8, if it were not for a threatening norther, which caused a postponement.<sup>42</sup> On March 9, the day the landing finally took place, recalled Reid, the weather was perfect. In his memoirs, which were included in both the biographies credited to his wife, he recollected further:

The day came when the wind proved all that was wanted. A light southerly breeze, blowing up coast almost direct for Vera Cruz, had declared itself before sunrise, and by earliest daybreak all was activity. Alongside each transport ship, as also some of the war vessels, would be seen one or more of the great lead-coloured boats already alluded to, with streams of men backing down the man-ropes and taking seat in them. These men were soldiers in uniform and full marching order. Knapsacks strapped on, haversacks filled and slung, cartouche box on hip, and gun in hand. In perfect order was the transfer made from ship to boat, and, when in the boats, each company had its own place as on a parade-ground. Where it was a boat that held two companies, one occupied the forward thwarts, the other the stern, their four officers — captain, first lieutenant, second and brevet — conforming to their respective places.

But there were other than soldiers in the boat, each having its complement of sailors from the ships.

A gun from the ship that carried our commander-in-chief gave the signal for departure from Punta Anton Lizardo, and while its boom was still reverberating, ship after ship was seen to spread sail; then, one after another, after careful pilotage, slipped out through the roadway of the coral reef, steaming up coast straight for Vera Cruz, the doomed city.<sup>43</sup>

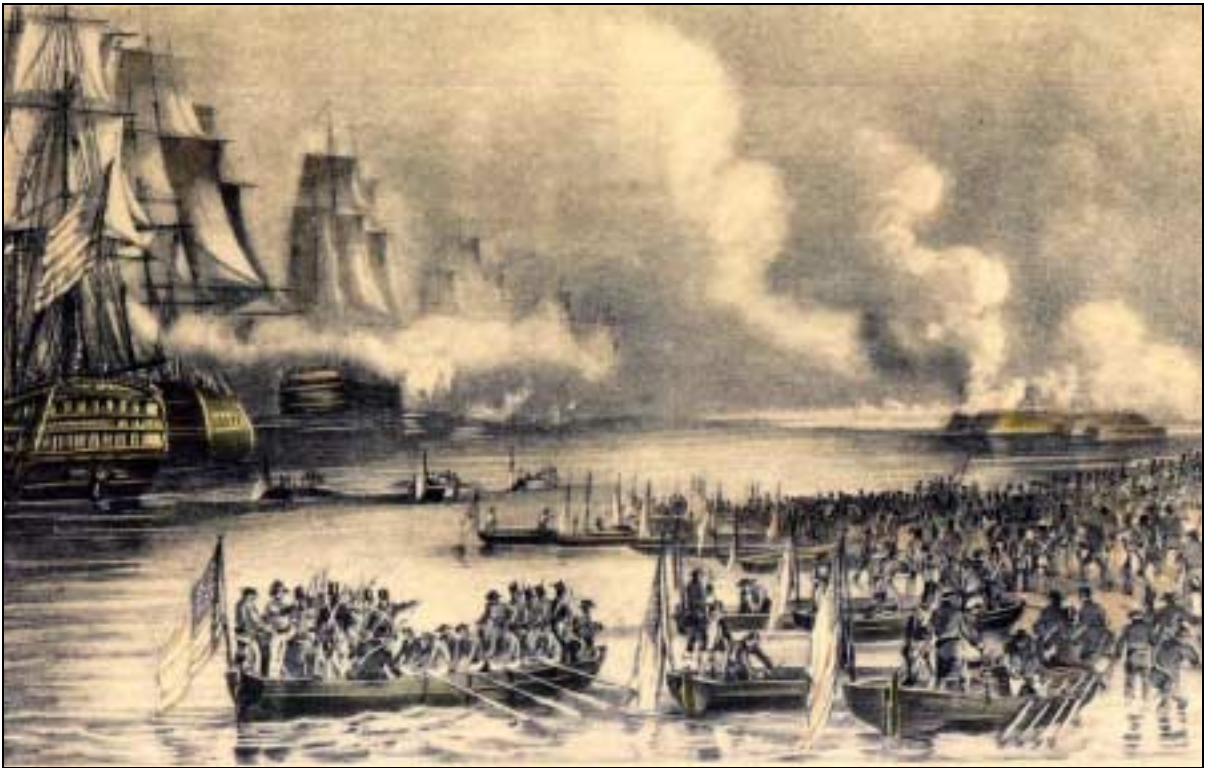


Figure 12. The landing at Vera Cruz. From the collection of the Descendants of Mexican War Veterans, since donated to the National Park Service, Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, Brownsville, Texas.

By late afternoon on March 9, the young lieutenant and his comrades found themselves within sight of Vera Cruz. With the extinct volcano Orizaba looming large in the distance behind the city, the scene must have filled the soldiers with varying degrees of excitement and dread. All around them was a vast array of vessels bringing the invasion force to bear on the shore opposite Sacrificios. Years later, Reid vividly remembered his first sight of the walled city. “*La Villa Rica de Vera Cruz* (the rich city of the True Cross),” he reminisced, “presents a picture unique and imposing” when “viewed from the sea.” It brought to mind, he thought, “the vignette engravings of cities in Goldsmith’s old geography, from which I got my earliest lessons about foreign lands.” It was an apt comparison, wrote the Irish-born ex-soldier, for “just as they were bordered by the engraver’s lines, so is Vera Cruz embraced by an enceinte of wall.” Summoning the powers of description for which his novels were noted, he recollected:

Roughly speaking, its ground plan is a half circle, having the sea shore for diameter, this not more than three-quarters of a mile in length. There is no beach or strand intervening between the houses and the sea, the former overlooking the latter, and protected from its wash by a breakwater buttress.

The architecture is altogether unlike that of an American or English seaport of similar size. Substantially massive, yet full of graceful lines, most of the private dwellings are of the Hispano-Moriscan order, flat-roofed and parapetted, while the public buildings, chiefly the churches, display a variety of domes, towers and turrets worthy of Inigo Jones or Christopher Wren.

From near the centre of the semicircle a pier or mole, El Muelle, projects about a hundred yards into the sea, and on this all visiting voyagers have to make landing, as at its inner end stands the custom house (*aduana*). Fronting this on an islet, or rather a reef of coral rocks, stands the fortress castle of San Juan d’Ulloa, off shore about a quarter of a mile. It is a low structure with the usual caramite coverings and crenated parapet, surmounted by a watch and flag-tower.

The anchorage near it is neither good nor ample, better being found under the lee of Sacrificios, a small treeless islet lying south of it nearly a league, and, luckily for us, beyond the range of Ulloa’s guns, as also those of a fort at the southern extremity of the city.

Hundreds of ships may ride there in safety, though not so many nor so safe as at



Anton Lizardo. Perhaps never so many, nor of such varied kind, were brought to under it as on March 9th, 1847.<sup>44</sup>

Looking back on that day nearly forty years later, Reid concluded that “the capture of Vera Cruz was an event alike creditable to the army and navy of the United States, for both bore part in it; and creditable not only on account of the courage displayed, but the strategic skill.” Furthermore, he observed, it was “one of those *coups* in which boldness was backed up by intelligence even to cunning, this last especially shown in the way we effected a landing.”<sup>45</sup> This undertaking, he remembered, was accomplished as follows:

We did not aim to enter the port nor come within range of its defending batteries, least of all those of San Juan d’Ulloa. The islet of Sacrificios, about a league from the latter, whose southern end affords sheltering anchorage, was the point we aimed at; and there our miscellaneous flotilla became concentrated, some of the ships dropping anchor, others remaining adrift. Then the beaching boats, casting off hawsers, were rowed straight for the shore, some half mile off. A shoal strand it was, where a boat’s keel touched bottom long before reaching dry land. That in which I was did so, and well do I remember how myself and comrades at once sprang over the gunwales, and, waist deep, waded out to the sand-strewn shore.

There we encountered no enemy — nothing to obstruct us. All the antagonism we met with or saw was a stray shot or two from some long-range guns mounted on the parapet of the most southerly fort of the city. But we now had our feet sure planted on the soil of Mexico.<sup>46</sup>

In his novel The Rifle Rangers, which was written when Reid was thirty-two and only two years after the end of the war, the aspiring author described the landing at Vera Cruz much more expressively than in his memoirs, which were composed at age sixty-four. In comparison to the rather dry account he penned in his twilight years, the earlier version is a brilliant example of the sort of florid prose for which he quickly became celebrated:

Meanwhile, the ships let fall their anchors, with a plunge, and a rasping, and a rattle. The sails came down upon the yards; and sailors swung themselves into the great surf boats, and mixed with the soldiers, and seized the oars.

Then the blades were suddenly and simultaneously dropped on the surface of the wave, a naval officer in each boat directing the movements of the oarsmen.

And the boats pulled out nearer, and by an *échelon* movement took their places in

line. Light ships of war were thrown upon our flanks, to cover the descent by a crossfire. No enemy had yet appeared, and all eyes were turned landward with fiery expectation. Bounding hearts waited impatiently for the signal.

The report of a single gun was at length heard from the ship of the commander-in-chief; and, as if by one impulse, a thousand oars struck the water, and flung up the spray upon their broad blades. A hundred boats leaped forward simultaneously. The powerful stroke was repeated, and propelled them with lightning speed. Now was the exciting race, the regatta of war! The Dardan rowers would have been distanced here.

On! on! with the velocity of tile wind, over the blue waves, through the snowy surf — on!

And now we neared the shore, and officers sprang to their feet, and stood with their swords drawn; and soldiers half sat, half crouched, clutching their muskets. And the keels gritted upon the gravelly bed; and, at the signal, a thousand men, in one plunge, flung themselves into the water, and dashed madly through the surf. Thousands followed, holding their cartridge boxes breast high; and blades were glancing, and bayonets gleaming, and banners waving; and under glancing blades, and gleaming bayonets, and waving banners, the dark mass rushed high upon the beach.

Then came a cheer, loud, long, and exulting. It pealed along the whole line, uttered from five thousand throats, and answered by twice that number from the anchored ships. It echoed along the shores, and back from the distant battlements.

A colour-sergeant, springing forward, rushed up the steep sides of a sandhill, and planted his flag upon its snowy ridge.

As the well-known banner swung out upon the breeze, another cheer, wild and thrilling, ran along the line; a hundred answering flags were hauled up through the fleet; the ships of war saluted with full broadsides; and the guns of San Juan, now for the first time waking from their lethargic silence, poured forth their loudest thunder.

The sun was just setting as our column commenced its advance inward. After winding for a short distance through the defiles of the sandhills, we halted for the night, our left wing resting upon the beach.

The soldiers bivouacked without tents sleeping upon their arms, with the soft sand for their couch and the cartridge box for their pillow.<sup>47</sup>

Within three days of the landing at Collado Beach, Scott's troops had completely encircled Vera Cruz, cutting it off from reinforcements. By March 21 a ring of U.S. batteries located a half mile from the walled city were ready to commence firing. The following day, when General Morales, commandant of the Vera Cruz garrison, rejected Scott's call for the city to surrender, the guns began a steady barrage, hoping to bring about a capitulation. At the same time, Commodore Conner ordered a naval bombardment.<sup>48</sup>

During the siege of Vera Cruz, which lasted three weeks, Reid's company was assigned to scout the sand hills surrounding the city, as well as the adjacent *tierra caliente*, "a low, jungly country, covered with the forests of Tropical America." Here and there throughout the region, he observed, there were a number of individual dwellings and small settlements, the inhabitants of which joined forces to wage "a desultory warfare in our rear." Although these Mexicans called themselves *jarochos* or *guerrilleros*" Reid observed, they were "better known to our soldiers by the general title *rancheros*." Ominously, he added, these guerrilla bands were notorious for "committing murders on straggling parties of soldiers who had wandered from our lines."<sup>49</sup>

Recalling his first scout, which occurred on March 10, Reid remembered that the evening before, he was summoned to regimental headquarters where he was ordered to go the "next morning...with twenty men (detached for this duty) into the back country, and procure as many pack mules as were procurable." The animals were needed, the regimental adjutant explained, "for transport of commissariat [sic] and quarter-master's stores along the line of investment." This was just the sort of mission Reid had hoped for. "From the hour of our landing," he confided, "I longed for an opportunity to display a talent I imagined myself to possess, viz.: in partizan [sic] warfare (le petite guerre)." He attributed "this bit of luck," as he called it, "to the adjutant himself, Stanley Gallagher, who was 1st lieutenant of my company, detailed on adjutant duty, and ever my friend."<sup>50</sup>

Early the next morning the eager leader "had my twenty men under arms, and was off mule-hunting." Reid noted that in accordance with the army's policy, the possessors of any animals they took would be compensated but only after the fact. There would be no asking

the owners “with your leave.”<sup>51</sup>

The soldiers’ almost complete ignorance of the lay of the land did not stop them from marching fearlessly into the interior, hoping for the best. By chance, when they were about “four or five miles from camp,” the New Yorkers “came upon a large meadow surrounded by forest.” There, “to my delight,” Reid recalled, “I saw a drove of mules grazing.” He also noticed, running through the middle of the pasture, “a ridge [or] embankment of earth raised a few feet above the general level.” It was an unfinished railway line, devoid of any “sleepers,” or ties — “much less the rails.” Clearly, he commented, “what work had been done to it, was evidently long suspended” for its entire length was covered with tropical vegetation. There was a path beside it, however, “and by this we made to approach the grazing mules.”<sup>52</sup>

As they made their way across the meadow, the sight of a nearby “ranche” distracted the would-be wranglers. Postponing their mule gathering efforts for the moment, they investigated, finding a Mexican rancher and his family at home. They also discovered two mules “standing tied to the trees nearby, each with a pair of large wicker panniers on its back, and all the panniers full of comestibles of a sort strange and new to us.” The food, Reid commented, “As I afterwards learnt and oft afterwards ate” were “tortillas enchiladas — that is tortillas with a coating of lard and chile pepper laid face to face like sandwiches and then formed into a roll.” By this time, he added, his men were “hungry as hawks,” due to their “having left camp with a hurried breakfast.” The aroma of the enchiladas, “enveloped in plantain leaves” and “still warm, and...fresh from the griddle,” must have been enticing. There was only one problem. Suppose the food was poisoned — a lethal trap intended for the

unwary *Norte Americanos*? “Soldiers campaigning in an enemy’s country,” Reid remarked, “are prone to such suspicions — especially where wells and water are concerned.”<sup>53</sup>

“I commanded patience,” he remembered, “till I had made the test.” Calling the owner of the rancho forward, the young officer commanded him to eat one of the enchiladas. “I watched every feature of his face as he swallowed the peppery condiment,” the former lieutenant recollected, “But he did it without a grimace.” Satisfied that the enchiladas were safe to eat, the hungry soldiers soon made short work of them, emptying the panniers and filling their bellies within the space of ten minutes.<sup>54</sup>

Reid harbored another suspicion, however. For who was such a large quantity of food originally intended? Fortunately, one of the company, an Irish-born sergeant named O’Keilly,” who had “served with Don Carlos in the Spanish wars,” knew how to speak the rancher’s language. In response to questioning, he replied that it had been prepared for “some men employed in the forest at a distance.” The lieutenant, however, doubted his veracity “and soon afterwards found reason to doubt it more.” In the meantime, the soldiers confiscated the two mules whose load was now much lighter and then began trying to roundup some of the other animals in the meadow nearby. Reid afterward thought that if assisted by “a half dozen Mexican rancheros” they “could have secured the lot by lazo [sic].” As it was, they only managed to get “six or seven, the others breaking through our line of surround, and galloping off out of sight.”<sup>55</sup>

It was about noon, Reid remembered, when suddenly the soldiers noticed a group of armed men atop the railway embankment, advancing toward them from the other side of the pasture “more than a mile off.” “I could see the glint and sparkle of arms,” the former officer

recollected, no doubt recalling the scene in his mind's eye. Whether they were regulars or *guerrilleros* could not be determined, nor how many there were. Nevertheless, Reid wrote: "Common prudence counseled a retreat, and we retreated, but not all the way back to camp."<sup>56</sup>

Although he was alarmed at the unexpected sight of the enemy, Reid feared the scorn of his men even more. The last thing he wanted was to be "thought a coward." In this state of mind and not knowing the Mexicans' strength or whether his group had been spotted, he led the little band under cover of some trees back to the ranch where they had eaten the enchiladas. There, in a remarkably democratic move, he took a count of those who favored a skirmish and those who wanted to return to camp. Twelve were for fighting. Reid seemed disgusted that one of the dissenters was "a commissioned officer, a lieutenant, not of my company or under my command directly, who had got leave from headquarters to accompany us." As for himself: "To return to camp without having accomplished my errand, no mules with me, and chased by an enemy of unknown number — most likely to be deemed mythical — in all this I saw sure humiliation." Appealing to his men with "visions of conquest and glory," he managed to greatly increase the number willing to make a stand, which, as he later recalled, "gave me firmer command over them."<sup>57</sup>

Quickly, Reid ordered his men "to lie down flat on their faces" and wait for orders. A short distance away, he concealed himself behind a split rail fence, where he "could see furthest along the raised ridge." The position that his party commanded "was admirable," providing "a view of the embankment [as] far as musket range, while a copse and ridge of ground on which it grew gave us both shelter and concealment." For what seemed like

“twenty minutes or half an hour,” the anxious soldiers nervously awaited the arrival of the enemy. At length, remembered Reid, “three tall strapping fellows afoot, with guns carried on shoulder” — an advance guard — came near. Their unconcerned manner of walking led the determined young officer “to believe they had not seen us on the savannah, while chasing the mules.” Although his men were eager to shoot, Reid “forbade it in a muttered whisper.” Behind the three men on foot, about fifty yards distant, was “a party on horseback, their arms and equipment telling them surely to be guerrilleros.” He hoped to allow them to come nearer before springing the trap. Reid later calculated: “Twenty paces further on and we could have decimated — destroyed them.” Suddenly and at the most inopportune moment, Sergeant O’Keilly called out: “Liftenant! They can’t be guerrilleros. The man here says there’s none in this neighborhood” — referring to his earlier questioning of the owner of the ranch. At that instant, Reid’s heart must have leaped into his throat. Startled by the unexpected outcry, the three foot soldiers opened fire, a musket ball from one of them hitting “the fence rail over which I was craning my neck,” he later recalled, while “several others from the mounted men behind played round my head ‘trip-trip.’” But instead of continuing the fight, he wrote disappointingly, the mounted men “made wheel, and galloped back along the railway ridge, as though the whole army, besieging Vera Cruz were after them!” At the same time “the three men on foot...disappeared,” hurtling down the railway embankment, “and getting off some way or other.” Predictably, Reid was furious with the careless Irishman, who he never forgave for spoiling his chances at reaping “a harvest of laurels.”<sup>58</sup>

Although Reid’s first opportunity to engage the enemy was a failure, he would ultimately earn enough “laurels” (along with a nasty wound), to last him a lifetime. More

importantly, as he surely came to realize later on, his scouting expeditions in the backcountry near Vera Cruz formed the valuable seed from which his career as a novelist began to bud, first by providing him with material for his initial “Sketches by a Skirmisher,” all written in March and published in the May 1, 1847 edition of the Spirit of the Times. These selfsame experiences would later inspire a short story, “Scouting Near Vera Cruz,” which appeared in a postwar issue of Graham’s Magazine. The magazine piece, in turn, was further transformed into the opening chapters of the aspiring young writer’s first novel, originally titled War Life, later The Rifle Rangers.

On March 18, a little more than a week following his aborted battle with guerrillas, Reid read sat down to record the incident for the readers of the Spirit of the Times. What is particularly interesting about the story as he recalled it some thirty-five years later while sitting at home in England, is how vastly it differs in both sequence and substance from the contemporary version he composed on the spot in Mexico. Ordinarily, it might be expected that over time the former lieutenant would embellish the tale, as old soldiers are wont to do when recollecting their wartime experiences. In this case the teller seems instead to have become more truthful in his advanced years! In the newspaper account, which began with a detailed description of the countryside and its people (a lifelong Reid trademark), the would-be hero compensated for his lost opportunity by inventing the very scenario he had probably anticipated up to the moment when the negligent sergeant spoke. He began by inflating the number of men he led from twenty to thirty. He also changed the chronology. Although “mule-gathering” was given as the reason for the expedition, neither mules nor the meadow in which they were eventually found were mentioned in the newspaper until near the end of



the narrative. Instead, Reid has the soldiers stopping to enjoy a breakfast of beef jerky and biscuit from their haversacks (nothing about enchiladas!) when their advance scouts report the approach of “mounted rancheros,” two of whom “appear on the bend of the road — suddenly halt, fire their escopettes, wheel, and gallop off.” At this point, Reid and his men immediately set up an ambush “in the enclosure of a ranch behind a clump of lime trees, commanding a view of the road.” The ranch owner, he reports, “a gallician [sic] Spaniard, professes to be our friend.” Disguised with a poncho made from a colorful Mexican serape, Reid ventures forth on the road, where he sees three armed *guerrilleros* on foot, advancing toward the site with about fifty others, mostly mounted men, following close behind. Satisfied that they are unaware of the trap and have probably taken him for one of their countrymen, Reid quickly returns to the ranch, where his men lie in wait for the unsuspecting Mexicans. At this moment, he writes:

The gallician [sic] is standing under the piazza of his hut — a few seconds, and the whole party will be under the muzzles of thirty muskets — the advance guard hesitate — they halt — “viene! Viene! Somos amigos!” My Spanish accent is not good. The gallician [sic] is ordered to repeat it. He bawls out, evidently against his will: — “Viene! Viene! Somos amigos!” They appear reassured and continue their advance. “Now my lads, ready!” the foremost now halt and half wheel. I turned suddenly around to enquire the cause. The gallician [sic] is standing in the attitude of having signalled [sic] the enemy, his arm stretched out and pointing to our ambush. “Los Soldados!” exclaims one of the guerrillas. It is too late — a sharp crack of a rifle, and the arm of the gallician [sic] is hanging bleeding and broken by his side. The ambushade is over, a dozen bullets whistle about our ears. One from an escopette as big as young cannon shot, fell and deadened in the soft sand at my feet. Our men spring from their ambush to return their fire — a thick copse of lime trees for a moment hold them back — still they dash forward at the word “advance” — a rustling among the limbs — the snapping of boughs — the word “fire” the flash — the blue smoke — a long roll of musketry — followed by a wild shout, and the guerrillas are in full retreat. There was more than one empty saddle as they galloped back up the road.<sup>59</sup>

The report concludes with Reid’s men chasing after the guerrillas, but unable to “get within

range, except once,” when “another of their party was brought down by a straggling shot.” Providentially, the pursuit brings the soldiers “to a large swamp, or meadow, through the centre of which passed on a kind of raised causeway.” Here, they find hundreds of “cattle...quietly grazing” as well as “a flock of mules about an hundred in number.” Unable to find the owner, Reid concludes by explaining: “We were under the necessity of borrowing without leave, according to the usages of war, then and there prevailing, and after a drive of several miles we found ourselves once more in camp.”<sup>60</sup>

Comparing the two versions of this story demonstrates quite clearly that Reid’s ability to take a true-life event and rework it into an embroidered but thrilling adventure was a skill he began to perfect while in Mexico. Certainly there is not much evidence of it beforehand. We cannot help but wonder, however, if the newspaper’s editors would have approved. Did they encourage him to embellish his reports? Or did they expect him to stick to the facts? Unfortunately, we do not know. In any event, this nascent talent tends to render the remainder of Reid’s “sketches” for the Spirit of the Times somewhat suspect as to their veracity.

The Spirit of the Times version of Reid’s encounter with guerrillas was the third of four short reports appearing together in the same issue. The first, “The Sand Hills of Vera Cruz,” was a richly worded travelogue-like passage combined with a brief account of the army’s landing on March 9. The second described in no little detail the rancharo culture of the *tierra caliente*. The addition to this second sketch of the confiscated enchiladas mentioned in Reid’s postwar reminiscence, suggests that either his memory was faulty or he simply neglected to include it in the third item. For the record, it read:

...Besides the tortilla he [the ranchero] has another species of bread manufactured from Indian corn, interlaid with meat and spices - I cannot recall the name of this bread — but I recollect well, when out upon a skirmish, on a late occasion, and hungry as a famished wolf, I captured an arriero whose mule was loaded down with this delicate mince handsomely done up in clean palm leaves. The arriero was on his way to give "comfort and assistance" to a party of the enemy — the very fellows I was in search of myself. We soon relieved the mule of its load, but before eating of the dainties, suspicious of a trick, I allowed the Mexican to eat largely of his own cookery. It proved to be all O. K., and was soon distributed among the soldiers, who swore the bread was finer than any mince pies they had ever eaten — I thought so too.<sup>61</sup>

The fourth piece is by far the most interesting, and given Reid's developing talent for literary adornment, one cannot help but wonder: What were the actual facts upon which it is founded? The story, entitled "An Encounter with Girls, not Guerillas," describes how one of Reid's pickets, an Irishman named Kiley (could this be the same Sergeant O'Keilly as in the mule-gathering story?), captures a wealthy *tierra caliente* landowner, a Spaniard with six young daughters. After deciding the man is no threat, Reid releases him. In response, the grateful Don invites the young lieutenant and his men to lunch at his hacienda where, upon arrival, the Spaniard's daughters greet him effusively, relieved to learn that their *padre* is unharmed. At first, the girls are wary of the *Yanquis* but after their father assures them "Americanos son Amigos!" the lieutenant and his men are met with a warm welcome. Two of the man's daughters, Catalina and Inez, seem to have made an especial impression on Reid, who wrote:

Proud, haughty, her dark eyes flashing, with a spirit that springs from her Castillian blood, in the back ground stood Catalina — the look of terror our approach occasioned was scarcely perceptible, and gave place to one that seemed to say "you may break but not bend" — you may kill but not conquer; there was a slight expression of disdain (I thought so) in the curling of her swan like neck. A whisper from her father — as the meteor passes over the sky of the north, so passed the cloud from those beautiful features; a smile, half condescending, half grateful, we are friends.

Inez is of a lighter temperament; full of smiles, full of thanks — fair haired and sunny-eyed; can they be sisters?<sup>62</sup>

Following these paragraphs, there is no further mention of the two girls; the remainder of the story describes only the sumptuous repast that was laid before the hungry soldiers and the conversation Reid had with the hospitable don.

As Steele points out, anyone familiar with Reid's immediate postwar literary output will instantly recognize that "Girls, not Guerrillas" is the origin of a similar tale Reid afterward wrote for Graham's Magazine, and that yet a third version was incorporated into his first novel, The Rifle Rangers (not counting War Life). In the Graham's magazine version, "Scouting Near Vera Cruz," Reid completely transformed the setting of his seemingly innocent meeting with the Spanish Don's daughters. This time, troopers are scouting the *tierra caliente* when they hear laughing and splashing. Curious, young Lieutenant Rolfe — Reid's fictional alter ego — peers through a small opening in a luxuriant wall of ivy. There, on the other side, he spies the two sisters, apparently nude, one seeming to be "carved from snow-white marble," the other "almost as dark as mahogany," bathing in a fountain, "in the wildest abandon of mirth." Not wishing to alarm them, he withdraws discreetly, and that, more or less, is the end of the story. As a chapter in The Rifle Rangers, the tale was further embroidered into a hair-raising adventure in which Reid's fictional counterpart chances upon two young Mexican women (whose contrasting complexions are again commented upon), bathing not in a fountain but in a crystal clear pool. This time, however, a cayman menaces the two girls. In the end, the heroic lieutenant and his men, who come to his aid after the terrible crocodile has bitten off the greater part of his sabre, save the terrified young ladies from certain doom! The names of the girls (Catalina and Inez in the first version) were also changed to Guadalupe ("Lupe") and Maria de la Luz ("Luz").



Figure 13. Adventure with a Cayman. From Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers (London: Charles H. Clarke, n.d.).

Some incidents that Reid omitted from his Spirit of the Times reports (or perhaps they were edited out), turned up in his later work. One amusing tale did not find its way into print until the 1870s, when it was published in a collection of short stories by several different authors:

In command of a detachment of soldiers, I was ordered on one occasion to hold a position on a sand-ridge in the rear of the city. As there was a picket in front of us, I saw no necessity for the men to keep awake. They went to sleep, therefore, with heads resting upon their knapsacks. During the night there sprang up a *norté*, or “norther,” as the Americans designate the dreaded tempest of the Mexican Gulf. The sand swirled up, and rushed about us in every direction — not only entering our eyes, but striking the cheeks so sharply as to cause acute pain. The men, covering their faces with the capes of their overcoats, lay still and fell asleep. So also did I. I well remember my surprise, when I awoke next morning just as the day was breaking. Near me was nothing bearing the slightest resemblance to a soldier, or human being of any kind. Only a number of protuberances that rose slightly above the general level of the surface. They were the *crania* of my still sleeping comrades, wrapped in their overcoat capes, and resting upon their knapsacks. But for their heads being thus elevated, they would no doubt have been, like the rest of their bodies, buried beneath the drift.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, while on a different expedition, Reid and his men “left their knapsacks, with other *impedimenta*, on the slope of a sand dune.” When they returned to collect them after a “norther” had passed, “the knapsacks were nowhere to be seen.” At first the soldiers thought their equipment “had been picked up by an adventurous party of the enemy’s *guerrilleros*.” As it turned out, the drifting sand had merely covered their gear and were it not for a soldier accidentally locating the lost equipment with his feet, by sinking into the soft sand above it, “we might never have recovered them.”<sup>64</sup>

Another incident that took place during the time the New Yorkers were camped near Vera Cruz clearly left a long-lasting impression on Reid. One night he was in charge of “a scouting party to reconnoitre a guerilla camp supposed to be some five miles away in the country.” During the wee hours of the morning, he wrote, “on one of those brilliant

moonlights for which the cloudless sky of Mexico is celebrated,” he and his men were at the “edge of an opening — the prairie of Santa Fe” when they came upon “an object that filled every one of us with horror.”

It was the dead body of a soldier, a member of the corps to which the scouting party belonged. The body lay at full length upon its back; the hair was clotted with blood, and standing out in every direction; the teeth were clenched in agony, the eyes glassy and open, as if glaring upon the moon that shone in mid-heaven above. One arm had been cut off at the elbow, while a large incision in the left breast showed where the heart had been torn out, to satisfy the vengeance of an inhuman enemy. There were shot-wounds and sword-cuts all over the body, and other mutilations made by the zopilotes and wolves. Notwithstanding all, it was recognised as that of a brave young soldier, who was much esteemed by his comrades and who, for two days had been missing from the camp. He had imprudently strayed beyond the line of pickets and fallen into the hands of the *guerrilleros*.<sup>65</sup>

Lacking shovels and spades, Reid recalled, the men used their bayonets to dig a grave for their unfortunate comrade. When they were finished, and had given the victim “such sepulture as was possible,” one of dead man’s closest friends “cut a slip from a bay laurel close by” and “planted it in the grave.” All the while, the soldiers kept silent, “for they knew they were on dangerous ground, and that a single shout or shot at that moment might be the signal for their destruction.” In relating the tale, Reid added that he afterward learned “this fiendish act was partly due to a spirit of retaliation.” An American soldier, “a very brutal fellow,” said Reid, “shot a Mexican, a young *jarocho* peasant, who was seen near the roadside chopping some wood with his machete.” Although the boy was not killed, his arm required amputation and Reid condemned the act as one of “sheer wantonness.” Unfortunately, he continued, the deed “provoked retaliation” and “several other American soldiers, straying thoughtlessly beyond the lines, suffered in the same way, their bodies being found mutilated in a precisely similar manner.” In the end, “the man who was the cause of

the vengeance became himself one of its victims,” but not, he remarked, “at Vera Cruz.” Instead, recalled Reid, the man met his end near the Mexican capital, several months after Scott’s troops left the coast. “His body was found in the canal of Las Vigas, alongside the *Chinampas*, or floating gardens, gashed all over with wounds made by the knives of assassins, and mutilated just as the others had done.” While conceding that “it might have been a mere coincidence,” he remarked, there were some who “supposed at the time that the one-armed *jarocho* must have followed him up with that implacable spirit of vengeance characteristic of his race, until at length, finding him alone, he had completed his vendetta.”<sup>66</sup>

The discovery of the mutilated corpse later inspired a poem, “The Ranger’s Grave,” which was published in 1869 in Onward, Reid’s short-lived American magazine. The episode, with some slight additional details (the corpse was discovered at a rancho, beside a slaughterhouse for cattle, for instance), was also recalled in “A Zig-Zag Journey Through Mexico,” an even later contribution to a collection of travel narratives called Wonderful Adventures.<sup>67</sup>

It may have been around this same time that Reid wrote a letter to Sam Arnold, a friend in Ireland, the contents of which created a controversy a full century later; one that its author could not possibly have imagined. The purported letter is supposed to have been written on June 10 from Santa Fe, a tiny village located in the midst of a vast cattle-covered prairie “about ten or twelve miles from Vera Cruz.”<sup>68</sup> Thanks to Reid’s story about the corpse he and his men discovered at Santa Fe, we know he was scouting in that locale but certainly not in June, unless he was later detached to return to the area for some reason. In any event, the letter read:



The town from which I write is quaint and of the Spanish style of building and reposes in a great land kissed by the southern sun. You have cows in old Ireland, but you never saw cows. Yes, millions of them here, I am sure, browsing on the sweet long grass of ranges that roll from horizon to horizon. At this time of the year the cowmen have what is called the round-up, when the calves are branded and the fat beasts selected to be driven to a fair hundreds of miles away.

This round-up is a great time for the cowhands, a Donneybrook fair it is indeed. They contest with each other for the best roping and throwing, and there are horse races and whiskey and wines. At night in the clear moonlight there is much dancing on the streets.

While this letter seems innocuous enough, in 1947 a writer, Clifford P. Westermier, who apparently had little knowledge of either Reid's Mexican War service or Mexican geography, used it to claim that the first rodeo held in what is now the United States took place at Santa Fe, New Mexico — and apparently everyone, including “sport historians, rodeo historians, writers for such diverse publications as the Guinness Book of World Records, and Official Programs of New Mexico's annual Rodeo de Santa Fe” accepted it without question until 1982, when a professor at the University of Texas at Austin, Mary Lou LeCompte, effectively debunked Westermier's claim by pointing out that he had obviously mistaken the village of Santa Fe in the state of Veracruz for the capital of New Mexico — which Reid may or may not have ever visited, but certainly not in 1847.<sup>69</sup>

An interesting sidelight to the controversy is that the letter, which Westermier and only one other writer allegedly examined, cannot now be located. LeCompte even contacted Joan Steele in late 1981 to see if she knew about it, but Steele had to admit that up to that time, neither the letter nor Westermier's claim was known to her.<sup>70</sup> From all appearances, the letter is still missing. If it still exists, it is likely to be in the hands of a private collector, who may know nothing of the fuss it caused.

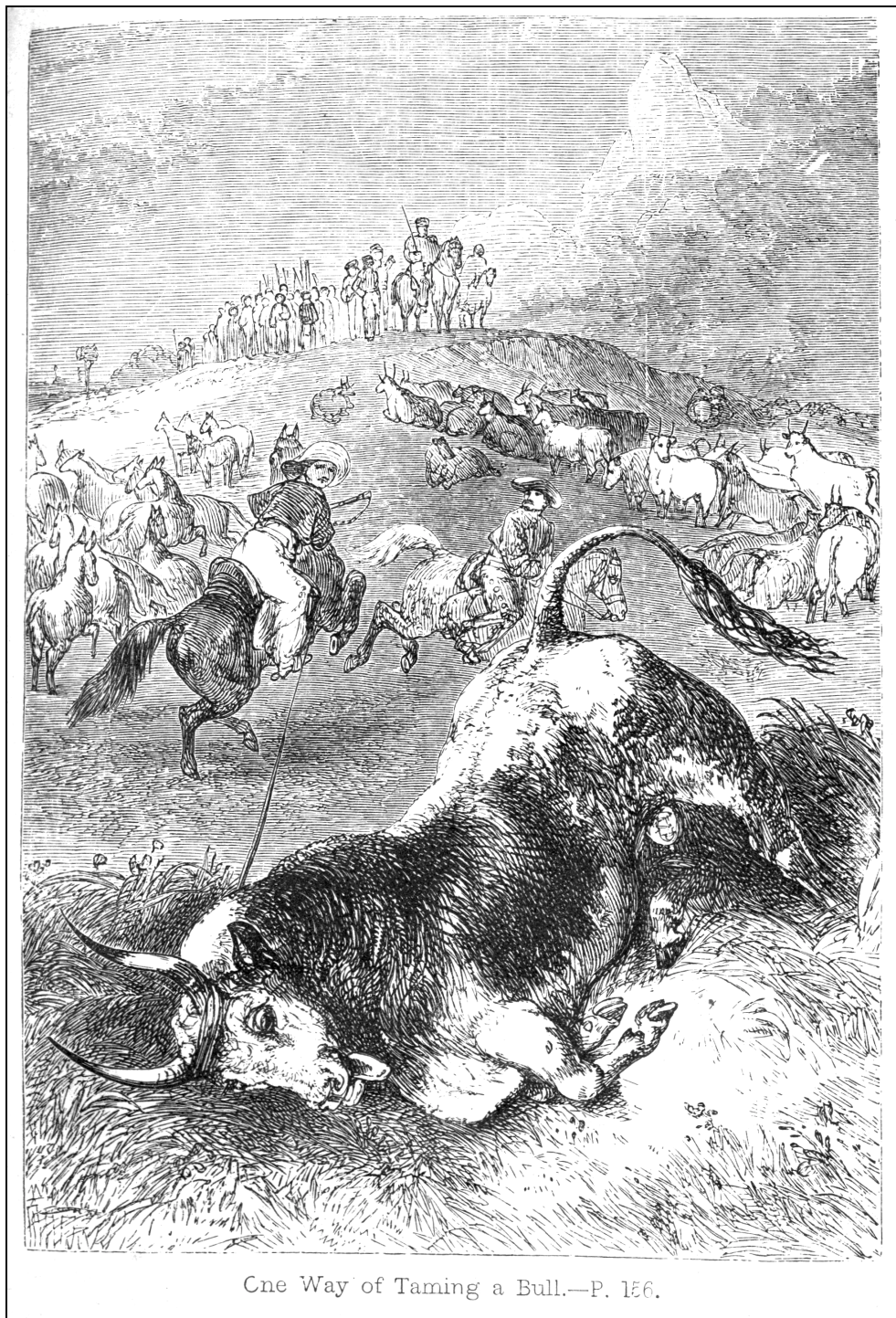


Figure 14. One Way of Taming a Bull. From Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers (London: Charles H. Clarke, n.d.).

In both The Rifle Rangers and The White Chief (1860), another of Reid's postwar novels, he provided his readers with an account of a Mexican round up or rodeo, which was almost certainly inspired by his witnessing one of these sporting events while serving as a soldier in Mexico. Ironically, considering the debate his now-lost letter provoked, the setting for the rodeo in The White Chief is New Mexico!<sup>71</sup> (In The Rifle Rangers, of course, the setting is the *tierra caliente* of Central Mexico.<sup>72</sup>)

Three weeks after the army landed in Mexico, Reid's scouting missions to the *tierra caliente* came to an end when, on March 29, 1847, the garrison of Vera Cruz capitulated. If he was present at the formal surrender, an event attended by much pomp and circumstance, he was curiously silent about it in his writing. It seems the very sort of thing the young lieutenant would surely have described in great detail in his either his correspondence with the Spirit of the Times or his postwar stories. But there is only a brief mention of it in The Rifle Rangers, in which he writes, "The American garrison entered the town, but the body of our army encamped upon the green plains to the south," adding: "Here we remained for several days, awaiting the order to march into the interior."<sup>73</sup> On April 8, the first division of Scott's army, began their march inland, leaving Vera Cruz behind. The New York Regiment may have set out the next day. On April 18, four days after crossing the *Puente Nacional*, Scott's forces encountered a large Mexican force — commanded by none other than Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna — at a mountain pass called Cerro Gordo, guarding the road leading to the capital, Mexico City. Although he was eager to participate, Reid did not take part in the ensuing battle. "I was cheated out of the opportunity," he later wrote, "by the cowardice or imbecility of the major of my regiment."<sup>74</sup> Observing a large number of

Mexican soldiers escaping through a nearby gorge, the young lieutenant asked for permission to take some men and pursue them. His request was denied. Later, Reid remarked bitterly, he learned that Santa Anna himself had escaped by that route.<sup>75</sup>

It is difficult to determine the identity of the “major of my regiment” to whom Reid referred in his remembrance of the Battle of Cerro Gordo. The unnamed officer could have been Maj. James C. Burnham, who was later advanced to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and who may also have been the model for a character in The Rifle Rangers called “Major Blossom” In his postwar novel, Reid devoted several unflattering pages to the corpulent Blossom, writing:

It would be useless to attempt an elaborate description of Major Blossom. That would require an entire chapter.

Perhaps the best that can be done to give the reader an idea of him is to say that he was a great, fat, red man, and known among his brother officers as “the swearing major.” If anyone in the army loved good living, it was Major Blossom; if anyone in the army hated hard living, that man was Major George Blossom. He hated Mexicans, too, and mosquitoes, and scorpions, and snakes, and sandflies, and all enemies to his comfort; and in the manner in which he swore at these natural foes would have entitled him to a high commission in the celebrated army of Flanders.<sup>76</sup>

In the absence of a photograph or any physical description of Burnham, it is impossible, however, to be sure if he was the man Reid had in mind. To further confuse matters, it is not Blossom but rather “Major Twing,” who in The Rifle Rangers, refuses to permit Reid’s fictional counterpart to ride after the escaping Mexican soldiers at the Battle of Cerro Gordo.<sup>77</sup> Reid also complained about this supposed lost opportunity in another postwar work, The Guerrilla Chief, blaming it not on a major but a colonel.<sup>78</sup>

Following the U.S. victory at Cerro Gordo, Scott took full advantage of Santa Anna’s flight to move his troops rapidly along Mexico’s National Road, bloodlessly entering and

occupying one town after the other — first Jalapa, then Perote. By May 13, Reid recalled in a postwar sketch composed for The Saturday Evening Post, General Worth's division had reached "Amozoc, a pretty village four leagues from the city [of Puebla], where they halted for the night." He remembered that Quitman's brigade, consisting of the New York and South Carolina regiments, encamped in the pass of the Piñal, four leagues to the rear." The following morning, which dawned "clear and unclouded," the young lieutenant and his fellow New Yorkers were on the march again. After tramping for twenty miles through a pine forest, past the tall mountain named *Malinche* in honor of Cortes' Indian wife, they "emerged from the dark pass of the Piñal" and found "a broad, bright valley at our feet." Transfixed by the beauty of the scenery, Reid described what he saw in the style for which would be celebrated throughout his long career:

Green fields, bordered with serried fences of the nopal and maguey — here a belt of bright yellow, where the riper grain summoned the reaper — there a clump of wild pepper trees, or a grove of olives, with the fantastic turrets of some old hacienda peeping out from the dark foliage; and at intervals the spire of a church, or the cupola of a convent, lifting the Cross to the reverential gaze of many an Aztec devotee.<sup>79</sup>

"As the long blue line of marching soldiers emerged from the mountain gorge," he continued, "every eye was feasting upon this incomparable scene."<sup>80</sup>

Without warning, the soldiers' reverie was interrupted by the sound of four cannons being fired, one-by-one, in the distance. "There was a moment's stillness," Reid remembered, then "the four shots were repeated." Ordered to halt, the anxious troops stood "silent and breathless," listening and wondering. There was some speculation that General Worth, whose men formed the army's front columns, had engaged the enemy. Then came the order "Forward — quick time!" and once again, "we were in motion; every eye straining

along the undulations of the landscape in our front” to see what was happening as the distant boom of the cannons continued to reverberate.

At this point a dragoon, his horse wet with foam, came riding up the road to bring General Quitman a note confirming the men’s suspicions. Santa Anna, in a desperate last-ditch effort to halt the advancing *Yanquis*, had sent “four thousand lancers to steal around Amozoc in the night” to attack Scott’s rear columns, which included Quitman’s brigade. The New Yorkers and South Carolinians, having missed their opportunity at Cerro Gordo, were so eager to do battle that “the quick step” became “a run.” Even some of the sick were seen abandoning the wagons that carried them, rushing to rejoin their companies. But by the time they reached the scene, Worth’s artillery had forced the lancers to retreat and the disappointed troops were forced to watch the Mexican horsemen gallop off into the distance toward Malinche.<sup>81</sup>

Having caught up with Worth’s division, Reid and his comrades spent the night of May 14 at Amozoc. The next morning, he recollected, “rivalled {sic] its predecessor in brightness and beauty.” But the troops had no time to contemplate the dawn. After two hours of a “brisk march” they reached a small village just outside Puebla, from which the soldiers could at last see their goal — *el Puebla le Los Angeles*. The young lieutenant, who was impressed with the sight, later described it, writing:

...It is indeed a glorious picture...The eye is struck with the heavy half Moorish style of its architecture — the dusky color of its terraced roofs — the quaint old cupolas of the churches — and above all, towering in the sublimity of their ecclesiastical grandeur, the tall spires of that world-renowned Cathedral, like twin columns reaching to the sky. The plain for miles upon every side appeared almost destitute of timber. Here and there a copse of garden-wood around the low walls of the distant hacienda, half relieved the apparent nakedness of the landscape.

In the far distance rose the Cordillera of the Rio Frio, crowned by the snow-white

peak of Popocatepec and the “White Sister,” while along the Southern expanse loomed up the blue sierra that forms the boundary between the plain of Puebla and the rich plantations of the *tierra caliente*.<sup>82</sup>

At the bridge of *Noche Buena*, the troops halted while General Worth sent forward a request for the city’s surrender. When “the summons was almost instantly obeyed,” the general sent a hundred dragoons “riding fearlessly through the suburbs, and up the long street of the ‘Mesones’” to the main plaza — a mile distant. There, Reid remarked, the horsemen were “cut off from all hope of succor had the enemy proved treacherous” due to “the intervening masses of twenty blocks of masonry” that “shut out the sight and the sound of their comrades.” Yet despite “a thousand eyes” that surrounded the dragoons, glaring “fiercely and hatefully upon them” for a full fifteen minutes, “a thousand tongues” that “muttered curses,” and “ten thousand arms” that were “ready to strike on the slightest pretext,” nothing untoward happened. When the remainder of the troops resumed their march, the “imposing grandeur” of the scene formed a memory that never left the young lieutenant, who vividly remembered how:

...the colors swung out upon the breeze — the music commenced to play, and that little army, in all four thousand two hundred men, commenced filing over the bridge of *Noche Buena*.

Thousands of fierce leperos lined the road on each side, and clustered upon the roofs of the houses. Hundreds of officers and soldiers of Santa Anna’s army were mingled among the citizens, confident in the security of the everlasting serape and sombrero. And boundless was there astonishment and indignation, when they counted (for hundreds counted us as we filed past,) the insignificant handful of dust-colored warriors who were thus entering unresisted [sic], the most warlike city of their nation. Where was that great host that had besieged and taken Vera Cruz? that had routed their armies upon the hills of *Cerro Gordo*? “Is this the army of the “Yanquies” — “Un puñado de aventureros! Carrejo! And many a swarthy lepero ground his teeth, and scowled malignantly from under his slouched sombrero.

On through the suburbs filed the American soldiery — on through the paseo — on over the bridge of San Francisco, and up the paved streets of the Mesones.

Thousands of lovely women — dark and tall and symmetrical, stood in behind

the iron gratings of their windows, or looked down from the terraced roofs. Many a bright eye beaming upon us — many a gaze welcomed us in which sadness and curiosity, anger and a feeble struggle with contempt were strangely blended. There was one whose brother — there another whose husband or perhaps lover had died upon the heights at Cerro Gordo; and “who are these? His murderers.” Now and then a sparkling little French *modiste*, who had fluttered all the way from the grisette life of *la belle Paris*, would appear in some obscure balcony and waving a tiny little white cambric cry aloud for “*les braves Americanes!*” This was the only welcome that greeted us on entering the city of the Angels.

At midday the American army — regiment after regiment — poured up the Calle Mesones, turned to the left, and filing along the end of the palace wheeled into the plaza.

The Mexican flag was hauled down and the star spangled banner rose in its place, and waved over the palace of Puebla.

As each column entered the square, they were formed into close order, and halting, piled their arms. The soldiers wearied with their dusty march dropped listlessly down upon the pavement — others unslung their knapsacks and sat upon them, while others again when nothing could brak down, laughed and joked in bad Spanish with the leperos who stood wondering. The iron hoofs of the quartermaster’s horses pang upon the pavements and echoed through the long avenues of the city.<sup>83</sup>

An hour later, Reid later remarked, after “this little army was distributed and lost in the great city,” Puebla returned to normal. Its shops opened, “its citizens sallied forth upon the streets,” and “the only difference, apparently,” was that “the soldier who guarded the barrack gateway or mixed with the crowd of idle Leperos spoke a different language and seemed to have got into a bluer uniform and a brighter skin.”<sup>84</sup>

Looking back on this scene later, the former lieutenant reflected on how incredible it was:

That a body of four thousand men should march across an hundred miles of the enemy’s country — across rugged hills and sterile plains, affording but little prospect of supplies, and none, whatever, of the possibility of retreat — alone — isolated — with a cloud of cavalry hovering on its wings, and another hanging in its rear — that this insignificant force — hardly a division — should boldly march under the shadows of a hostile city — a city holding over eighty thousand inhabitants, hitherto considered the most warlike of their nation — is one of those facts, the moral grandeur of which inspires us with awe.<sup>85</sup>



Yet “such a feat,” he added, was the entry of the American army into the city of Puebla.

Other soldiers were equally awestruck and expressive. Private George Ballentine, a fellow British subject in the service of Uncle Sam’s army, recalled that as the troops advanced to within a few miles of Puebla, which “sat on the side of a gently rising and delightfully wooded hill,” they were treated to “one of the finest views of a city at a distance that I have ever seen.” Ballentine marveled at the “numerous spires and churches [that] could be seen as distinctly as the lines of a highly finished engraving.” Likewise, he observed the picturesque quality of the “lofty snow mountains of Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, with their broad and heavy-looking dark bases, and their dazzlingly bright pyramidal summits, [which] rose in the background.” The young Scotsman also expressed his opinion that Puebla’s site was far superior to Mexico City’s, “particularly regarding its healthfulness” and that it did “credit to the taste and judgment of the Spanish; this being one of the few cities founded by them in Mexico.”<sup>86</sup> Another soldier, Sgt. Thomas Barclay of the Second Pennsylvania regiment, was enthralled by the city’s cathedral, which he termed, “the great curiosity of Puebla.” Barclay wondered at “the amount of money which must have been expended in erecting and ornamenting this building.” Its spires, he observed, “rise to the height of 216 feet” and “they are full of bells, some of which are an enormous size.” As for the church’s interior, he declared, the “gilding, carving, and ornamental work...is truly magnificent.”<sup>87</sup>

The three months that Reid spent in Puebla seem to have made an indelible impression on him. Immediately after the war, he chose the “City of the Angels” as the setting for “The Wounded Guerrilla,” a short story published in Graham’s magazine. Much later, after he became a successful novelist, he recalled Puebla and its people more

thoroughly in two similar books of adventure: The Bandolero, also entitled Mountain Marriage or Marriage Among the Mountains, and The Queen of the Lakes: A Romance of the Mexican Valley, which was published in a later edition as The Captain of the Rifles; or, The Queen of the Lakes.

The Bandolero, or Mountain Marriage, first published in 1866, takes up where War Life/The Rifle Rangers, Reid's first romance, leaves off. In the latter, the reader is taken no further in time than the Battle of Cerro Gordo while the former begins with the occupation of Puebla, which followed Cerro Gordo, and goes forward to, and even a little beyond, the American army's capture of Mexico City.

As in his earlier Saturday Evening Post sketch, Reid waxed eloquently in The Bandolero about Puebla's scenic location and recalled once more with incredulity how easily Scott's army took the city. In regard to its people he wrote:

LA PUEBLA DE LOS ANGELES is peculiar, even among the cities of modern Mexico; peculiar in the fact, that two-thirds of its population are composed of priests, *pelados*, *poblanas*, pickpockets, and *picarones* of a bolder type.

Perhaps I have been too liberal in allowing a third to the "gente de bueno," or respectable people. There are travellers who have altogether denied their existence; but this may be an exaggeration on the other side.

Trusting to my own souvenirs, I think I can remember having met with honest men —and women too — in the City of the Angels. But I shall not be positive about their proportions to the rest of the population. It may be less than a third — certainly it is not *more!*<sup>88</sup>

Reid also speculated that one in every ten men in Puebla was "either a priest, or in some way connected with the holy fraternity" while every tenth woman was "far from being an angel."<sup>89</sup>

Coming from a long line of Protestant ministers, it is hardly surprising that the Ulster-born author was particularly critical of the city's friars, complaining that they were

“encountered not only at every corner but almost at every step you take.” He also leveled a damning charge. “If monks were immaculate,” he declared, the city “might deserve the sanctified appellation it has received — the *City of the Angels*.” But as it was, he avowed, “the *City of the Devils* would be a more appropriate title for it!”<sup>90</sup>

Although Gen. Winfield Scott declared his belief that the vast majority of the U.S. soldiers serving in Mexico were “honorable men,” he was acutely aware that his troops included a smattering of troublemakers who habitually made life difficult for both their fellow soldiers as well as any Mexican civilians whom they encountered.<sup>91</sup> One of these malefactors, a tall, robust Irishman named Keilly, was attached to Reid’s company. Perhaps he was the same soldier named in Reid’s newspaper sketches and his memoirs. In any event, Private Keilly was from all accounts “a man of notoriously bad character” whose intemperance and “wild, disagreeable disposition” frequently led him to commit acts of violence. During the time the army lay idle at Puebla the hotheaded Irishman’s unsociable behavior seems to have worsened. One man later recalled that since their arrival in that city Keilly had “been confined in the guardhouse pretty nearly all the while” on charges of “drunkenness, neglect of duty, & general bad conduct.” Official army records confirm that on June 13, 1847 a court-martial headed by Captain Gallagher tried Keilly on a charge of “disobedience” and “continued absence,” found him guilty, and sentenced him to “close confinement on bread and water during the stay of the Regt. in Puebla.”<sup>92</sup>

As the sun rose over the New York regiment’s San Marcos garrison on Sunday, July 18, 1847, Keilly was being held under close guard — in consequence of an unprovoked assault upon a sentinel the night before. That same morning Reid was on duty as officer of

the guard when, at about 10 a.m., he received an order from Lieut. Carter, Adjutant of the New York regiment, to place leg irons on the recalcitrant Irishman and “to keep said prisoner in irons during his tour of guard, and to deliver him in this condition to the officer of guard who should succeed him.” A soldier named Marshall, who was also on duty that morning as Sergeant-of-the-Guard, said that later, “between 11 & 12 o’clock,” when he carried out the order “to place fetters on [the] prisoner, Keilly was uncharacteristically “sober & peaceable” and that “he offered no resistance.” Reid, who was present as the manacles were placed on the brawny soldier, stated afterward that he warned him, as on previous occasions, not to try “to escape the centinal [sic] placed in charge of him.” In response, Keilly uttered an uncomplimentary remark “about Col. Burnett, from whom it was stated to him, the order to place the irons upon him, had emanated.” Before leaving, Reid admonished Marshall “to allow no one to approach the prisoner, or to take the irons off of him.” It was “in this condition” that the young officer “left the prisoner to return to his duties at the Guard Room.” At about the same time, Marshall also stepped away from “the place where the prisoner was stationed,” leaving Keilly in charge of Pvt. Peter Moore, who was armed with a musket and bayonet.<sup>93</sup>

According to Reid, only a few minutes passed before “he was summoned by the sentry over said prisoner, who was loudly calling for the Corporal of the Guard.” Marshall’s testimony differed only slightly. He estimated the interval was “about fifteen or twenty minutes.” He agreed, however, that Moore was loudly shouting for the Corporal of the Guard to come to his aid. From all accounts, after Marshall and Reid departed, Keilly began to complain that the irons hurt his feet and started to remove them, which was a fairly simple

task owing to the fact that there was no lock. The manacles were simply held in place with a wire, which Keilly seems to have had no trouble breaking. Moore later said he ordered him to stop “two or three times” but the huge Irishman ignored him. Responding to the sentry’s call for help, Reid hastened back to the room where Keilly was confined, where he saw the powerfully built soldier “flinging his leg irons from him, and apparently struggling with the centinal [sic].” One soldier remembered that Reid called out “What are you doing there!” as he approached and that Keilly flung his irons over Moore’s head, into the yard. Reid later testified that when “he inquired the cause” of the commotion, the reply — from either Moore or a bystander — led him to believe “Keilly was trying to escape.” Marshall, who also came running when the commotion began, remembered that Reid was “about ten paces in front” of him but he too saw Keilly “taking the irons off his feet.” Marshall concurred with Reid’s assessment of the situation, namely that “the sentry was trying to prevent him from taking them [the manacles] off & from getting away.”<sup>94</sup>

“At that moment,” the lieutenant later testified, he “ordered the sentinel to fire on the prisoner.” Moore’s response, according to the young officer, was “I can’t.” Reid thought the soldier was either “unable to disengage his musket on account of his close contact with the prisoner, who was at this time either struggling to take his musket or attempting to pass him.” Sergeant Marshall observed that Keilly “was in a rage” but that “he did not take hold either of the sentry’s person or his arm.” Another witness said Keilly was “talking in an angry tone.” Moore’s recollection of Keilly’s demeanor differed substantially. He later testified that when Reid and Marshall arrived, a “peaceable & sober” prisoner was standing in one corner of the room and that although he held his musket across that space to prevent the prisoner’s

escape, Keilly made no such effort. This statement contradicted Marshall's, who concluded that because "the prisoner had moved from his original position some four or five paces," he was certain that Keilly, a "powerful man," was "trying to get away." Observing that the prisoner's wrists were "rubbed," Marshall also concluded that the badly behaved soldier had tried "to wrest the shackles from his hands," although he had not been able to do so. Other witnesses concurred that Keilly had moved from the spot where Reid originally left him.<sup>95</sup>

In view of what happened next, it is difficult to accept the notion that Keilly, who was universally held to be "a very bad man in every particular," was not trying to escape. That he had managed to do so on other occasions, both "violently & stealthily" said one witness, helps explain why, in the excitement and heat of the moment, Lieutenant Reid made what turned out to be a most fateful decision. Believing that Private Moore was either unable or perhaps even unwilling "to do his duty," the no-doubt frantic officer "drew his sword and rushing upon the prisoner thrust him in the breast or side." In response, said Moore, the wounded Irishman shouted, "Murder!" and "raised his manacled hands" as if to ward off the thrust. Reid said he thought Keilly meant to strike him with his upraised hands and so he "thrust again." None of the witnesses heard any words pass between the two men.<sup>96</sup>

Sergeant Marshall also testified that "several men" had "rushed toward [the] prisoner at the same time" he and Reid hurried to the scene. Moore recalled there had been some soldiers standing in the courtyard of the building in which the regiment was housed, beside a fountain. Marshall added that in his judgment Keilly "could not have escaped if Lt. Reid had called upon the men around to assist," provided, of course, they "would have done their duty." However, he remarked, he thought it unlikely the men would "have obeyed the order."

The regiment's enlisted men, he acknowledged, were generally "insubordinate," oftentimes refusing to "obey officers promptly."<sup>97</sup>

About fifteen minutes after Keilly was stabbed, Dr. Mina B. Halstead, the New York regiment's surgeon, was summoned. Arriving on the scene, he found that Keilly had three wounds — "two in front & one from behind." "The first," he recalled, "was about the junction of the third rib; the second about the junction of the fourth rib; the third a little back of the side between the fifth & sixth ribs." One of Reid's thrusts had gone through Keilly's lung but the final thrust was probably the deadliest. Halstead determined it went "through the heart."<sup>98</sup>

Remarkably, Keilly lingered for four or five hours before expiring, no doubt from loss of blood. Moore and Marshall testified that he said nothing after being stabbed but Dr. Halstead recalled that the tall Irishman was only speechless at first. After awhile, recalled the surgeon, "he spoke & begged he [Halstead] would not move him." The doctor also said that Keilly "spoke of his mother." Captain Barclay also went to see the dying man following the incident. As Keilly gripped his hand, said Barclay, "he seemed to think he deserved what he received — i.e., he deserved his fate." After asking Barclay to summon a Catholic priest, Keilly "acknowledged he had been a bad man." The officer later said he believed the Irishman was referring both to the incident that led to his wounding as well as "his general character." He neither named Reid nor blamed him, recalled Barclay, saying only "I have nobody to blame."<sup>99</sup>

Six days after Keilly's death, a court-of-inquiry was convened to investigate the incident. It consisted of four officers: Lt. Col. J. P. Dickinson and First Lieut. E. C. Morague

of the South Carolina Volunteers; Maj. James C. Burnham of the New York regiment; and Capt. E. C. Williams of the Second Pennsylvania Volunteers. After taking testimony from Reid, Sergeant Marshall, Private Moore, and several other witnesses (who described Reid as “quiet,” “peaceable,” and “gentlemanly” while concurring that Keilly was a troublemaker), the court concluded it was “questionable” whether Keilly was trying to escape and therefore, “Lt. Reid was not justifiable under the circumstances in taking the life of the deceased.” At the same time, the court added that “in extenuation...[and] that from the character of both parties, & from the insubordinate spirit prevailing in the Regiment, Lt. Reid on the first intimation could not but regard Keilly as being in the act of attempting to escape from custody.” Thus in effect, the court exonerated Reid of blame. References in court documents to “the characters of both parties” make it clear that the general conduct of the two principals most certainly influenced their decision.<sup>100</sup> Shortly afterward, Reid was transferred to Company B. Whether the reassignment resulted from the incident or was merely coincidental is uncertain.

At the end of the first week of August 1847, the New York regiment, along with the bulk of the troops under Scott’s command — by now numbering some 12,000 men, commenced their advance on the capital which, as Reid remembered, lay “about eighty miles from Puebla.” On August 10, “with an immense siege and baggage train,” wrote Reid, the army “moved over these pine-clad hills, and entered the Valley of Mexico.” “Here,” recalled the recently-exonerated young officer, “halt was made for reconnaissance, which lasted several days.”<sup>101</sup>

Reid remembered that as the soldiers passed over the mountains, they saw the City of



Mexico standing “in the middle of a marshy plain interspersed with lakes,” observing that it was “entered by eight roads or causeways,” which “were known to be fortified, but especially that which leads through the gate San Lazaro, on the direct road to Puebla.” Scott, he remarked, “considered “a strong work on the hill El Piñol,” which protected the road, “as next to impregnable.” Consequently, he noted, the army detoured south, traveling instead along “an old road winding around Lake Chalco — through the old town of that name, and along the base of the southern mountain bridge.”<sup>102</sup>

“After a slow march of four days,” continued Reid, “our vanguard debouched on the great National Road, which rounds southward from the city of Mexico to Acapulco.” But that road was “also strongly fortified.” Therefore, he recalled, Scott “resolved to turn the fortifications on it by making more to the west.” He also remembered “San Augustin de las Cuenas, a village five leagues from Mexico on the National Road, became the point of reserve.” At last, “on the 19th of August, General Worth moved down the National Road, as a feint to hold the enemy in check at San Antonio,” which Reid described as “strongly fortified.” Simultaneously, he noted, “the divisions of Generals Worth and Twiggs, with the brigade of Shields — to which I was attached — commenced moving across the Pedregal, a tract of country consisting of rocks, jungle and lava, and almost impassable.” That evening, after crossing the Pedregal, he wrote, “we...became engaged with a strong body of the enemy under General Valencia, at a place called Contreras.” Reid recalled that when nightfall brought an end to the battle, “the enemy still held its position.”<sup>103</sup>

Reid later remarked that the long hours between dusk and daybreak on August 19-20 were some of the worst he and his men ever experienced. “It rained all night,” he recalled,

and “we sat, not slept, in the muddy lanes of a poor village, San Geronimo.” The next morning, at dawn, he recalled, “We were at it again.” Yet despite having spent a miserable night trying to sleep in the rain, the Americans routed Gen. Gabriel Valencia’s “Army of the North,” as his troops were known, explained Reid, “being men of San Luis Potosi and other northern States.” The battle lasted less than a hour, he also remembered, and after capturing “a crowd of prisoners and twenty seven pieces of artillery,” the victorious *Norte Americanos* watched with no little satisfaction as “the flower of the Mexican army, was scattered and in full flight for the city of Mexico.”<sup>104</sup>

Reid thought that the Mexican defeat at Contreras, which he wrote about at length in his Spirit of the Times reports, was due, at least in part, to the fact that only a portion of the enemy’s army was utilized. The Mexican troops, he wrote, were “6,000 strong, backed by a reserve of 6,000 more under Santa Anna himself.” But “the reserve did not act owing...to some jealousy between Valencia and Santa Anna.”<sup>105</sup>

Following victory at Contreras, Scott’s troops assumed “the road...was...open to the city.” This was “a great mistake,” Reid recalled, “as the sharp skirmishes which our light troops encountered as we advanced soon led us to believe.” “All at once,” he remembered, “we stumbled upon the main body of the enemy, collected behind two of the strongest field works I have ever seen, in a little village called Cherubusco [sic].”<sup>106</sup>

The road to Churubusco, he later recollected, “passed over a small stream spanned by a bridge, which was held in force by the Mexicans.” When the soldiers “attacked [the position] fruitlessly in front,” it became clear “that, unless something like a flank movement were made, they would not be dislodged.” Shields’ brigade, to which the New York regiment

belonged, “was ordered to go round by the hacienda of Los Portales and attack the enemy on the flank,” but Reid and his comrades got no further than “the barns of Los Portales.” “Shot down by scores,” he recalled, “the men eagerly sought shelter behind walls or wherever else it could be found.” He also remembered “Colonel Ward B. Burnett made a desperate attempt to get the companies together, but it was unsuccessful” and Burnett “fell, badly wounded.”<sup>107</sup>

At this stage, recollected Reid, “The situation had become very critical.” Commanding “the Grenadier Company of New York Volunteers,” he “saw that a squadron of Mexican lancers were getting ready to charge,” and he “knew that if they came on while the flanking party were in such a state of disorganization the fight would end in a rout.” “On the other hand,” he countered, “if we charged on them, the chances were the enemy would give way and run.” In the end, he decided, “Nothing could be worse than the present state of inaction and slaughter.” From this point forward, the Irish-born lieutenant’s memories of the Battle of Churubusco resembled a novel, in which he played the part of the hero:

The lieutenant-colonel of the South Carolina Volunteers — their colonel, Butler, having been wounded, was not on the field — was carrying the blue palmetto flag of the regiment. I cried out to him:

“Colonel, will you lead the men on a charge?”

Before he could answer, I heard something snap, and the colonel fell, with one leg broken at the ankle by a shot. I took the flag, and as the wounded officer was being carried off the field, he cried:

“Major Gladden, take the flag. Captain Blanding, remember Moultrie, Loundes and old Charleston!”

Hurrying back to my men, reaching them on the extreme right, I rushed on in front of the line, calling out: “Soldiers, will you follow me to the charge?”

“Ve vill!” shouted Corporal Haup, a Swiss. The order to charge being given, away we went, the Swiss and John Murphy, a brave Irishman, being the first two after their leader — myself.

The Mexicans seeing cold steel coming towards them with such gusto, took to their heels and made for the splendid road leading to the city of Mexico, which offered unequalled opportunities for flight.



Figure 15. The Battle of Contreras. From Messages and Papers of the Presidents, vol. 5 (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897).

A broad ditch intervened between the highway and the field across which we were charging. Thinking this was not very deep, as it was covered with a green scum, I plunged into it. It took me nearly up to the armpits, and I struggled out all covered with slime and mud. The men avoided my mishap, coming to the road by a dryer but more roundabout path.

As we got on the road Captain Phil Kearney came thundering over the bridge with his company, all mounted on dappled greys. The gallant Phil had a weakness for dappled greys. As they approached I sang out: "Boys, have you breath enough left to give a cheer for Captain Kearney?"

Phil acknowledged the compliment with a wave of his sword, as he went swinging by towards the works the enemy had thrown up across this road. Just as he reached this spot, the recall bugle sounded, and at that moment Kearney received the shot that cost him an arm.

Disregarding the bugle call, we of the infantry kept on, when a rider came tearing up, calling upon us to halt.

"What for?" I cried.

"General Scott's orders."

"We shall rue this halt," was my last rejoinder. "The city is at our mercy; we can take it now, and should."

"Lieut.-Colonel Baxter, then in command of the New York Volunteers, called out:

"For God's sake, Mayne Reid, obey orders and halt the men."

At this appeal I faced round to my followers, and shouted, "Halt!"

The soldiers came up abreast of me, and one big North Irishman cried:

"Do you say halt?"

I set my sword towards them and again shouted "Halt!" This time I was obeyed, the soldiers crying out:

"We'll halt for you, sir, but for nobody else."<sup>108</sup>

"Thus," continued Reid, "was the American army halted in its victorious career on the 20th of August." Nearly forty years later he remained firmly convinced that in "another hour," the army "would have been in the streets of Mexico." But Winfield Scott, he complained, "had other designs; and with the bugle recall that summoned the dragoons to retire, all hostile operations ended for the time." Reid remembered that following the battle, "the troops slept upon the field."<sup>109</sup>

Elizabeth Reid contended that the halt at Churubusco clearly demonstrated the her late husband's "great influence over his men," adding, "his great courage on all occasions,

and his genial nature, utter impartiality, and fine sense of justice endeared him to his followers.” As further proof, she recalled an “amusing incident” that was published in the Spirit of the Times, the New York newspaper for which Reid was a correspondent:

Lieutenant Mayne Reid, commanding Company B (the Grenadiers) of the New York Regiment, has in his company two German soldiers — one brave fellow, who fought like a tiger during the whole of the bloody action at the hacienda of Los Portales; while the other, a cowardly rascal, had stolen from the ranks on the morning of the engagement, and remained behind to plunder a Mexican hacienda.

On the morning after the battle, as the lieutenant was visiting the quarters of his company, he observed these two soldiers in the act of making their toilet. The former was vainly endeavouring to guide his feet through the mazes of a very dilapidated pair of pantaloons that had been literally shot off his legs during the action, while the latter was very complacently admiring the set of an elegant pair of blue cassimeres which he had stolen on the previous night from some unfortunate Mexican gentleman, and which fitted him to a hair.

The lieutenant, acquainted with the previous conduct of both parties, called the latter, and ordered a ‘swap’ instanter. The process of undressing, swapping, and redressing drew around the spot a crowd of their comrades, who were so pleased with this instance of summary justice that a cheer rang round the walls of the hacienda, and one fellow, as he limped off on his wooden leg, declared that it was the best thing he had ‘seed did’ during the whole campaign.<sup>110</sup>

Following Churubusco, Reid’s uniform was ruined — covered in the green slime that had filled the ditch through which he and his men had been forced to wade at the height of the battle. “Not having a spare suit,” wrote Charles Ollivant, “he ransacked the captured wardrobe of a Mexican officer of high rank, and donned the only suit which would fit him.” By chance, added the former secretary, “it was a very showy uniform.” Reid later speculated that its scarlet sash helped make him a better target for the Mexicans, quite possibly contributing to his later wounding at Chapultepec.<sup>111</sup>

In the meantime, he wrote, an armistice was “entered into between the commanders-in-chief of the two armies.” Subsequently, “the four divisions of the American army separated for their respective headquarters in different villages.” General Worth, he recalled,

“crossed over to Tacubaya, which became the headquarters of the army,” while “Twiggs held the village of San Angel; Pillow rested at Miscuac [sic], a small Indian village between San Angel and Tacubaya” and “the Volunteer and Marine division fell back on San Augustine.”<sup>112</sup>

Scott agreed to the armistice, hoping that Peace Commissioner Nicholas Trist, who had been sent by Polk to treat with the Mexican government, could reach some satisfactory arrangement. As far as the President of the United States was concerned, Texas and the so-called “disputed territory” were yesterday’s news. Through Trist, Polk asked for nothing less than the cession of California and New Mexico — the same terms diplomat John Slidell had sought to secure in the fall of 1845. The belief was general among the *Yanquis*, recalled Reid, “that the Mexicans would accept any terms rather than see their ancient city at the mercy of a foreign army.” But it was “a great mistake,” he recollected. Not only were the Mexican peace commissioners adamant in their refusal to accede to the President’s demands, “the armistice gave the crafty Santa Anna a chance to fortify an inner line of defence, the key to which was the strong Castle of Chapultepec, which had to be taken three weeks later with the loss of many brave men.”<sup>113</sup>

Consequently, he recalled, “on the 6th of September, the American commander-in-chief sent a formal notice to the enemy that it had ceased to exist.” Santa Anna’s reply to General Scott was “insulting,” remembered Reid. “On the same day,” he added, “the enemy was seen in great force to the left of Tacubaya, at a building called Molino del Rey, which was a large stone mill, with a foundry, belonging to the government, and where most of their cannon had been made.” Reid also remembered that it was “notorious in the annals of

Mexican history as the place where the unfortunate Texan prisoners suffered the most cruel treatment from their barbarous captors.” The structure was situated “directly under the guns of Chapultepec,” he further remarked, the distance to which was “about a quarter of a mile.” Reid also recollected that the Molino del Rey was “separated from the hill of Chapultepec by a thick wood of almond trees.”<sup>114</sup>

It appears that Reid had no special role in the Battle of *El Molino de Rey* — the King’s Mill, which took place on September 8. His nearly identical reports of the engagement, in both his correspondence to The Spirit of the Times and his later memoirs, are straightforward accounts displaying practically none of the flair and colorful commentary of which he was capable. In his observations, he noted that after following the successful taking of the *Molino del Rey* and the *Casa Mata* that the “latter was shortly after blown up, and all the implements in the foundry, with the cannon moulds [were] destroyed.” and “our army was ordered to return to Tacubaya.” He concluded by adding:

Thus ended one of the most bloody and fruitless engagements ever fought by the American arms. Six hundred and fifty of our brave troops were either killed or wounded, while that of the enemy did not amount to more than half this number.<sup>115</sup>

Reid also remarked:

The fatal action at Molino del Rey cast a gloom over the whole army. Nothing had been gained. The victorious troops fell back to their former positions, and the vanquished assumed a bolder front, celebrating the action as a victory.<sup>116</sup>

Reid’s personal moment of glory arrived on September 13, during the assault on Chapultepec. Situated atop a 200-foot tall hill overlooking the westernmost edge of the City of Mexico the so-called “castle” or “fortress” was originally constructed to serve as a summer palace for New Spain’s viceroys. A little more than a decade following



independence, Mexico's military academy was established here. It was still being used for that purpose in 1847. Some of the school's cadets, who took part in Chapultepec's defense during the war with the United States, were fated to go down in history as *Los Niños Heroes* —the “Boy Heroes.”<sup>117</sup>

Although Chapultepec — the Hill of the Grasshopper — was not as strong as it appeared (its garrison numbered less than a thousand men under the command of Gen. Nicolás Bravo), it guarded the western approaches to the Mexican capital — the Garita de San Cosme and the Garita de Belen. After considering his options, Scott determined to take it, particularly after he learned the Mexicans had considerably strengthened their southern defenses. Thus to attack the city from that side would require building batteries. “I go in for more fighting and less work,” the old soldier is reported to have said.<sup>118</sup>

In one of his “Sketches by a Skirmisher,” the young lieutenant described the object of the U.S. Army's attention:

Chapultepec stands between Molino del Rey and the city. The castle is built on an isolated hill, on two sides a precipice, and on the remaining sides very steep and difficult of access. A good road runs from Tacubaya to the city. This road winds round the base of the hill of Chapultepec. An aqueduct leads to the city. The road and the aqueduct travel together, entering at the Garita de Belen.

A belt of wood lies between the castle and Molino del Rey, on the south. A stone wall surrounds these woods. Well garrisoned, Chapultepec would be impregnable. The belief is that 1000 Americans could hold it against all Mexico. They might starve them out, or choke them with thirst, but they could not drive them out of it. There are but few fortresses in the world so strong in natural advantages.<sup>119</sup>

In order to soften Chapultepec's defenses for the coming assault, Scott brought cannons to bear on the hill. Wrote Reid, “During the whole of the 12th, the shot from the American batteries kept playing upon the walls of the castle, answered by the guns of the fortress.” By the end of the day he observed, “the castle began to assume a battered and

beleaguered appearance.” He added: “Shot and shell had made ruin on every point, and several of the enemy’s guns were dismounted.” Reid also recalled that when the bombardment commenced, “the Calzada or winding road, from the castle to the foot of the hill” was turned into “a dangerous thoroughfare” by the fire from a battery commanded by a Lieutenant Hagney. He found it “amusing to see the Mexican officers, who wished to enter or go out of the Castle, wait until Hagney’s guns were discharged, and then gallop over the Calzada as if the devil was after them.” In his correspondence to The Spirit of the Times, he told of one man who failed to make it out of harm’s way:

A Mexican soldier at the principal gate was packing a mule with ordnance. “Can you hit that fellow, Hagney?” inquired the writer of this sketch.

“I’ll try,” was the quiet and laconic reply.

The long gun was pointed and levelled. At this moment the soldier stooped by the side of the mule, in the act of tightening the girth. “Fire!” said Hagney, and almost simultaneous with the shot a cloud of dust rose over the causeway. When this cleared away, the mule was seen running wild along the Calzada, while the soldier lay dead by the wall.<sup>120</sup>

“The morning of the 13th dawned bright and beautiful,” remembered Reid, observing that while “the Mexican flag still waved over Chapultepec...her guns did not respond to the American batteries with spirit.” He concluded that the Mexicans “evidently discovered the inutility of firing on our works, and now lay behind his walls and trenches, sullenly awaiting the storming.”<sup>121</sup>

At about 7 a.m., he recollected, “the Division of Gen. Worth moved over from Tacubaya to Molino del Rey, and joined that of Gen. Pillow, already in position at this point” while “Quitman was on the main road between Tacubaya and Chapultepec, marshalling his column for the assault.” An hour later, he wrote, “the quick and frequent bursting of shells from the American batteries, as well as the sharp fire of musketry in the woods under the hill,

announced that the American skirmishers were driving in the light troops of the enemy.” At the same time, he reported, “the assaulting columns of Quitman and Pillow, leaving their respective positions, moved forward upon the castle.” It was, thought the young officer, “an interesting moment, not the less interesting to those who knew that the last order of the American Commander-in-Chief to his generals had been, to ‘remember that the fate of the American army depended on the taking of Chapultepec!’”<sup>122</sup>

Reid’s report of the assault gave credit to all who participated, praising the volunteers and a battalion of Marines who were “exposed at every step to the deadly ravages of the enemy’s grape,” as well as General Shields, who was wounded but refused to be carried to safety. After describing how General Pillow’s men had “driven the enemy from the South within the walls of the castle” while maintaining “a brisk fire of rifles and muskets upon the defenders,” Reid finally came to that part of the sketch in which he, describing himself only as a “young officer,” played the role of hero:

At this moment a small command of two companies (volunteer and marine) is seen crossing the open meadow to the south. The young officer who leads them seems to be in great haste. They enter the wood and pass briskly through the different regiments, who are already ascending the hill. On reaching the most advanced line of skirmishers they are halted. They have not yet fired a shot. The officer in command glances toward the castle. There is no shelter any further in that direction. In front a high wall is lined with the gleaming bayonets of the enemy, and every moment the stream of fire runs along its top. Several cannon are pointed to sweep the space between. These at intervals belch forth their iron hail, tearing the ground in front, while in rear the huge branches of trees go crashing as though a hurricane was at play amongst them.

From windows and loop holes, the muzzles of a thousand muskets are directed on the same spot. No wonder then that the assaulting column had paused for a moment.

Once under the walls these would be safe. This the officer saw at a glance.

“Men, we must charge up to that wall.”

A voltigeur to the right hearing this challenge, replied —

“We will charge to that wall if any one will lead us.”

“Come on — follow me!” was the reply of the officer, and as if by one impulse the whole line leaped up from their shelter, and with a wild cheer dashed forward toward



Figure 16. The assault on Chapultepec; badly wounded in a charge up the hill, Reid never made it to the top. From Messages and Papers of the Presidents, vol. 5 (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897).

the wall. It was a desperate race, and those who watched them from a distance trembled for their fate. Luckily the shower of grape had just passed over, and the artillerists were about loading their guns. The musketeers, too frightened at the wild hurrah and the near approach of their terrible enemies, shot wide and high. Many, however, fell, and the officer who led the charge, after gaining within sword's reach of the walls, was seen suddenly to wheel round, stagger and fall into a cleft in the rocks. He was wounded — not killed.

The Mexican musketeers now retreated into the inner works of the castle, and hundreds were already securing their safety by escaping on the other side.

The cold steel of the Yankee bayonet gleaming over the outworks; the sharp crack and sure aim of the rifle soon told, and the fire from the windows grew weaker at each moment.

Ladders were now flung against the wall, a wild shout was heard along the American lines, and as if by a simultaneous impulse, the assaulting columns leaped over the wall, and Chapultepec was taken. A number of officers and men rushed for the top of the castle simultaneously, and in a few moments the flag of Mexico was hauled down, and in its place waved the proud banner of the North...<sup>123</sup>

Although portions of Reid's Mexican War memoirs are nearly identical to his 1847 sketches, the part describing his role in the attack on Chapultepec is less modestly composed.

It is interesting to compare it with the previous selection:

The Mexican flag was still waving triumphantly over the Castle, and the line of smoke-puffs had not got an inch nearer it; nor was there much change in the situation when, after a quick run across the intervening ground with my following of volunteers and marines, we came up with the storming party at halt, and irregularly aligned along the base of the hill. For what reason they were staying there we knew not at the time, but I afterwards heard it was some trouble about scaling ladders. I did not pause then to inquire, but, breaking through their line with my brave followers, pushed on up the slope. Near the summit I found a scattered crowd of soldiers, some of them in the grey uniform of the Voltigeur Regiment; others, 9th, 14th, and 15th Infantry. They were the skirmishers, who had thus far cleared the way for us, and far ahead of the "forlorn hope." But beyond lay the real area of danger, a slightly sloping ground, some forty yards in width, between us and the Castle's outward wall — in short, the glacis. It was commanded by three pieces of cannon on the parapet, which swept it with grape and canister as fast as they could be loaded and fired. There seemed no chance to advance farther without meeting certain death. But it would be death all the same if we did not — such was my thought at that moment.

Just as I reached this point there was a momentary halt, which made it possible to be heard; and the words I then spoke, or rather shouted, are remembered by me as though it were but yesterday:

"Men! if we don't take Chapultepec, the American army is lost. Let us charge up

to the walls.”

A voice answered: “We’ll charge if any one leads us.”

Another adding: “Yes, we’re ready!”

At that instant the three guns on the parapet belched forth their deadly showers almost simultaneously. My heart bounded with joy at hearing them go off thus together — it was our opportunity; and quickly comprehending it, I leaped over the scarp which had sheltered us, calling out:

“Come on; I’ll lead you!”

It did not need looking back to know that I was followed. The men I had appealed to were not the men to stay behind, else they would not have been there, and all came after.

When about half-way across the open ground I saw the parapet crowded with Mexican artillerists in uniforms of dark blue with crimson facings, each musket in hand, all aiming, as I believed, at my own person. On account of a crimson silk sash I was wearing, they no doubt fancied me a general at least. The volley was almost as one sound, and I avoided it by throwing myself flat along the earth, only getting touched on one of the fingers of my sword-hand, another shot passing through the loose cloth of my overalls. Instantly on my feet again, I made for the wall, which I was scaling, when a bullet from an escopette went tearing through my thigh, and I fell into the ditch.<sup>124</sup>

In her biography of her late husband, in which the preceding account was included, Elizabeth Reid added that the “second man up to the walls of the Castle was Corporal Haup, a Swiss, who fell, shot through the head, across the body of Mayne Reid, covering the latter with blood.” Before dying, Haup reportedly “managed to roll himself off, saying at the same time, ‘I’m not hurt so badly as you.’”<sup>125</sup>

Although historian John S. Jenkins later credited Reid as the man who first planted a U.S. flag on the ramparts of Chapultepec,<sup>126</sup> the former lieutenant was careful to point out in his memoirs that it was not he, but rather his friend and fellow officer, “Hypolite Dardonville, a brave young Frenchman, who scaled the walls and raised the first American flag that ever floated over this grand old Castle.”<sup>127</sup> Reid later added that Dardonville’s act signaled the death of several deserters — members of the ill-famed *San Patricio* Battalion, who stood with nooses around their necks on the tailgates of wagons throughout the assault

and were hanged by order of Col. William S. Harney when the Stars and Stripes could be seen in the distance replacing the Mexican *bandera*.<sup>128</sup>

Reid's bravery did not go unnoticed. In his official battle report, General Scott mentioned the young Irishman by name. Several other officers named him as well, including General Pillow, who wrote:

Lieut. Reid, in command of one company of the New York regiment and one of marines, came forward in advance of the other troops of his command, participated in the assault and was severely wounded.<sup>129</sup>

General Quitman also confirmed Reid's account of the battle, writing: "The gallant New York regiment claims for their standard, the honor of being the first waved from the battlements of Chapultepec." This news, not surprisingly, was repeated in the New York papers, which printed Colonel Burnett's report as well, in which Reid was listed as one the regiment's officers "who particularly distinguished himself." The newspapers also noted that Reid and Dardonville were among the wounded (the former "severely," the latter "slightly") and that as a result of his gallantry, the young Irish officer was being promoted on to the rank of First Lieutenant.<sup>130</sup>

While there are numerous written reports attesting to Reid's heroics on that fateful day in September 1847, it may be that his valor was also recorded in visual form. If a certain passage in The Mountain Marriage; or The Bandolero, one of Reid's lesser-known postwar works, can be taken as truth, a young artist "who had accompanied [the] army throughout the campaign" and who was later killed by bandits while riding as a passenger in a *diligencia* on the road between Mexico City and Puebla, also noticed the daring young officer as he called upon his men to follow up the hill at Chapultepec. According to Reid, the murdered youth

“had oft partaken of the hospitality of my tent” and had, in return, “in his great picture of the storming of Chapultepec...fixed my face upon the canvas, foremost, far foremost of those who on that day dared to look over the well-defended walls.”<sup>131</sup> Unfortunately, the artist’s name is unknown. Neither can we be sure if the picture to which Reid referred is extant.

Following the U.S. Army’s successful assault on Chapultepec, General Scott’s forces managed to fight their way through the Mexican defenses located on the western approach to the capital. Early the next morning, Reid reported, “the remnant of the American Army, in all less than 3,000 men, who had fought their way to the gates, entered the city, and formed in the Grand Plaza.” In short order, he added: “An officer with a small body of men was seen ascending the stairs of the palace” and within moments, he continued, “the national flag of Mexico came down upon the haulyards and the banner of the North was seen waving over the halls of the Montezumas.” Mexico City had fallen.<sup>132</sup>

Reid’s initial experience following his wounding at Chapultepec was later recalled in his second novel, The Scalp Hunters, in which he wrote:

I have had the pleasure of being wounded in the field of battle. I say *pleasure*. Under certain circumstances, wounds are luxuries. You have been carried on a “stretcher” to some secure spot. An aid-de-camp drops from his sweating horse, and announces that “the enemy is in full flight:” thus relieving you from the apprehension of being transfixed by some moustached [sic] lancer — a friendly surgeon bends over you; and, after groping a while about your wound, tells you it is “only a scratch,” and that it will be well in a week or two: — present pains are forgotten in the contemplation of future triumphs — the congratulation of friends — the smiles, perchance, of one dearer than all. Consoled by such anticipations, you lie back on your rude couch, smiling at a bullet-hole through thigh, or the slash of a sabre across your arm.<sup>133</sup>

In a short story published immediately after the war, Reid described the short journey from the place where he was wounded to the convent-turned-hospital where he recuperated:

On the 15th of September, two days after the storming of Chapultepec, a small



party of soldiers, in dark uniforms, were seen to issue from the great gate of that castle, and, winding down the Calzada, turn towards the City of Mexico. This occurred at 10 o'clock in the morning. The day was very hot, and the sun, glancing vertically upon the flinty rocks that paved the causeway, rendered the heat more oppressive.

At the foot of the hill the party halted, taking advantage of the shade of a huge cypress tree, to set down a litera, which four men carried upon their shoulders. This they deposited under one of the arches of the aqueduct in order the better to protect its occupant from the hot rays of the sun.

The occupant of the litera was a wounded man, and the pale and bloodless cheek, and fevered eye showed that his wound was not a slight one. There was nothing around to denote his rank, but the camp cloak, of dark blue, and the crimson sash, which lay upon the litera, showed that the wounded man was an officer. The sash had evidently been saturated with blood, which was now dried upon it, leaving parts of it shriveled like, and of a darker shade of crimson. It had staunched the life-blood of its wearer upon the 13th. The soldiers stood around the litter, their bronzed faces turned upon its occupant, apparently attentive to his requests. There was something in the gentle care with which these rude men seemed to wait upon the young officer, that bespoke the existence of a stronger feeling than mere humanity. There was that admiration which the brave soldiers feel for him who has led them in the field of battle, *at their head*. That small group were among the first who braved the frowning muzzles of the cannon upon the parapets of Chapultepec. The wounded officer had led them to those parapets.<sup>134</sup>

The battlefield through which he was carried, Reid wrote, was a hellish landscape littered with “dismounted cannon, broken carriages, fragments of shells, [and] dead horses, whose riders lay by them, dead too, and still, unburied.” While lying in the shade of the aqueduct, he noticed that other soldiers were “strolling about, busied with this sad duty, but heaps of mangled carcasses still lay above ground, exhibiting the swollen limbs and distorted features of decomposition.” The air, he commented further, was filled with a “disagreeable odor,” prompting him to ask his litter-bearers to resume the journey.<sup>135</sup>

After entering the city through the Garita Belen, wrote Reid, his party “passed up the Paseo Nuevo, and halted in front of the Alameda,” a large park located in the center of the city. While his bearers rested once more, he observed:

Anyone who has visited the City of Mexico will recollect, that opposite the

Alameda, on its southern front, is a row of fine houses, which continue on to the Calle San Francisco, and thence to the Great Plaza, forming the Calles Correo, Plateros, &c. These streets are inhabited principally by foreigners, particularly that of Plateros, which is filled with Frenchmen. To prevent their houses from being entered by the American soldiery upon the 14th, the windows were filled with national flags, indicating to what nation the respective owners belonged. There were Belgians, French, English, Prussians, Spanish, Danes, and Austrians — in fact, every kind of flag. Mexican flags alone could not be seen. Where these should have been, at times, the white flag — the banner of peace — hung through the iron railings, or from the balcony.<sup>136</sup>

Finally, after passing “up the Calle Correo,” Reid was taken to “the Hotel Compagnon, in the street of Espiritu Santo,” where, “for two months the invalid was confined to his bed.”<sup>137</sup>

On December 4, 1847, The Spirit of the Times published a notice, which originated with The Newport News, reporting that Reid had died as a result of his wounding at Chapultepec. Recuperating in the occupied Mexican capital, the ailing lieutenant was surely taken aback when he learned of the report, but at the same time was no doubt pleased to see himself described as “a man of singular and varied talents” who “gave much promise as a writer.” Reid was almost certainly also flattered to read: “It is mournful that talents like his should be so early sacrificed, and that his career should be so soon closed, far, very far, from the land of his birth and the bosom of his home, as well as the land of his adoption.” The paper also mistakenly reported that Reid had “distinguished himself” at the Battle of Monterey, apparently because authorship of a poem about the “bloody affair,” published a few weeks earlier, had been ascribed to him.<sup>138</sup> Reid’s alleged demise was also announced in The New York Herald.<sup>139</sup> Perhaps most gratifying of all was a gesture made by a young woman who did not know the lieutenant personally but was animated by the news of his death to take up her pen and compose an eight-stanza poem that began and finished with the following lines:

Gone — gone — gone!  
 Gone to his dreamless sleep!  
 And spirits of the brave,  
 Watching o'er his lone grave,  
 Weep — weep — weep!<sup>140</sup>

The young lady's poetic endeavor was afterward read aloud "at a public dinner, given in Columbus, Ohio, to celebrate the news just arrived from Mexico, of the taking of its capital by the American army." Apparently it was also printed in a local newspaper from which someone must have sent a clipping, for Reid later remembered reading "the...complimentary lines, while stretched upon a couch in the conquered city, and in a state of rapid convalescence, which, no doubt, the verses did something to hasten."<sup>141</sup>

In point of fact, Reid was so flattered by this gesture that in 1869, in the very first issue of his short-lived magazine Onward, he printed the poem in its entirety, along with an explanation of its origin, confiding to his readers:

For over twenty years, they [the lines] have lain in the desk of him, about whom they were written; though neither neglected nor forgotten. Time has removed the sacred seal; and they are here given to the public, with an indorsement [sic] from the conductor of this magazine; that as a "dirge," he thinks there is nothing in the English language superior, and that alongside them Wolfe's "Burial of Sir John Moore," appears but picturesque versification.<sup>142</sup>

Unfortunately, the erroneous news of Reid's demise eventually reached his parents in Ballyroney. It came to them in the form of a letter from a family friend who had immigrated to America and had read of the young soldier's reported death in the newspapers there. From all accounts, the Reverend and Mrs. Reid had no idea that their son had "lately abandoned the pen for the sword." Up until the moment they received the friend's missive, they thought their eldest male offspring was still trying to make a living writing, although they may have wondered why he had not sent them any clippings for several months. When the unexpected

letter reached “his family in their peaceful home on the banks of the Bann,” wrote Charles Ollivant, it “fell like a bombshell.” In one agonizing moment, he added: “The father’s high hopes for the ultimate success of his favorite son were cruelly dashed to the ground, and the whole household [was] filled with the profoundest grief.” But two weeks later, Reid’s mother reported a dream “to the effect that her eldest son was not dead after all” and by happy coincidence, the very next day the family received a newspaper clipping in the mail confirming it. Shortly after, a letter from Reid himself arrived, “which dispelled the sad feelings engendered by the first report, replacing them with the liveliest joy and thankfulness.”<sup>143</sup>

On October 28 Reid also wrote a letter to The Spirit of the Times, describing his injury. It was caused, he reported, by a “bullet about as large as a pigeon’s egg, (from an escopette),” that had “passed through the thick part of his [left] thigh, playing the very deuce with it.” When the letter was published in mid-December, the paper not only also called attention to the fact that their earlier report of Reid’s death was mistaken but also congratulated their correspondent “on his escape.”<sup>144</sup> It was not mentioned, however, that when Reid’s wound was initially treated, doctors considered amputating the affected limb but decided against it, believing that “the patient could not survive the operation, as the bullet had only just escaped severing an important artery.”<sup>145</sup>

While Reid was recuperating in Mexico City, his authorship of the poem “Monterey” (which his widow later mistakenly stated was published in Godey’s Ladies’ Magazine) was challenged by C. F. Hoffman, editor of The Literary World, who claimed it was he, and not the wounded lieutenant or anyone else, who originated the verses. The confusion, Hoffman

explained, had arisen “from the fact of there being a dozen lyrics entitled ‘Monterey,’ published nearly simultaneously” in newspapers and magazines throughout the United States. “A spirited one,” he added, “appeared in the New York Illustrated Magazine; Lieut. Gardinier, of the Army, was named as the author of another; and we have the impression of having seen a third in the Tribune, or some other city paper, under the name of the gallant Lieut. Mayne Reid.” In truth, concluded the peeved editor, “Monterey,” which had originally been printed in the November 14, 1846 edition of Yankee Doodle under a pseudonym, and had since been published by Appleton in a collection of similar poems, was his work.<sup>146</sup>

There is no reason to doubt Hoffman’s assertion. Throughout his life Reid nearly always rose to defend any challenge to his veracity. In this case, not only is there no record of his ever actually claiming authorship of “Monterey,” neither is there evidence he disputed Hoffman’s declaration. Owing further to the fact that Reid was not present at the Battle of Monterey (although some erroneous short biographies place him there, no doubt because of the poem), all indications are that assigning the verses to the young lieutenant was simply a mistake made by contemporary journalists and innocently perpetuated by his widow.

Within three months of his wounding, Reid had more or less recovered (although the injury would trouble him from time to time until it eventually ended his life). Certainly, if some reportedly rash behavior on his part is any indicator, he had at the very least regained a generous measure of that same reckless spirit that propelled him up the walls of Chapultepec. As the end of the year approached, Reid challenged Captain Justus McKinstry — an assistant quartermaster in the regular U.S. Army — to a duel, owing to some disparaging remarks about Reid’s character that McKinstry is said to have made. Through an intermediary, Capt.

John B. Grayson, the accused man sent a letter to Reid, denying the charge. Apparently, the brash young officer accepted his would-be opponent's explanation for there was no duel.<sup>147</sup>

On the morning of December 19, 1847, Burnett's New Yorkers, along with the South Carolina, Massachusetts, and two Pennsylvania regiments, marched the nine miles from Mexico City to San Angel, a small village situated on the northern edge of the Pedregal, where they were quartered for the remaining several months of the U.S. occupation of Mexico. As the troops left the city they paraded past a balcony from which General Scott reviewed them, hoping perhaps that in the case of the New York boys their departure might make it somewhat easier to maintain order in the capital. As noted beforehand, the men from the Empire State seemed to be a particularly troublesome set of soldiers whose unruly behavior, after a little more than a year in service, had not improved. As time went by, it may have worsened. In February, a Pennsylvania sergeant reported that "the inmates" of the guardhouse, where offenders were sent as punishment for various offenses, "are principally New Yorkers and the room is crowded." He also remarked that while the South Carolina regiment was "composed of a noble set of men" who were rarely seen intoxicated, "in all those respects the New Yorkers are the exact opposite." They were so rowdy, he added, that a court martial had been set up "to investigate the conduct of the New York Regiment for damaging the building in which they were quartered." Worst of all, he commented, was the robbery and murder of a South Carolina volunteer by some New Yorkers.<sup>148</sup>

Although it pales in comparison with some of the enlisted men's offenses, apparently even the regiment's officers were known to imbibe a bit too much alcohol at times. Recalling that period of his life, Reid told Charles Ollivant another story, in which he was the miscreant

and a future Civil War general attempted to set him to rights. Ollivant later included this improbable tale in his unpublished manuscript:

It was on the occasion of a dinner party given by Mayne Reid to his brother officers and friends. Wine was freely quaffed, songs and stories were the order of the day, and the spirits of all rose to meridian heights. The hours flew rapidly by, and midnight found the convives still seated at the table. At this juncture, a noisy summons from below roused their attention. Mayne Reid descended the stairs to see who the intruder was. He found it to be Captain McClellan of the Engineers — afterwards General McClellan, commander-in-chief of the Federal forces in the civil war between North and South — come to order the dispersion of the dinner party — though he belonged to another arm of the service, and had no right to interfere. High words passed between the two officers; and eventually Mayne Reid pushed Captain McClellan against the door-post of the dwelling house, and told him plainly that he should sit up with his friends all night, [if] it pleased him so to do — that it was no business of his (McClellan's) to interfere and other words to the same effect. Captain McClellan then apologised, and retreated utterly discomfited, leaving Mayne Reid master of the situation.<sup>149</sup>

After he had fully recovered from his Chapultepec wound, Lieutenant Reid was assigned the task of guarding a convent that may have been the same one — *Santa Catarina* — he identified by name in the concluding chapter of his postwar novel *The Rifle Rangers*, calling it “the richest in Mexico.”<sup>150</sup> It is difficult, however, to confirm this possibility. The only place in the Valley of Mexico with a similar designation is the *Capilla de Santa Catarina*, a small chapel still standing today in the suburb of Coyoacán — which in 1848 was a small village also on the northern edge of the Pedregal, slightly east of San Angel. In truth, any of several other former convents in the area could have been the one to which the young officer was assigned. In any event, it seems that in time Reid became a favorite of the nuns, who “frequently sent him little delicacies in the shape of sweetmeats, made by their own fair hands, with his initials in comfits on top.”<sup>151</sup> And from all accounts, he was also well liked by the monks. Recalling this period of his life, he wrote:

During the campaign in which I had taken part, chance threw me into the company of monks of more than one order. Under the circumstances that gave me entrée of their convents, and an intimate acquaintance with the brethren, even to joining them in their cups — these consisting of the best wines of Spain and her colonies, Xeres, Canario, Pedro Ximenes, with now and then a spice of Catalan brandy, opening the hearts and loosening the tongues of these cloistered gentry — I can speak to the character of the present monks of Mexico as Friar Gage spoke of their fraternity more than a century ago.<sup>152</sup>

In his quarters at the convent Reid must have kept himself busy writing the battle reports that were afterward published in The Spirit of the Times. Even earlier, it appears (probably during the several weeks his regiment spent in Puebla), he was composing and sending pieces to other publications in the States. A short story, “The Mysterious Lady,” set “on the eastern shore of Lake Pontchartrain” near New Orleans, appeared in the January 1, 1848 issue of The Green Mountain Gem; A Monthly Journal of Literature, Science, and the Arts. It was similar to his other tales with a Louisiana setting, except with a slight twist; the “Mysterious Lady” of the title, with whom the story’s hero falls in love, has a glass eye!<sup>153</sup> While in Mexico City Reid probably also wrote several of the poems and stories that were later published in Graham’s magazine, a few of which appear to have been inspired by the young officer’s purported love affair with a Mexican woman and to whom he was reportedly engaged. A brief news item, published in the Pittsburgh Daily Dispatch in the early part of 1848, named the object of his affections.

Lieut. T. Mayne Reid, whose death was reported some time since, is about to be married to Signorina Gundelophe [sic] Rozas, a beautiful lady, daughter of Senator Rozas, and said to be the wealthiest heiress in the valley of Mexico. He formerly resided here, and was known as the ‘Poor Scholar.’<sup>154</sup>

A reporter for The New York Herald, alluding to the short-lived “All Mexico” annexation movement that was then prevalent in the United States put it more cleverly when he wrote:





Figure 17. Illustration for Reid's poem "Adios," showing the young lieutenant in the arms of his Mexican sweetheart. From Onward, May 1869.

### A NOVEL ANNEXATION

Lieutenant Mayne Reid, of the New York Volunteers, formerly attached to the staff of the New York Herald, is about to annex himself to a daughter of one of richest men in Mexico. This is a novel annexation, and we may in due time look out for a new work from the gallant officer.<sup>155</sup>

A short notice in The Spirit of the Times was almost identical:

‘ANNEXATION.’ — Lieut. Mayne Reid, whose death was reported some time since, is about to be married to Signorina Guadeloupe Rozas, a beautiful lady, daughter of Senator Rozas, and said to be the wealthiest heiress in the valley of Mexico. That’s right; the fighting is over, and now for ‘annexation.’ We are for it decidedly.<sup>156</sup>

Reid’s widow later charged that all these stories were “untrue,” but apparently only insofar as the alleged engagement was concerned.<sup>157</sup> Similarly, Charles Ollivant, who held that nothing was “positively known” about this aspect of Reid’s life, adamantly declared “there was no truth” in reports of an impending marriage. At the same time, he conceded that his former employer was almost certainly “acquainted and flirted with the fair Guadalupe who figures as the heroine of his first romance, the “Rifle Rangers.””<sup>158</sup> One anecdote, told to Ollivant “by Mayne Reid himself,” further confirms the affair, while simultaneously illustrating how at times the vain young officer could be a bit too self-absorbed for his own good. Reid was something of a dandy, inferred Ollivant, remarking that he “was wont to empty his trunk in adorning his person before calling upon his sweetheart, the beautiful Guadalupe.” His habit while dressing was to “stir up his enthusiasm by reciting poetry, much to the annoyance of his fellow officers, who were envious of his of success with the fair sex.” On one occasion “he commenced declaiming his favorite poem, Fitz-Greene Halleck’s ‘Marco Botzaris,’” which included the verse:

At midnight in his guarded tent,  
The Turk lay dreaming of the hour  
When Greece her knees...

At this point, Lt. Ned Marshall of the 15th Infantry Regiment, who had somehow become acquainted with Reid, interrupted his friend in mid-verse, asking facetiously, “Why did she grease her knees?” When Reid appeared puzzled, Marshall remarked: “You said ‘grease her knees,’ Now the question that agitates the country is, why did they grease her knees?” Failing to appreciate the humor in Marshall’s glib query, Reid just looked at him for a moment and then snapped: “You’re a fool.” According to Ollivant, only “an ample apology” from Marshall averted a duel.<sup>159</sup>

While we may be reasonably sure Reid had a Mexican lover named Guadalupe, one unanswered question remains: was she a wealthy heiress, the daughter of a Senator? The answer: quite possibly. Clearly, her given name was misspelled in the American press. Assuming a similar misspelling of her family’s name and a misidentification of his position, the young lady’s father could have been Luis De La Rosa Oteiza, a journalist and diplomat appointed to the post of Foreign Minister by interim Mexican President Peña y Peña, and who on May 26, 1848, along with U.S. commissioners A.H. Sevier and Nathan Clifford, signed the so-called “Protocol of Querétaro” — a document explaining amendments made to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo by the U.S. Senate. However, there seems to be no way to confirm whether or not De La Rosa had a daughter named Guadalupe.

If Reid’s paramour was indeed the offspring of a prominent Mexican politician, the reason why the two young lovers were not wed is not difficult to deduce. Even if her family liked him personally, Reid was plainly an unacceptable suitor. First, the young lieutenant belonged to an invading enemy army. Second, and worst perhaps, he was a Protestant. To a devout Mexican family this would certainly have been just as objectionable as the young

woman's Catholic faith would have been (and most certainly was) to Reid's Presbyterian parents. For a high Mexican official to allow his daughter to marry such a man would have been unthinkable. Finally, there is some possibility that marriage to another man had already been arranged. An impassioned love poem Reid may have composed while in Mexico lends considerable weight to this supposition. Reid would later refute any allegations that a long-term relationship with a Mexican woman was something he had ever seriously contemplated, but his denial seems insincere. There is simply too much evidence that the memory of his Mexican love affair haunted the former soldier long after he left the country, particularly in his postwar novel, The Rifle Rangers, the pages of which abound with it.

Complimentary portrayals of Mexican women, scattered throughout the pages of Reid's published work, suggest also that there may have been others, in addition to "the fair Guadalupe," to whom his attention was turned during the months he spent in Mexico. Charles Ollivant certainly thought so. "Like Byron," the aspiring biographer wrote, "he appears to have had an unhappy weakness for the female sex."<sup>160</sup> According to the author's widow (of all people!) the attraction was mutual. "Some fair Mexicans," she wrote, likened "the gallant officer" to "'Don Juan Tenorio,' a [romantic] character which appears in one of their most famous plays." This assessment seems also to support the opinion of an American newspaper writer who described Reid in print "as a 'mixture of Adonis and Apollo Belvedere, with a dash of the Centaur.'" Concurring with Ollivant, Mrs. Reid, with no apparent trace of jealousy, imagined it was "quite possible that more than one black-eyed señorita watched the final departure of this hero from Mexico with regret and tears."<sup>161</sup> In any event, admiration for Mexico's opposite sex — hand-in-hand with a contrary opinion of

the country's male population — was not peculiar to Reid, who wrote in the glossary that accompanied early editions of The Rifle Rangers:

The 'men' of Mexico, but particularly those who dwell in the towns, are small and bilious-looking. The women present a better appearance, and, in general are fine-looking creatures. It was a common saying among the officers of the American army [during the war with Mexico] that 'the women of Mexico were the best *men* of the country.'

From all accounts, there were a great many Mexican women who freely consorted with the invading *Yanquis*. By doing so, however, they put themselves at risk of retribution by their countrymen, whose revenge taking may have been fueled more often by feelings of jealousy than patriotic fervor. Reid certainly seemed to think so, if some of his postwar work is any indicator. Undoubtedly the most disturbing is a short story, "A Case of Retaliation," which was included in a collection called The Guerrilla Chief and Other Tales. The story also appeared with no byline in the September 1851 issue of Harper's New Monthly Magazine, entitled "Memories of Mexico."

As in similar Reid tales, the main character is a young U.S. Army lieutenant who is unmistakably based on the author himself, two of the most telling indicators being that he is named Henry — the same name Reid gave the principal character in his first postwar novel (and to some of his pre-war short story characters) — and that he is wounded at Chapultepec, being afterwards carried into the city on a stretcher! In this story however, the dashing young officer shares the spotlight with the captain of his company, a close friend identified only as L—, who is also injured by enemy fire, but in the earlier Battle of Contreras, "the bullet from an escopette" passing "through his left arm below the elbow joint," causing damage that can only be remedied by amputation. Early on, the young lieutenant leaves his badly-wounded

comrade in the care of a beautiful, compassionate Mexican señorita and her elderly father, who live in the village of San Angel, while he goes off to lead the charge at Churubusco. Afterwards, the victorious lieutenant returns to the hacienda where he left his friend to find that he has been well looked after by the girl, whose name is Rafaela, and her *padre*. Later, following his own wounding, Henry is visited by the recovered L—, who in time confides that he has fallen in love with his attractive caregiver — and she with him.<sup>162</sup>

Unfortunately, this creates a dilemma: L— is concerned because the war is now coming to a close and he is at a loss to know what do. If he marries the girl and stays in Mexico, he risks putting himself, his sweetheart, and her father in danger from Mexican patriots seeking vengeance against the *Ayankeedos* — Mexicans who collaborated with or were friendly to the Americans during the occupation. If the captain marries his lover and takes her with him to the United States, the old man, who refuses to even consider leaving, might be endangered. Furthermore, Rafaela herself is resigned to staying if her *padre* will not go.<sup>163</sup>

As an alternative, Henry suggests that L— return to the U.S. with his regiment, “stay a month or two until the excitement consequent upon our evacuation cools down,” and then, he advises further: “Shave off your mustache, put on plain clothes; come back and marry Rafaela.” Although the plan has some obvious flaws, the most obvious being that it leaves the girl and her father open to possible retribution during the young captain’s absence, L— agrees, although “it is terrible to think of parting with her.”<sup>164</sup>

On the evening prior to the regiment’s leaving Mexico City, Henry is about to fall asleep in his quarters when he is aroused by a frantic knocking at the door. It is L—, whose

face is “ghastly,” with white lips, set teeth, and “dark rings...around this eyes.” “The eyes themselves,” Henry (Reid) remarked, “glared in their sockets, lit up by some terrible emotion.”<sup>165</sup>

Insisting that Henry get up and come with him, telling him that he needs his help, L— takes the bewildered lieutenant to the Convent of San Francisco, near the *Alameda*, “where our regiment had quartered for the night.” There, Henry sees something that horrifies him:

As we entered the room — a large one — I saw five or six females, with about a dozen men, soldiers and officers. All were excited by some unusual occurrence. The females were Mexicans, and their heads were muffled in their rebosos. Some were weeping aloud, others talking in strains of lamentation. Among them I recognized my friend’s betrothed.

“Dearest Rafaela!” cried L—, throwing his arms around her — “it is my friend. Here, Henry, look here! look at this!”

As he spoke, he raised the reboso, and gently drew back her long black hair. I saw blood upon her cheek and shoulders! I looked more closely. It flowed from her ears.

“Her ears! *O God! they have been cut off!*”

“Ay, ay” cried L—, hoarsely; and dropping the dark tresses, again threw his arms around the girl, and kissed away the tears that were rolling down her cheeks — while uttering expressions of endearment and consolation.

I turned to the other females; they were all similarly mutilated; some were even worse, for their foreheads, where the U.S. had been freshly burned upon them, were red and swollen. Excepting Rafaela, they were all of the “poblana” class — the laundresses — the mistresses of the soldiers.<sup>166</sup>

Following this horrible revelation, the American soldiers ride out in the night and after leaving all the women in the care of Henry, who was “glad of the excuse to be absent from such a scene,” they locate the perpetrators and promptly exact revenge by hanging them from some trees surrounding a small roadside shrine in the “pueblito of Piedad.” The story is brought to a happy conclusion with L— marrying Rafaela in “the old Spanish cathedral” in New Orleans and then returning with his bride to Mexico where, reports Henry, “The Mexican government behaved better to the Ayankeeados that was expected,” leaving his

friend to enjoy “his fortune in a snug hacienda, somewhere in the neighborhood of San Angel.”<sup>167</sup>

What makes this story particularly interesting is trying to determine how much is based on fact and how much is fictitious. Did Reid, for instance, have a friend, a captain in his own regiment whose surname began with the letter “L,” who lost his arm at Contreras? The answer? Not so far as it is known. None of the New York regiment’s captains had surnames beginning with the letter “L,” so who was the character based upon? Or was he modeled after anyone at all?

Chances are the character of L—, if he represents an actual person at all, is probably based either on Captain (later General) Phillip Kearny — who Reid admired and praised for his gallantry more than two decades later in an article written for the first issue of his short-lived American magazine, Onward — or Reid’s friend and fellow New Yorker, Lieut. Thomas W. Sweeny, who lost his right arm following the Battle of Churubusco (not Contreras, as in the story). Kearny too was wounded at the Battle of Churubusco, losing his left arm afterward to the surgeon’s knife. Neither Kearny nor Sweeny, however, married a Mexican woman in New Orleans and returned to live in the village of San Angel. Clearly, most of the story is the product of Reid’s fertile imagination, but just as L— goes to visit his friend following his wounding, so too did the Sweeny visit Reid in a Mexico City hospital, after he was wounded at Chapultepec. While there, Sweeny reportedly said: “I am sorry to see you so badly hurt, old man,” to which Reid allegedly replied, “I was pretty roughly used” but added, “with a gleam in his eye, ‘By God, I was the first man over the walls!’” Of course this story, which was told many years later by Sweeny’s son, had at least one obvious



embellishment: Reid never claimed to be the first over the wall at Chapultepec, graciously conceding that honor to another friend, Lt. Hypolite Dardonville.<sup>168</sup>

As for the disfigurement of the Mexican women by their countrymen, it is interesting to note that in 1861 Reid included an almost identical tale of retribution in his novel, The War Trail, couching it in much the same horrified language. This suggests he actually witnessed or heard of such an occurrence and that it made a deep impression on his mind. But were Mexican women who fraternized with U.S. soldiers actually ever mutilated in the manner described in the story? According to at least one other soldier, the answer is “yes.” In his Mexican War reminiscences, My Confession, Samuel Chamberlain, who served in the dragoons with Taylor’s army in Northern Mexico, wrote:

During the war many of the females of the country had proved firm friends of “Los Gringos,” and we were often indebted to them for valuable information regarding the movements of the enemy, their own countrymen. Our fair female friends showed the utmost contempt for the weak dissolute “greasers, “ and were public in their outspoken admiration of the stalwart frames, fair skins, blue eyes, and the kind and courteous demeanor of *Los Barbarianos del Norte*. This feeling was not confined to the lower classes; the *señoritas ricas* and the “*doñas puros Castellanas*” of the towns shared it with the *poblanas* and *margaritas* of the villages.

As might be supposed, this did not increase the love of the hombres for us, or render the position of the “Yankedos” now that their protectors were leaving the country, a pleasant one. They suffered fearful outrages from the returned Mexican soldiery and the *ladrones* of the country — they were violated, ears cut off, branded with the letters “U.S.” and in some cases impaled by the cowardly “greasers,” who thus wreaked their vengeance on defenceless women.

At Saltillo there were a number of women who had lived with the Americans, and were models of their class. When our troops evacuated the town these unfortunates were compelled to remain behind, some of them ladies of unusual beauty. After General Lombardini’s Mexican division reoccupied the places, the authorities got up a grand celebration to commemorate the treaty of peace. At midnight the Grand Plaza was all ablaze with fireworks, and full of drunken soldiers, *pollos* and *ladrones*, when a fat Dominican monk, one Padre Olitze, got up on the fountain in the centre of the square, and in the most fiery language denounced these poor “Yankedos” to the mob. With yells of fiends, they searched out the miserable creatures, dragged them from their beds in their night clothes to the plaza, where for hours they were subjected to

nameless horrors; an unheard of atrocity was perpetuated on them by the agency of the less brutal Burros, and then in their dying agonies they had their ears cut off and the finishing stroke (a merciful one) given by cutting their throats. Twenty-three women were tortured to death at this time, and no notice was taken of it by General Lombardini, or anyone else among the Mexican authorities.<sup>169</sup>

It is interesting to note further that Chamberlain, whose “Confession” was not published or made public until the mid-1950s, not only corroborates Reid’s allegations of Mexican retribution (albeit in a different location) but also offers evidence that the two men, who could not possibly have known one another at the time of the war, were kindred spirits. Both, for instance, were vain, affecting similar styles of facial hair (mustache and imperial). Additionally, both seemed to adore Mexican women and were reportedly successful, at least by their own accounts, in wooing them. Furthermore both killed a fellow U.S. soldier, although under different circumstances. It’s doubtful they ever met but if they had, the two *raconteurs* would surely have found plenty to talk about.

Reid’s widow later wrote that it was during this period of her late husband’s life — the six months or so that passed between release from the hospital and his departure from Mexico — that he acquired the storehouse of knowledge that enabled him later to describe the country, along with its people, plants, and animals, with such incredible precision. This is not surprising. Garrison duty, as any soldier who has served in such a capacity can attest, can be incredibly boring without some way of keeping your mind engaged. During the American occupation of Mexico City, some officers spent their spare hours drinking brandy, smoking cigars, and playing cards at the Aztec Club, a sort of gentleman’s association that over the years has evolved into a hereditary society. Reid was not a member, although he seems to have enjoyed socializing as much as the next fellow. In any case, much like the young

Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson — who spent his time learning Spanish, Reid seems to have applied his off hours, when he wasn’t busy writing, to more instructive purposes. Even his courtship of the lovely Guadalupe must have provided the young officer, who seems to have had an almost sponge like ability to absorb information, with invaluable insights into Mexican cultural life.

Owing to the dangers involved (guerrillas were still operating in the vicinity of the capital long after it fell to Scott’s army), Reid was doubtless careful not to travel alone when he went out exploring. One who might have accompanied him from time to time was Lieut. Francis E. Pinto, who maintained a friendship with the Irish author long after their service in Mexico came to an end, and who had the distinction of becoming the oldest surviving officer of the regiment, dying at the age of 83 in 1905.<sup>170</sup> One man who is known to have gone on local expeditions with Reid was Thomas Sweeny, whose son William wrote in 1905 that his father had “related to me many incidents of their [his and Reid’s] military service in the ‘Aztec land.’” Once the two men had recovered from their respective wounds, the younger Sweeny wrote, his father and Reid “made frequent excursions to the vicinity of the City of Mexico,” where, wrote Sweeny, echoing Mrs. Reid, the future author gathered information that “he afterward utilized when he came to write his novels of Mexico and the Mexican War.”<sup>171</sup> One incident the young Sweeny related is particularly amusing:

On one occasion Reid asked my father to accompany him to a village some distance from the City of Mexico, and where it was said the oldest church in Mexico was located. As they approached the village they perceived a man at work in a near-by field. Reid, who was an excellent Spanish scholar, hailed the man and told him they desired to see the padre, or village priest. The man seemed much alarmed, and started toward the village on a run. In a short time he returned, accompanied by a large body of the villagers armed to the teeth, and with the padre at their head. Reid and Sweeny expected every moment to be attacked, and in their almost indefensible condition —

they had only their pistols with them — they would have stood a slim chance, if any, of escaping with their lives. With admirable self-control, Reid addressed the padre and informed him that they were American officers, who, learning that some of our soldiers had committed outrages on the villagers, had come to inquire into the matter, and if they found the reports to be true to do all in their power to have the guilty ones brought to justice. On hearing this the attitude of the padre and his people changed at once from hostility to great friendliness. In order to make a better impression, Reid likewise told the padre that he and Sweeny were “Christianos,” and in order to show his devoutness Reid knelt down by a wayside shrine, so common in Mexico and all old Catholic countries, and fervently kissed the feet of the image several times. Sweeny, who knew Reid as a professional infidel, could only refrain from laughter at this sudden conversion when he reflected upon the gravity of this situation. The padre now invited them to his house to partake of refreshment, and they found their host to be an agreeable and cultured gentleman. In the course of conversation Reid spoke of the church, when the padre informed them that it was not far off, and on their leaving he instructed them how to reach it by the shortest route and also gave them much valuable information relating to its early history.

On their return to the City of Mexico Reid begged Sweeny not to mention the incident of his sudden conversion to Christianity, but the story was too good to keep, and finally leaked out, much to Reid’s disgust.<sup>172</sup>

After several months of no doubt similar excursions, the inquisitive and resourceful young officer’s military career officially came to an end on May 5, 1848, when he reportedly resigned his commission. In both the Memoir and Life and Adventures, his widow claimed he left the army with the rank of Captain, the title by which he was addressed for most of the rest of his life. However, it appears that Reid’s claim to that grade is dubious. All compiled postwar rosters of officers list him with the rank of either Second or First Lieutenant<sup>173</sup> and neither his pension application nor any of its supporting documents make mention of any rank above Second Lieutenant, although as previously remarked, a promotion to First Lieutenant was reported in the press following the fall of Mexico City.<sup>174</sup>

One explanation for Reid’s postwar use of “Captain” preceding his name could be that he was awarded a brevet, i.e., “honorary,” rank and somehow it went unrecorded in official records. It may also be that Reid’s claim to be called “Captain” stems from a special

act of the New York State Legislature, passed in 1851, conferring “brevets on *all* the surviving officers” of Burnett’s regiment of New York volunteers, although Reid’s name (along with some other surviving officers) was inexplicably omitted from a list of lieutenants upon whom the brevet rank of captain had been bestowed, which was printed in the New York Daily Times.<sup>175</sup> Assuming that the exclusion was inadvertent, the awarding of a postwar brevet may explain why when Reid’s first novel was published in 1849, it was advertised as being written by “Lieut. Mayne Reid,” whereas subsequent works are all by “Capt. Mayne Reid.” Or, it might simply be that he or a subsequent publisher thought that “Captain” carried more cachet than “Lieutenant” and the decision was made to use the title regardless of any entitlement he may or may not have had to it.

On June 18, 1848 Reid’s company (B) along with two others —H and K — departed Vera Cruz aboard the schooner *Creole*. Numbering 148 men in all, they reached New Orleans on or about June 24.<sup>176</sup> The New Orleans *Delta*, taking note of their arrival — along with four companies of Pennsylvania volunteers aboard the steamer *Edith* — had this to say about the losses they suffered during the war:

A little more than twelve months ago, the two great states of New York and Pennsylvania sent forth to the scene of war, two splendid volunteer regiments, composed each of about one thousand men. These regiments, after serving through the brilliant and stirring scenes in the valley of Mexico, have returned home, and are now encamped in our neighborhood. Their numbers are sadly reduced. Not one third of the force they carried away has returned.<sup>177</sup>

Although Reid was probably delighted to have the chance to visit New Orleans once more, the New Yorkers’ stay in the vicinity of the Crescent City was brief. Continuing their journey by sea, they reached Fort Hamilton on July 11, 1848. The very next day, public funeral services were held at Grace Church in Manhattan for the six officers of the regiment

whose bodies had earlier been recovered and carried home for re-burial by order of New York City's Board of Alderman. The honored dead included Lt. Col. Charles Baxter and Capt. Charles Pearson, both of whom had succumbed to wounds received at Chapultepec, Capt. James Barclay, who died at San Angel on January 30, 1848, Capt., Abram F. O'Linda, who was killed at Chapultepec, Lt. Edgar Chandler, who died of wounds received at the Battle of Churubusco, and Lt. Charles F. Gallagher, who passed away near the City of Mexico in September 1847. As perhaps his final military duty, Reid participated in the services, which included the firing of guns, the pealing of church bells, and a procession to Greenwood Cemetery. In the official program of ceremonies Reid is listed as a pallbearer for Chandler.<sup>178</sup>

The remainder of the New York regiment returned home on July 22 aboard the ship *Fanny Forester*. Five days later, the steamboat *Columbia* carried the men to Castle Garden for a grand reception to which the public was invited. There, a decoration authorized by the New York state legislature was awarded to most, if not all, of the surviving soldiers. The medal, silver in color (but perhaps in not in content), was encircled by the words "Presented by the City of New York to the N.Y. Regiment of Volunteers in Mexico." It featured an eagle, an Indian, a sailor, a Dutch windmill and beavers in its design. The name and company of each recipient was engraved on the face. A published list of the names of the men who were recommended to receive the award included Reid.<sup>179</sup>

Reid's return from the U.S.-Mexican War alive and relatively intact, in combination with his subsequent success as a novelist, seems all the more remarkable in light of a New York newspaper report that appeared a little less than ten years later, summarizing the fate of

the men with whom he had gone off to war. Shockingly, of the 800 or so soldiers that were part of the New York regiment in 1846, “scarcely a fifth part of their original number” were believed to still be alive. Some 227 had died in Mexico, either from disease or in battle, while a nearly identical number had been discharged on certificates of disability. The number of missing or deserted was 35. And “since their return from Mexico,” it was reported, the former volunteers “have been seriously damaged in reputation as a body, by the dissipated and idle habits of some of their number.” These vices included “drunkenness or vagabondism” which, the writer suggested, had “swept off those addicted to it.” The year previous, the report added, an association of former New York volunteers had been formed in the city “to look after the interests of the surviving members of the corps, and for mutual assistance generally.” According to the records of the organization “it appears that only 114 officers and soldiers of the New-York Regiment are known to be living, while there are 100 others who are supposed to be living, or not known to be dead.” Apparently, Reid was among the latter number, for his name was absent from a roster that accompanied the report. This omission was corrected a week later by the printing of a roster of only the former officers known to be alive.<sup>180</sup>

In 1851, in addition to brevetting the surviving officers of the regiment, the New York State Legislature appropriated a sum of money to be awarded as bonus to veterans of the regiment and a commission was set up by the Mayor’s Office of the City of New York to distribute the funds. It is doubtful, however, that the former lieutenant ever received any of this money owing to the fact that it was necessary for applications to be made in person at the mayor’s office and in 1851 Reid was living in London. He also missed a lecture on behalf of

the sick and disabled New York veterans, which took place at the Metropolitan Hall in New York City on May 25, 1853, as well as a banquet in honor of Major General Quitman, held at the Astor House on July 29 of that same year, at which the former officers of the regiment were lauded along with Quitman.<sup>181</sup>



## CHAPTER SIX

### AMERICAN INTERLUDE

I part for a while from the land I have so strangely loved — from the land I still love. I leave it with a thousand regrets. But a just cause tempts me.

— Mayne Reid, The New York Herald, June 28, 1849<sup>1</sup>

After returning to the United States from Mexico, Reid wasted little time resuming his old life. Following the funeral of his fallen comrades and the awarding of medals in New York, the young hero of Chapultepec spent the remainder of the summer of 1848 at Newport, Rhode Island. There, in all likelihood he checked into his favorite hostelry — the Ocean House. A newspaper, probably The Newport Daily News, called attention to his arrival:

We omitted yesterday to notice the arrival in our midst of this chivalric young soldier, fresh from the field of glory in Mexico. He had been reported killed once or twice, and also wedded to a Mexican heiress. He looks, however, as if neither of these evils had approached him, and a finer or more gallant figure and countenance are not to be seen any day in our streets.<sup>2</sup>

Reid's summer sojourn in Newport is another brief period in the author's life about which little is known. We may imagine that it consisted of a succession of lazy, do-nothing days; that he sat by the shores of Narragansett Bay, gazing at the waves and yearning for his "fair Guadalupe." Perhaps he did some writing. In any case, at the close of the season the former soldier left Rhode Island and made his way to Philadelphia, where once more he attempted to make a living with his pen. Earlier that same year, while he was still in Mexico, Godey's Lady's Book had printed "Francisco and Inez. A Duetto" — an unremarkable short poem that the aspiring young author may have composed while recovering from his

Chapultepec wound.<sup>3</sup> For some unknown reason, he never wrote for Godey's again. But some of Reid's immediate post-war literary output found its way into Graham's. The first of these efforts was an impassioned poetic plea addressed "To Guadalupe," published in the September 1848 issue. It is interesting that these verses appeared under Reid's own name and not a pseudonym like "the Poor Scholar." (Did he think she might read it? Did he send her a copy of the magazine or a clipping? Alas, we do not know.) "Mexican Jealousy: A Sketch of the Late Campaign," a short story attributed to "Ecolier," was included in the same number.<sup>4</sup>

In "To Guadalupe" the heartsick former soldier employed ambiguous language to disguise what was probably a very personal message — one that only a certain dark-eyed señorita would be likely to understand. On the surface, its ten stanzas tell of the reluctant parting of two young lovers. While the reason for the couple's separation is not expressly spelled out in the poem, one portion suggests that the obstacle to their bliss was an arranged marriage by the girl's family, which may very well have been the actual reason why the smitten young lieutenant and his raven-haired sweetheart were compelled to part.

Thee not upbraiding — thou hast not deceived me —  
 For from the first I knew *thy compromise* —  
 No, Guadalupe this hath never grieved me —  
 I won thy love — so spoke thy lips and eyes: —  
 The consolation of this proud possessing  
 Should almost change my sorrow into bliss:  
 I have thy heart — enough for me of blessing —  
 Another may take all since I am lord of this.<sup>5</sup>

Reid's short story "Mexican Jealousy" supports the supposition that the former soldier's heart was aching for the girl he had left behind in the "Land of Anahuac." This tale, which describes the circumstances under which the two lovers may have met, tells of a wounded American officer who becomes infatuated with an attractive young woman whose

home is located on a street bordering the *Alameda* — a large public park in the heart of Mexico City. The story ends in tragedy, however, when a rejected Mexican suitor murders the young lieutenant's lover in a fit of jealous rage.<sup>6</sup> Although the conclusion was almost certainly the product of Reid's imagination, one cannot help but wonder why he chose to end the story in that way. Did the disappointed young Irishman think that if he imagined his beloved was dead, he would stop thinking about her? We can only guess.

Another Mexican adventure, "Scouting Near Vera Cruz: A Sketch of the Late Campaign," appeared in Graham's October issue.<sup>7</sup> It too was grounded in Reid's wartime experiences, although the line between fact and fiction was indistinctly drawn. "To Her Who Can Understand It," a second poem that was clearly inspired by the author's yearning for his lost love, was found in the same issue. It ended with an impassioned pledge: "The love I promised thee, when last we parted, Shall never be another's while *you* live."<sup>8</sup>

The last of Reid's contributions to Graham's, "The Wounded Guerilla: A Sketch of the Late Campaign," appeared in the January 1849 issue. Set in Puebla, where a portion of Scott's army halted during the summer of 1847, the story bears some slight resemblance to "Mexican Jealousy." It tells the tale of a Mexican guerrilla fighter named Pepe who becomes angered when the girl whose heart he had hoped to capture, Remedios, rejects his advances in favor of a dashing young American officer, obviously based on Reid himself. Hoping to exact revenge, the guerrilla ambushes and shoots the lieutenant but only wounds him. In the end, other U.S. soldiers kill Pepe, leaving him "on the road a bleeding corpse".<sup>9</sup>

The remainder of Reid's work published during the immediate postwar period found its way into the pages of the Ladies' National Magazine ("The Wife: A Tale of Mexico,

November 1848) and The Saturday Evening Post (“Original Sketch of the American Army into Puebla,” February 25, 1849).<sup>10</sup>

Apart from the publication of these compositions, little is known about Reid’s second period of residence in Philadelphia. Surely he could not have made a living from the small sums he earned writing. What else did he do? The only other certainty is that from Monday, October 23 through Friday, October 27, his play, “Love’s Martyr,” completed some two years earlier, was performed at the Walnut Street Theater, with noted English actor James W. Wallack, Jr. “taking the leading part.” Reid was almost certainly thrilled to have his play performed. Having the celebrated son of distinguished thespian Henry Wallack in the lead role was icing on the cake. Unfortunately, the drama, which opened on Monday, October 23, closed after only five performances.<sup>11</sup> No doubt elation quickly turned into disappointment.

If the short run of “Love’s Martyr” caused Reid to entertain any doubts about his future prospects, it was at this moment that fate stepped in to give him another chance. In Philadelphia, according to one account, Reid happened to encounter his friend Donn Piatt, “who invited him to pass the winter at his home...whither the two men went in the latter part of the year.” Another version of the story has Reid turning up unexpectedly on the doorstep of his friend’s home in southern Ohio, where the impetuous young Irishman passed the winter of 1848-1849 alternately “making love to the fair girls of the Mac-o-chee,” “dashing over the country” on Piatt’s prized bay mare, Jenny, and “writing a romance with the scene in Mexico and on our Mexican Border.”<sup>12</sup>

The novel that poured forth from Reid’s pen — a tale of adventure based on his own experiences in the Mexican War — was quite clearly an outgrowth of his “Sketches by a

Skirmisher” and the short stories he had already composed for Graham’s. Although it would later be expanded and renamed The Rifle Rangers, the book’s original title was War Life; Or, the Adventures of a Light Infantry Officer. During the long, cold winter evenings, Piatt remembered, the family would gather around the fireplace and the ex-soldier “would read chapters to us.” The future Union general thought his friend “was a fine reader” but overly sensitive to criticism: “If the commendation did not come up to his self-appreciation he would go to bed in a huff, and, not touching pen to paper for days, would make my mare suffer in his wild rides.” The young Ohioan quickly learned that to save wear and tear on his horse “I must praise his work, and he came to regard me in time as Byron did Gifford” — a literary critic who had proclaimed Byron “the greatest of living poets,” prompting Byron in turn to declare that Gifford was “a damned discriminating fellow.”<sup>13</sup>

Although there is some reason to believe he carried the memory of his Mexican lover in his heart for most of the rest of his life, apparently the several months Reid spent in Logan County, Ohio helped him forget, at least for a time, the heartache that the termination of that affair caused him. In later life, Piatt revealed that during the time his friend was a guest in his home, the former lieutenant pursued the affections “of a fair inmate of our house,” a blue-eyed beauty who failed to return his ardor. (Her identity is unknown.) In spite of this setback, Reid seems to have genuinely enjoyed the time he spent at Mac-o-Chee. When he departed in the spring of 1849, recollected Piatt, his friend wrote two letters “from the station where he awaited his train.” One contained a poem the Ohio lawyer preserved as a keepsake — a set of verses that had “no remarkable poetic merit,” but which “gracefully put on record his kind feelings on parting from the house he had made his home for nearly a year.”<sup>14</sup>



Figure 18. Reid's friend Donn Piatt, at whose Ohio home he wrote War Life, the forerunner of his first successful novel, The Rifle Rangers. Photo from the Library of Congress.

From Ohio, Reid traveled by train to New York, and it is here that we encounter one of the mysteries in Mayne Reid's life. According to Charles Ollivant, the would-be author took the novel he had spent all winter writing to publisher after publisher, only to be turned down time and time again. "Finally," after becoming "disgusted with his non-success," the frustrated young man allegedly "locked up the manuscript in his trunk, not caring if he never saw it again."<sup>15</sup> Mrs. Reid more or less corroborated this version of events, remarking that the offers "he received were unsatisfactory."<sup>16</sup> But both these statements are untrue. In point of fact, Reid *was* successful in finding a publisher.

In the late spring of 1849, advertisements began appearing in American periodicals, announcing that serialization of "Lieutenant Mayne Reid's great romance," entitled War Life; or, the Adventures of a Light Infantry Officer, would commence on May 5 in the pages of The New York Literary American, a weekly magazine owned by English-born publisher Andrew J. Townshend and edited by George P. Quackenbos. In the event that readers missed the obvious inference in the book's title, the magazine declared that Reid's maiden work was "founded upon his adventures in the late Mexican War" and pronounced it "the most remarkable and interesting work that has appeared in the New York Press," adding that it had been "procured at great expense."<sup>17</sup> Reporting the news, the Literary Union, a rival publication, generously wished Reid well, remarking: "Success to the enterprise."<sup>18</sup>

Following serialization of the returned soldier's work in its "ample columns,"<sup>19</sup> the Literary American published War Life in book form, although it must have been a very limited run. Today, only two copies are today known to exist — one in the rare books division of the New York Public Library and the other at the University of Texas at Austin.<sup>20</sup>

**LIEUTENANT MAYNE REID'S  
GREAT ROMANCE**

Founded on his adventures in the late Mexican  
War, entitled,

**War Life!**

OR,  
**The Aventures of a Light Infantry Officer,**  
Has been procured at a great expense by the  
EDITOR OF THE

**NEW-YORK LITERARY AMERICAN.**

And will be published in that paper of May 5, and  
the succeeding weeks. In the course of the work  
the storming of Vera Cruz, several Battles, and the  
Triumphal Entry into the City of Mexico are faith-  
fully described. It is the most remarkable and in-  
teresting work that has appeared in the New York  
Press, and will be

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Figure 19. Advertisement for the serialization of War Life, Reid's first novel, in the New York Literary American magazine, which afterward published it in book form.



What makes all this so puzzling is that the two people to whom Reid was closest seem to have known nothing at all about War Life (and we may reasonably presume they did not conspire to keep it hidden). We can only conclude that he chose to conceal it from them, but why? Unfortunately, the answer to that question may never be known.

Reid's circumstances in terms of a job and residence during the three or four months he spent in New York in early 1849 are also unknown. It is certainly doubtful that he could have made ends meet on whatever amount the Literary American paid him for War Life. In all probability he went back to work for the New York Herald or the Spirit of the Times in some minor editorial capacity.

Around this same time, New Yorkers were reminded that in 1819 a gold snuff box had been awarded to General, later President, Andrew Jackson by the City of New York "for distinguished military services." Many years later, when he was making out his will, Jackson left the gilded container "to that patriot of New York City who should be adjudged by his countrymen to have been the most distinguished in defense of his country and our country's rights."<sup>21</sup> Apparently, as soon as he heard this news, Reid began collecting testimonials, attesting to his gallantry, from other former soldiers, which he afterward "presented to the Common Council" of New York in hope of being "selected as the most valiant soldier from New York in the war with Mexico."<sup>22</sup>

Reid wrote later that he was also stirred to action by the claims of others "to have been first into Chapultepec," which were "being discussed by army officers and others, in the newspapers and elsewhere." Foremost among the pretenders, he remarked indignantly, was former general Gideon Pillow, who "at the time [was] using every exertion to...prove that

the men in his division were the first to enter” the fortress. Because Pillow had “an eye on the Presidency,” the former lieutenant added, it was “a life-and-death matter with him.”<sup>23</sup>

Reid was careful to point out, in case there was any question regarding their objectivity, that of the five former officers from whom he obtained statements, only one was a “personal friend, the others being almost unknown” to him. One of these was Marine Captain D. J. Sutherland, still on active duty in Washington, D.C., who promptly replied to a letter sent by Reid on May 29, 1849, remarking that at Chapultepec “I noticed you encouraging the men, and...heard you call on a detachment to charge up to the wall,” adding that he saw “two or three detachments following you” and that “during this assault you were wounded.” Another was a former lieutenant of the Regiment of Voltigeurs, Theodore D. Cochrane, who also recalled Reid’s wounding and a speech he made “to the men of all arms” prior to the assault, “which had induced them to ascend.” A third was a former captain of the Fifteenth Infantry, D. Upman, who wrote from Milwaukee, Wisconsin on June 9, 1849 that as his company was “under the walls of [Chapultepec] castle, I heard a voice behind us crying out ‘hurrah boys, New York for ever!’ and turning around, I saw you swinging your sword, and leading a party up.”<sup>24</sup>

Charles Peternell, also a captain of the Fifteenth Infantry, wrote to Reid after being contacted by “Mr. Grey of the [Cleveland, Ohio] Plaindealer” who “communicated to me...that you had sent me some fourteen days ago a letter.” Apparently, when he didn’t get a response, Reid contacted Grey in the hope that he could track down Peternell, who promptly informed the anxious former officer that he had never received his errant missive. “Nevertheless,” he wrote, “will I testify to what I have seen of your military bravery and

valor at Chapultepec,” recalling that at the height of the battle, when he asked someone to identify the “young officer leading the charge on our right,” he was told “It is a New Yorker by the name of Mayne Reid; a hell of a fellow!”<sup>25</sup>

The fifth declaration, perhaps the most flattering, was obtained with the assistance of Reid’s friend, Donn Piatt, who swore on oath in front of a Cincinnati Justice of the Peace that “on or about the 15th of April 1849 he received from Edward C. Marshall, of Cincinnati, Lieutenant in the Fifteenth Regiment...from this State, and now on his way to California” a “statement in reference to Lieut. Mayne Reid’s conduct and taking [of] Chapultepec.” All the officers, Marshall is reported to have said, “who saw or knew of” Reid’s leading the charge that September day, “pronounced it, without exception, the bravest and most brilliant achievement performed by a single individual during the campaign.” Marshall himself was convinced that it was Reid’s “daring” that “was the cause of our taking the castle as we did.” Furthermore, he enthused, “Nor was it an act of blind courage, but one of cool self-possession in the midst of imminent danger.” What made it all the “more remarkable,” he concluded, was that “Reid was not ordered to attack, but volunteered.”<sup>26</sup>

Reid also obtained copies or transcripts of military dispatches in which his name was favorably mentioned. These included reports by Generals Winfield Scott, John. A. Quitman, and ironically, Gideon Pillow. Dispatches composed by Col. Ward B. Burnett — commander of the New York regiment, and Captain Huger, Chief of Ordnance, were also acquired, along with a copy of Order No. 35, recommending him for promotion to first lieutenant.<sup>27</sup>

In early June, Reid’s claim to have led both New York and South Carolina troops at the Battle of Churubusco, which was published in one or more newspapers, was challenged

by Maj. A. H. Gladden, the former “spirited commander of the Palmetto Regiment,” who wrote to the mayor and city council of New York, saying:

A singular document presented to you by Lieut. Mayne Reid, of the New York volunteers, has been brought to my attention. Its romantic character and misstatement of facts, are so prominent, that it would not have had my notice, but from the circumstances that he has enclosed me a copy.

With regard to the alleged valor and prowess of the Lieutenant, I have nothing to say; but justice to my command of the Palmetto Regiment requires me to observe that all his statements relating to the South Carolina Regiment of volunteers are the result of a poetic imagination and fancy, rendered wild in its aspiration after the golden trophy. In proof of this, I will only add one illustration, which is that the Palmetto Flag never fell, but was handed to me by Lieut. Col. Dickenson, and by me placed in charge of Patrick Leonard, a private in company H., S. C. V., by whom it was borne through the actions.

I regret the necessity of this communication, but it is due to truth to expose unfounded pretensions.<sup>28</sup>

When Reid learned that Gladden had questioned his veracity, the affronted Irishman immediately set about collecting evidence to corroborate his version of events. On or about June 25, 1849 Reid, or someone acting on his behalf, drafted a statement that was signed and sworn to by no fewer than five former enlisted members of the New York volunteers: Sgt. Jacob Hershorn, Pvt. Otto Newbauer, Principal Musician John E. Murphy, Pvt. Julius Latte, and Sgt. Thomas N. Dixon. It read:

I, being duly sworn, do testify that I was in the action of Churubusco, and in the charge made by the New York and South Carolina regiments, which drove the enemy from their shelter behind the road and the hacienda of Los Portales. This was the last charge made upon the enemy that day by our infantry.

Previous to this movement, we stood in the middle of an open meadow without making any advance, and under a severe fire from the enemy, from which many men were falling. There were two regiments on the ground — or what was left of two regiments, for many had been killed or wounded. These regiments were the New York and South Carolina volunteers. We did not know what to do, as no one appeared to give any order.

At this moment Lieut. Mayne Reid ran out in front, and called out: “Comrades! Will you follow me?” or words to that effect. The men shouted “We will!” and rushed forward with a cheer. The enemy, when they saw us coming, ran from their shelter and

down the road to the City of Mexico. Lieut. Reid was many paces in advance during the whole movement, and appeared to direct it. It is my solemn belief that Lieut. Reid caused the change to be made, and let it, as I have described.<sup>29</sup>

When he had these documents in hand, Reid immediately wrote a letter, setting the record straight as he saw it, to the New York Herald. Along with the accompanying statements, it was published on June 28, 1849.<sup>30</sup> But in the end and despite these efforts, the hopeful young Irishman did not receive Jackson's snuffbox. It was conferred instead on Colonel Ward B. Burnett,<sup>31</sup> which almost certainly annoyed his former junior officer.

Remembering his Mexican War service shortly before his death in 1883, the former soldier remarked that he "might have many more similar testimonies had time been allowed me for collecting them." In any event, he had been become involved in a new cause. Following his arrival in New York in 1849 Reid began to attend mass meetings being held "for the purpose of sympathizing with the revolutionary movement then disturbing Europe," particularly the Bavarian and Hungarian uprisings. From all accounts the impulsive young author "was an interested participator at many of these demonstrations, and at once made up his mind to aid the revolutionists with all his power."<sup>32</sup>

Of all the speakers at these rallies, Reid was drawn the most to Friedrich Karl Franz Hecker, a German revolutionary known "for his jovial, free-and-easy style in public appearances" and his "wild and raging speeches." Following a failed uprising in his native Baden, Hecker had crossed the Atlantic, arriving in the autumn of 1848 in New York City, where "the mayor and a crowd of over twenty thousand waving red-gold banners" had turned out to greet him.<sup>33</sup> In the late spring of 1849, Reid and the German radical reportedly became fast friends. Hecker is said to have appealed to the former soldier's vanity by promising him

the rank of colonel if he could raise a party of volunteers and “succeed in conveying his men safely to the scene of action.”<sup>34</sup> It worked. That summer, a New York periodical reported:

Lieut. Mayne Reid, the first applicant for the gold box left by Gen. Jackson, to the bravest man in the New York Regiment, it is said, is organizing a company to go to Europe, and help the Magyars, against the Austrians and Russians.<sup>35</sup>

Whether Reid and Hecker were actually close friends, one thing is certain: The former lieutenant became so filled with revolutionary zeal that he not only turned his back on a budding literary career but also a “fair prospect of golden gains and adventure.” Elizabeth Reid later pointed out that 1849 was the year of the great California Gold Rush and that “during the first three months of year...110 vessels sailed from the port of New York alone, bound for California” — six per day on average, adding: “a total of over 14,000 vessels left the Atlantic sea-ports for the same destination, from December 14, 1848 to April 15, 1849.” In view of the gold “fever” then prevailing in the United States, she was convinced that her then-future husband “would have crossed the plains with one of the numerous caravans but for the counter excitement in favour of the far-off strugglers for freedom.” “True to his nature,” she exclaimed, the brash young man rejected a chance to get rich for “‘war to the knife’, and perhaps death.”<sup>36</sup>

It was also in New York, reported Mrs. Reid, that “Commodore Moore, of the U.S. Navy, presented him [Reid] with a fine sword,” inscribed with the words: “Presented to Captain Mayne Reid, by his old friend, Commodore E. U. [sic] Moore.” (She added that her late husband had “lent this weapon in the year 1861 to his brother-in-law, who had joined the English legion to fight for Garibaldi in Italy” but that it was stolen and “never recovered or even heard of, to the great regret of its owner.”<sup>37</sup>)

Another mystery of Reid’s life is how he came to know Edwin Ward Moore, a United

States naval officer who in 1849 could look back on a nearly twenty-five-year-long career that included command of the navy of the Republic of Texas. In 1849 Moore married a Philadelphia woman. While it is possible, therefore, that the two men met in Philadelphia, it is more probable they became acquainted in New York, where in 1849 Moore was “attempting to perfect a machine to revolutionize marine engineering.”<sup>38</sup> In either event, it seems unlikely they were acquainted with one another prior to the period immediately following the Mexican War.

Following “a brief visit to Newport, R.I.,” wrote Elizabeth Reid, her then-future husband returned to New York where, on June 27, 1849, the day before his letter regarding Churubusco was published in the New York Herald, he sailed from New York for Europe, along with “Frederick Hecker, and others,” aboard “the Royal Mail steamship *Cambria*.” The remainder of “the legion raised in New York were to follow in another steamer.”<sup>39</sup> This information, with the exception of the departure date (which is given as one day earlier), is corroborated by a report in the Literary Union magazine, which noted:

Mayne Reid, the author-soldier, has been appointed Colonel in the Hungarian service, and took passage in the *Cambria*, on the 26th, for Liverpool, with the intention of immediately starting from there to his place of destination, where in the cause of liberty he may add more glory to a name which is now coupled with honor. Previous to his embarkation he was presented with a sword from his friend, Commodore Moore, of the Texian navy.<sup>40</sup>

When the *Cambria* reached Liverpool on July 10, the would-be freedom fighters immediately “learned that the Bavarian revolution was at an end.” Undeterred, they resolved to go on to Hungary, where a revolt led by the celebrated Magyar nationalist Louis Kossuth was still in progress, as soon as the bulk of the volunteers arrived from New York. Agreeing to meet up with Hecker in London in “a week or ten days,” Reid decided to take advantage of

the delay to visit his family in Northern Ireland, whom he had not seen for ten years. In short order he was aboard the first available vessel bound for Warren Point.<sup>41</sup>

Elizabeth Reid tells us that upon her future husband's arrival in Ireland on July 12, 1849, "an amusing incident occurred" at the quayside involving a "couple of Paddies" who "shouldered his luggage" and started "marching off with it."

"Where is the car?" inquired Mayne Reid.

"Shure, your honour, it's close by."

In turning to speak to a fellow-traveller, he had failed to notice in which direction the men had gone. After an impatient wait of fifteen minutes, with no sign of them or the horse and car, Reid was beginning to bless his native land in rather strong language, and about to dispatch a boy in search of them, when he espied the car approaching round the angle of the road. Instead, however, of a horse, there was a man between the shafts!

Mayne Reid, no little astonished, inquired the meaning of this and received the following explanation from the horse's substitute:

"Well, your honour, shure the horse has just gone to the smithy to be shod; he'll be here this minit!"

The situation was so ludicrous that, in spite of his impatience to be off, Mayne Reid laughed heartily, and gave three cheers for "Ould Ireland."

Finally the horse arrived, and after a hard struggle — the smithy evidently not having agreed with the animal's temper — he was confined between the shafts, and Mayne Reid once more mounted an Irish car, and was travelling over the well-remembered road, with its enchanting mountain scenery, leading to his old home.<sup>42</sup>

None of Reid's family knew of his coming, thinking him still in America. No doubt they were all greatly surprised when a messenger sent ahead announced the imminent arrival of the fellow who had "left home a mere youth" nearly ten years earlier and was now returning as "a man who had passed through many fires, and bore their scars upon him." As Mrs. Reid writes: "We leave the reader to imagine the rejoicings that followed."<sup>43</sup>

In short order, "the neighbours of the surrounding country assembled in a body to do honour to the hero of Chapultepec," curious to learn about his adventures in America. They were particularly curious about "his reported marriage to a Mexican heiress, the news of



which had reached them.” Playing down the affair, Reid “replied that this was a bit of romance, and that although he greatly admired a moustache on the upper lip of a *young* Spanish beauty, the contemplation of such an adornment on the lip of an *old* one was too much for him.” In deference to the anti-Catholic sentiment that prevailed in that province, he reportedly remarked to his mother, “I believe you would as soon have me dead as married to a papist,” to which she replied: “Indeed, I almost think I should.”<sup>44</sup>

Reid’s remark regarding his fondness for “a moustache on the upper lip of a *young* Spanish beauty” recalls his first novel, The Rifle Rangers, which includes a word-portrait of the Spanish Don’s two daughters — Luz and her older sister Lupe:

Their features too were alike. “Sisters!” one would exclaim, and yet their complexions were strikingly dissimilar. The blood, mantling darker in the veins of one, lent an olive tinge to the soft and wax-like surface of her skin, while the red upon her cheeks and lips presented an admixture of purple. Her hair, too, was black; and a dark shading along the upper lip — a moustache, in fact — soft and silky as the tracery of a crayon, contrasted with the dazzling whiteness of her teeth. Her eyes were black, large, and almond shaped, with that expression that looks over one; and her whole appearance formed a type of that beauty which we associate with the Abencerrage and the Alhambra.<sup>45</sup>

A much later romance, The Headless Horseman, published in 1867, similarly includes a nearly rapturous description of the twenty-year-old female character Isidora Covarubio de los Llanos that suggests Reid’s penchant for a “bigotite” on the upper lip of a young lady was undiminished by time:

In her beauty there is no sign of decadence. She is fair to look upon, as in her “buen quince” (beautiful fifteen). Perhaps fairer. Do not suppose that the dark lining on her lip damages the feminine expression of her face. Rather does it add to her attractiveness. Accustomed to the glowing complexion of the Saxon blonde, you may at first sight deem it a deformity. Do not pronounce until you have looked again. A second glance, and — my word for it — you will modify your opinion. A third will do away with your indifference. A fourth change it to admiration!

Continue the scrutiny, and it will end in your becoming convinced: that a

woman, wearing a moustache — young, beautiful, and brunette — is one of the grandest sights which a beneficent Nature offers to the eyes of man.<sup>46</sup>

In view of this apparent lifelong predilection, as well a longing for his lost love that some of his later work also suggests, it is easy to imagine that the remark Reid made upon his arrival back in Ireland was also the sort of thing he said to reassure his wife when she happened to come across such lines in his work. There is also the possibility that the comment Reid uttered was in fact a fabrication dreamed up by Mrs. Reid, who even in widowhood may have harbored some jealousy toward the exotic beauty who had preceded her in her husband's affections.

In any event, the topic of conversation must have quickly changed when Reid opened two leather portmanteaus he had carried from America, the weight of which had prompted the carriage driver who brought them in to ask for an extra tip. The ex-soldier displayed their contents: "Colt revolvers, powder horns and gun screws — articles of warfare which filled the quiet household with dismay." At first, the young man's friends and family wondered if he had brought them "for use in Ireland" but he quickly assured them that was not his intention, that "they were really brought for employment in the Baden revolt."<sup>47</sup>

Although he had been away from Ireland for nearly a decade, Reid remembered his promise to Hecker and kept his visit short. Departing Ireland after a stay of only two or three weeks, he arrived in London in early August, where "he at once threw all his energies into the Hungarian cause." At the Hanover Square Rooms, a performance hall that then stood on the east side of Hanover Square, a public meeting was held at which Reid reportedly "announced himself to be at the head of a band of bold Americans" who were "on their way to Hungary to place their swords and lives at the disposal of her people" and offered a fiery

resolution that called for “the immediate recognition of the Government *de facto* of the kingdom of Hungary” and the defeat of both the Austrians and Russians.<sup>48</sup>

In the United States, Reid’s friends and fellow Mexican War veterans may have learned of his impending involvement in the Hungarian freedom struggle from a brief notice that appeared in the Saturday Evening Post:

Lieutenant Mayne Reid, who made his name famous at the Battle of Chapultepec, with the New York regiment of volunteers, company B, is now in London. The Hungarian minister residing here has given him letters of introduction to the brave Kossuth, to Bem, and to Georgey, and Lieut. Reid will leave London next week with a large party of Hungarians and offer his services to the Hungarian government. May success attend him!<sup>49</sup>

To understand what drew Reid to the cause of Louis Kossuth, it may help to review the political situation in Hungary, which was then a part of the Austrian Empire. Beginning in the mid-1820s, Magyar liberals under the leadership of Count Stephen Széchenyi began to press the government of the Austria to enact several liberal reforms. These included freedom of the press, independent Hungarian courts, the reunification of Transylvania and Hungary, the replacement of Latin with Magyar as the country’s official language, a system of taxation that treated nobles and common people equally, protections for both peasants and their property, religious toleration of Protestants, and certain municipal reforms. By the early 1830s, Széchenyi found himself being eclipsed by Kossuth, who first attracted attention when he began circulating “in manuscript...a day-by-day account of the Hungarian parliament.” For this offense he was tried, convicted, and imprisoned but “a popular agitation...eventually induced the Austrian government to grant Kossuth an amnesty.” In 1841 Kossuth fanned the flames of discontent by publishing a provocative journal “which became the chief organ of the Magyar liberals.” He later formed an organization that called

for a boycott on foreign-made goods.<sup>50</sup>

The armed uprising against Austrian rule that Kossuth launched grew out of the 1848 revolution that began in France and quickly spread to other parts of Europe, including Germany and Italy. The Hungarian revolt collapsed, however, because it “did not enlist the cooperation of more than about half of the population.” The failure could also be attributed to Hungary’s ethnic diversity. Each group — Magyars, Slovaks, Rumanians, and Croats — had differing political agendas. In addition to the need to mount a defense against an invading Austrian army, the Magyar nationalists were distracted and weakened by a civil war with the Slavs. Despite a declaration of independence and the appointment of Kossuth as the erstwhile republic’s undisputed ruler, the Magyars were defeated in August 1849 by Russian troops sent by Czar Nicholas I to aid the Austrian emperor. To escape the execution or imprisonment that was sure to be their fate, Kossuth and several comrades fled the country, seeking safety in Turkey. Eventually, they would make their way to Great Britain.<sup>51</sup>

Obviously, Kossuth’s defeat at Temsevar on August 9, 1849 put an end to the plans of Reid and his associates. Their services no longer needed, the young Irishman helped his disappointed fellow legionaries return to the United States “by selling a quantity of Colt’s revolvers which he had brought over with him” in order to pay their fares.<sup>52</sup> But Reid did not return with them. Instead of resuming his life in the United States, the would-be revolutionary decided (or was compelled by circumstances) to stay in England, where he sought to continue his literary career by seeking a British publisher for his Mexican War novel.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE RISE AND FALL OF A SUCCESSFUL AUTHOR

I regret that my book exhibits no higher purpose than to amuse; but I have endeavoured to enamel its pages with a thousand facts, the result of my own experience. I have endeavoured to paint scenes of a strange land as they are painted on my memory. If you cannot believe them true, may I hope that you will acknowledge their *vraisemblance*?

— Mayne Reid, The Scalp Hunters, 1852<sup>1</sup>

When Mayne Reid first arrived in London in 1849, the sprawling metropolis was not only the largest city and capital of England, with a population approaching two million, it was also the heart of a vast British empire stretching from one end of the globe to the other — a rich mix of cultures embodied in untold millions of people, all of whom looked (some more enthusiastically than others) to a then-young Queen Victoria as their beneficent sovereign. More importantly to any aspiring author, London was “the principal literary emporium of the kingdom,” the place where “almost all books of importance are...printed and published, and thence distributed.” It was estimated in 1845 that the annual value of Great Britain’s book trade then ranged from five to ten million dollars.<sup>2</sup>

Sometime after arriving in London, Reid revised and expanded War Life, re-titling it The Rifle Rangers; Or, Adventures in South Mexico. Afterward, or perhaps simultaneously, the hopeful young writer set out to find a publisher. Interestingly, as Joan Steele notes in her dissertation, he seems to have first tried to sell his work as a serial to Richard Bentley, of Bentley’s Miscellany, to whom he wrote on September 4, 1849, explaining the nature of the

tale and asking for an interview.<sup>3</sup> But Bentley apparently turned him down, a decision the publisher may have later regretted. This initial setback doesn't seem to have discouraged Reid very much, however. He kept trying, and eventually he "was...successful, the work being brought out in the spring of 1850 by William Shoberl," whose office was located at 30 Great Marlborough Street,<sup>4</sup> not far from Oxford Circus — the lively, bustling intersection of Oxford and Regent streets in London's West End.

Having achieved his goal of finding a publisher for his book, Reid left London in November 1849, returning to his parents' home in Northern Ireland. There, he spent the winter months crafting what some of his contemporaries (as well as a few modern day commentators), came to regard as his masterwork, The Scalp Hunters.<sup>5</sup> In March 1850 he returned to the British capital, where he composed a preface for The Rifle Rangers, dedicating the book to a newfound friend — Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart, a Liberal Member of Parliament.<sup>6</sup>

During this second visit to the British capital, Reid lodged at 33 Bryanstone Street, near Marble Arch, where, prior to his book's publication, he worked on changes to the manuscript suggested by his publisher. Although Reid's accommodations were located only a short distance from Shoberl's Marlborough Street office, the young author seems to have been so absorbed in his work that he sometimes found it more convenient to correspond with the publisher rather than walk or take a two-penny omnibus to his office. (On the other hand, it may have been Shoberl who was too busy for frequent conferences with the as-yet-untested novelist.) In one extant letter, found pasted to the flyleaf of a first edition of The Rifle Rangers, Reid told Shoberl that he was sending back "the first two sheets connected" and that

“I have changed, at your suggestion, the present into past tense in the description of Dubrosc [a New Orleans Creole with whom the “hero” of the book, Henry Haller, fights for leadership of a company of volunteers in the Mexican War],” adding: “The punctuation of that paragraph is correct, according to my meaning.” Requesting a meeting, he wrote: “I have made the other changes suggested by you, and indeed it would be a good thing if you could find time to run over the whole of it before me in a similar way.” In the letter, Reid also revealed that he made some other minor alterations not asked for by Shoberl.<sup>7</sup>

When it finally appeared in print in April 1850, credited to “Captain Mayne Reid,” the thirty-two-year-old author’s first novel (if we disregard the earlier War Life) was issued in three-volumes, a common publishing practice of the time. The price per set was one guinea, or twenty-one shillings, “on an agreement to pay the author one-half of the profits.” But despite reportedly brisk sales, Shoberl “contrived to pay the author only £25, and this was all the profits Mayne Reid received on the first edition of his first romance.” No doubt feeling cheated (and obviously having retained the copyright in his work), Reid afterward took the book to a second publisher, Simms & McIntyre, who put it out in a single volume, as part of their “Parlour Library” series. Despite the fact that the new edition cost only one shilling (boards) or one shilling, sixpence (cloth), in time the fledgling author “realised large sums” from this and “various subsequent editions,”<sup>8</sup> including an attractive one put out by Charles H. Clarke that featured illustrations by William Harvey.

In the preface of The Rifle Rangers Reid was forthright about the inspiration for its contents — his very own experiences in the U.S.-Mexican War. “The incidents,” he wrote, “are not fictitious — allowance being made for a poetic colouring which fancy has doubtless

imparted.” Furthermore, he revealed, all the book’s characters “are taken from living originals, though most of them, figure under fictitious names.” He added, “They are portraits nonetheless.”<sup>9</sup>

Some of the book’s characters are easy to identify with their real-life counterparts. Of course the hero of the book, which is narrated in the first person, is Reid himself — in the literary guise of a dashing young U.S. Army officer named “Henry Haller” who commands “an independent corps of ‘Rifle Rangers’” mustered into service at New Orleans in late 1846. Another transparently disguised character is Reid’s real life friend, the Frenchman Hypolite Dardonville, who in The Rifle Rangers becomes the brave “Raoul.” Precisely who some of the others were meant to represent is a little more difficult to ascertain. One of the more interesting is Sgt. Bob Lincoln, “a celebrated mountain trapper and...old acquaintance” who speaks in a thick dialect (“Cap’n, I understan’ these hyur critter better ‘n you kin. Yer must mix among ‘em — mix and licker — that’s the idee.”) Another is Edward Clayley, a young cotton planter with “a free, dashing spirit” who is elected Haller’s second-in-command. Perhaps their real-life prototypes were found in New Orleans, Nashville, Natchitoches or some other place where Reid traveled prior to joining the army.

Not surprisingly, the story includes a villain: the hotheaded Creole Emile Dubrosc, who, after losing a sword fight to Haller, becomes his unrelenting nemesis — and who also, near the end of the tale, is revealed to be none other than a spy in the service of Gen. Santa Anna! And what romance, for that is what Reid called his stories, would be complete without a female love interest? In The Rifle Rangers there are two — the dark Guadalupe (of course!), who falls for (and marries) Haller, and the fairer Maria de la Luz, the girl to whom



Lieutenant Clayley ends up pledging his undying love.

The Rifle Rangers, recalled Mrs. Reid many years later, “proved a great success from its first appearance, receiving the most flattering reception from press and public.” One of the more complimentary commentaries was printed in the London Observer, which called the book “extraordinary” and “exceedingly amusing,” terming its author “no every-day man.” A literary critic for Bell’s Messenger, who claimed he had “rarely met with a more entertaining or agreeable work,” was particularly impressed by the Irish novelist’s ability to paint word pictures, writing: “The description of Mexican scenery is so forcibly drawn, as to convince those who know nothing of the country that it is accurate; and enable those who are familiar easily to recognize it.” A reviewer for the Morning Advertiser agreed, recommending the book “to those who delight in lively descriptions of stirring scenes.” Enthusiastically, a writer for the Weekly Dispatch declared, “The Captain can tell a story with any of his compeers, and altogether has written one of the liveliest, most entertaining, and readable books of the day,” predicting that it “cannot fail to become popular.”<sup>10</sup>

Reviewers on the opposite side of the Atlantic were equally generous with their praise. One critic, writing for Bentley’s Miscellany, (perhaps Richard Bentley himself, who may have regretted his earlier indifference) remarked:

He [Reid] has given us a work which contains all the interest of a striking romance...There are some nice descriptions of Mexican scenery, dashed off with a free hand, and the peculiarities in the character, costumes and customs of the natives, are well delineated...Captain Reid is a fine, manly, “go ahead” fellow who will be sure to win his way to the good opinion and regard of the reader.<sup>11</sup>

An anonymous American reviewer who may or may not have known Reid personally (but almost certainly knew *of* him) recalled the Irish author’s presence in New York the

summer before, sardonically remarking, “In sundry letters published in this city last year,” the former soldier “claimed that he was the real hero of the Mexican War.” This same journalist also found it amusing that some of his British counterparts had mistaken Reid for an American. Continuing his generally favorable review, he wrote:

In his preface he alleges that all his statements offered as facts are strictly true, though at times highly colored for the sake of effect. This will be obvious to every reader, for the book is full of adventure of all sorts — perils by sword, fire, rivals, wild animals, bloodhounds, &c. — which are related in a lively, dashing style, varied at times with descriptions of the scenery, plants, and inhabitants of Central American. One of the London journals, in a review of it, observes, “We would not wish a more lively or interesting companion than Captain Reid, — a thorough *Yankee soldier*, combining humor, imagination, and dashing bravery in the highest degree.” The thorough Yankee, like many others much quoted abroad, is a clever Irish adventurer, who was in the United States altogether some four or five years, engaged chiefly as a writer for the journals in New York and Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout his career as a novelist, Reid relied on a formula from which he rarely strayed. Whether the style was original or borrowed from some other author is unknown. In either event, the structure of his books quickly became a hallmark of the Irish author’s work. Almost every one began with a vivid, nearly poetic description of the setting, whether it was the “Wild West,” the “Great American Desert,” the “Burnt Prairie,” or whatever locale in which the story might take place. The Rifle Rangers was one of the few that initially lacked an introductory chapter, although one entitled “The Land of Anahuac” was eventually added for later editions. This prefatory scene-setting material, which Joan Steele discusses in her book about Reid’s work,<sup>13</sup> was then followed by a thrilling tale of adventure, punctuated at intervals by factual asides on plants, animals, and human cultures. Additionally, Reid’s books were usually (but not always) narrated in the first person by some fictional alter ego and invariably, the story was brought to an abrupt end in the closing paragraphs, in a manner than

suggested the writer had simply run out of either ideas or energy. He also relied on stock characters. The hero, frequently named Henry (or some variation), was generally a version of Reid himself and there was always a villain — usually some Latin type who lusted after the same woman — generally a dark-eyed brunette beauty with a hint of moustache on her upper lip, with whom the hero had fallen in love. A best friend and his fair-haired female love interest were also frequently seen and for reasons that remain a mystery, the name Adele was often used for one of the female characters.

A letter Reid composed in August 1850 while sojourning at his parents' home in Ireland reveals that in addition to spending the past several months working on his first two novels, the aspiring young writer was either contributing or attempting to contribute to various British periodicals. To M. Parker, Jr. at Frazer's Magazine, he wrote:

Some months ago I addressed a note to your office in relation to my becoming a contributor to your mag...Since that time ill health has prevented me from fulfilling my intention of preparing an article for you. I have a length written one...and you are welcome to it at whatever you consider a fair compensation. I fear my ill-favoured manuscript my prejudice it in your eyes...Should the article not meet your approbation, Might I request a notice...as in that case, I should be spared the labour of preparing an article for the October number of a magazine to which I am promised.<sup>14</sup>

Reid's work also appeared in American publications. In 1850, an impassioned piece of poetry titled "War!" appeared in The Pennsylvanian newspaper, which recalled that the aspiring novelist was "well known in this city" and hailed him "as one of the ablest and bravest young men of the day." Noting that he had served in the war with Mexico, where he "won imperishable distinction," the paper called attention to his more recent intention to join the Hungarian revolt and remarked: "He is now in London, and is earning, at last, after undergoing many privations, a living by his pen." However, it added: "He expects to get back

to this country in a few months.”<sup>15</sup> Whether Reid actually indicated such an intention or not is unknown but in light of the remark, it is ironic that the “few months” ended up becoming nearly eighteen years. Another U.S. publication that carried some of Reid’s work around this time was Harpers New Monthly Magazine, which printed two pieces in its September 1851 issue. One of these, “Memories of Mexico,” was unsigned. (See Chapter Four.) The other was an extracted chapter from The Scalp Hunters, originally called “In a Bad Fix,” but changed for the magazine to “Escape from a Mexican Quicksand.”

During this period of Reid’s life, his widow later recalled, her late husband “had no fixed abode and his worldly goods were carried in a couple of portmanteaus that were “always guiltless of locks and keys.” As a result, “their contents were constantly rolling about railway platforms and landings of steamers” where thieves had little trouble helping themselves to the contents of the aspiring young author’s luggage. On more than one occasion Reid arrived “at his home in Ireland, minus shirts, collars, and dress suit, requiring him to replenish his wardrobe.” However, because he kept them “stowed away at the bottom of his portmanteau,” the young novelist’s American “trophies,” the scalps and other items he “had collected during his Mexican and prairie life,” managed to escape “the fate that usually befel [sic] the upper goods.”<sup>16</sup> What his family thought of these grisly souvenirs (and precisely how he came to obtain them) seems to have gone unrecorded.

Whether William Shoberl evinced any interest in putting out Reid’s next effort, The Scalp Hunters, is unknown. In any case, Reid seems to have quickly become disillusioned with the tight-fisted publisher, who despite the success of The Rifle Rangers contrived “by one plea or another” to evade “further payment.” As a result, Reid sought an entirely

different publishing house for his second novel. However, despite the acclaim accorded his first work, “it was several months before he succeeded in arranging for the publication of his second romance by Charles J. Skeet, King William street.” After that, things seem to have gone more smoothly. In the United States, it was arranged for the New York publishing house of Lippincott, Grambo, and Company to handle the book and a year following its initial publication in Great Britain, Simms & McIntyre made The Scalp Hunters a part of their popular “Parlour Library” collection — which boasted such luminaries as Jane Austen and Victor Hugo. In time The Scalp Hunters became one of Reid’s most popular titles, eventually selling more than a million copies “in Great Britain alone” (according to the author’s wife) and by the turn of the century it had reportedly been “translated into as many languages as ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress.’”<sup>17</sup>

The Scalp Hunters, which features a younger Henry Haller (Reid) as the hero, is a rip-roaring tale of adventure in the Rocky Mountains. Like The Rifle Rangers it purports to be based on the author’s actual experiences but “poetically coloured.” It begins with a journey Reid may have actually made in 1841 or 1842 from Independence, Missouri to Santa Fe, New Mexico (see Chapter 3) and ends, following a number of harrowing escapades and the rescue of a white woman who has been captured by Indians, in El Paso del Norte (present-day Ciudad Juarez). Two of the tale’s other principal characters were a pair of colorful mountain men, “Old Rube” Rawlings and Bill Garey, one or both of whom may have been based on the fur trappers Reid is believed to have encountered while clerking in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Another was a Canadian “voyageur” named Godé, whom Haller hires “as a sort of attendant or *compagnon*.” The story was also populated with some real

people whose identities were undisguised: the traders Ceran St. Vrain and William Bent, fur trapper Jerry Folger, and New Mexico Governor Manuel Armijo. The book's central character, however, is Seguin, the Scalp Hunter — a French Creole whose daughter Adele is the woman rescued in the closing scenes of the story. Intriguingly, this was at least the fourth of Reid's works in which a principal female character was named "Adele." The first was the short story, "The Belle of Red River," published in the Ladies' Magazine of Literature, Fashion and Fine Arts in June 1844. The second was a poem, "My Own Dark-eyed Adele," which appeared in the Ladies' National Magazine in September 1844. The third was also a poem, "The Death of Adele H.," printed in an 1846 issue of The Casket. In later years, a serial called Adela; or, Saved by an Angel — the original title of Reid's novel The Lone Ranche — would appear in a British magazine. One can't help but wonder: Was there a real Adele in Reid's past?

Another important female character in The Scalp Hunters is Seguin's youngest daughter Zoe, with whom Haller falls in love. Finally, as in all Reid's books, The Scalp Hunters is chock-full of data about the weather, the geography of the region, and its native flora and fauna, introduced into the story through the casual conversation of the characters.

Most reviews were positively glowing which was all the more remarkable, as Charles Ollivant later pointed out, due to the fact that up to that time, Reid was "a perfect stranger, unconnected with any of the literary cliques of the day."<sup>18</sup> But while The Scalp Hunters received generally good reviews, not all were flattering. In November 1851, the following was printed in Harper's New Monthly Magazine:

Lippincott, Grambo, and Co. have republished *The Scalp Hunters*, by Captain MAYNE REID, a record of wild and incredible adventures among the trappers and savages of

New Mexico. It is written in an incoherent and slap-dash style, in which the want of real descriptive strength is supplied by the frequent use of interjectional phrases. The scenes, for the most part, consist of city brawls and forest fights, with an excess of blood and thunder sufficient to satiate the most sanguinary appetite.<sup>19</sup>

Despite such negative commentary, the book proved popular, perhaps *because* of its appeal to readers' "sanguinary appetites." Certainly, its reception by the public no doubt buoyed Reid's spirits and led him to conclude his decision to try to earn a living with a pen was the right one to make. The success of both The Rifle Rangers and The Scalp Hunters seems to have also encouraged a British book publisher, David Bogue of Fleet Street, to suggest to the aspiring young author that he "write a series of boys' books of adventure."<sup>20</sup> Steele writes that Reid later regretted entering the juvenile market because he felt it detracted from his stature as an author.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, in 1851 he was still seeking to establish himself. No doubt he was also tempted by the sums of money Bogue must have assured him he would earn. Not surprisingly, he accepted the proposal.

It appears that instead of returning to Ireland again, Reid remained in London to pen what was essentially a sequel to The Scalp Hunters — the first of his so-called boys' books, The Desert Home, which was published "in an illustrated cloth edition" at a cost of 7 shillings, 7 pence, appearing on the shelves of British bookstores in December 1851. There can be little doubt that a great many of these, perhaps the vast majority, were bought as Christmas presents for the sons of middle and upper class families, which is surely what Bogue intended. In any case, the book was a popular success. An English newspaper reviewer, writing about it in February 1852, enthused:

Captain Mayne Reid offers to the juvenile community a little book calculated to excite their surprise and gratify their tastes for the Transatlantic and the wonderful. The dangers and incidents of life in the wilderness are depicted in vivid colours.<sup>22</sup>

The reviewer also provided his readers with a synopsis of the book and confided to readers: “this work is founded upon actual fact.”<sup>23</sup>

Its significance is uncertain but when a U.S. publication, The American Whig Review, included Reid’s latest work in its inventory of recent publications, it was listed not as The Desert Home but rather The American Family Robinson, and attributed not to Captain but *Lieut.* Mayne Reid.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, an entirely different book with the same title, and of course written by an entirely different author, came out at about the same time. Perhaps the magazine simply confused the two works. The fact that Reid’s novel was published under the title An English Family Robinson as well as The Desert Home, may also explain the misunderstanding.

In January 1852 Reid was staying at the Hotel de Provence, in Leicester Square, London, when he penned a note to R. H. Mason, author of Pictures of Life in Mexico, asking if he was the same “gentleman with whom I had the pleasure of dining in New Orleans in the summer of 1848?” The former lieutenant explained that he was “then returning from a campaign in Mexico,” adding, obviously in hope of refreshing the man’s memory, “we dined alternately for some days in the St. Charles and Verandah Hotels.” It is unknown whether Mason was indeed the same person whose company at dinner Reid had enjoyed some years before or even if the curious former soldier received the reply he asked for, but the letter serves as evidence that whenever possible, Reid sought to maintain friendships with Americans and ties to the United States.<sup>25</sup>

Sometime that same year Reid took up residence at 30 Parkfield Street, Islington. Although he probably spent most of several months working on his next book, he somehow



found time to indulge his abiding zeal for martial affairs. To satisfy his “military ardour,” as he called it, the impulsive novelist proposed to organize the “Belvedere Rifle Club” and to seek Crown recognition by satisfying certain conditions “stated by the Marquis of Salisbury, Lord-lieutenant of Middlesex.” These requirements stipulated that “the numbers of a Volunteer Rifle Corps should not exceed sixty, and that particulars of the names of the members, and of the mode of training in arms practiced, should be supplied.”<sup>26</sup> There is some uncertainty, however, whether the club was ever actually established and if so, whether it ever achieved formal recognition. Considering Reid’s impetuous nature, it was probably just a passing fancy.

Reid’s interest in military matters was demonstrated further in a letter he wrote on March 10, 1852, to the editor of The Sun, in which he discoursed on the so-called “Needle Gun” — an automatic weapon “then just adopted by the Prussian government,” which after a brief trial, had been rejected by the British Board of Ordnance. This, commented Reid, was “a matter of extreme wonder,” considering the weapon’s many advantages. But, the former soldier remarked, in his view the best thing about the “needle-gun” was not its “quickness of loading,” not its “direction and range,” nor even the rapidity of its firing. What supposedly made the gun a superior weapon was that it eliminated the need for a standing army, which Reid, a former volunteer himself, held was entirely unnecessary, especially when a nation possessed a weapon that any raw recruit could learn to use as well as “a soldier of twenty year’s practice.”<sup>27</sup>

Sometime during the latter half of 1852 the now-successful author began a friendship with Louis Kossuth, the Magyar nationalist who arrived in July to live in exile in London,

following the unsuccessful Hungarian revolt Reid had hoped to join some three years earlier. Kossuth's arrival in England also followed a triumphant tour of the United States, where he was received with wide acclaim but found no official support for his cause. Reid's Ulster upbringing and a decade-long residence in the United States had no doubt influenced the Irish author's adoption of political views that were strongly antimonarchical. Having been drawn to the Hungarians' cause in 1849, it seems only natural that he would have wanted to make the acquaintance of the very man who led the insurgency of which he had hoped to be a part. Although the circumstances of their meeting have gone unrecorded, in all probability Reid introduced himself to Kossuth at one of the "many public meetings held on behalf of the [Hungarian] refugees" in London during the year.<sup>28</sup>

That same year (1852) the thirty-four-year-old author met another person who would become an even larger part of his life — his future wife, Elizabeth Hyde, "the only daughter of George William Hyde, and granddaughter of the late Saville John Hyde, of Quorn House, Leicestershire, and Sevenoaks, Kent." She was also reportedly "a lineal descendant of Edward Hyde, the first Earl of Clarendon," but this claim seems doubtful.<sup>29</sup>

At the time of their meeting, Mrs. Reid later reported, she was "scarce thirteen years old" and living in London, probably in the Kensington Gore section of the city,<sup>30</sup> with her aunt Eliza, "the widow of my uncle, an older brother of my father's, who had brought me up soon after the death of my mother, which happened when I was a baby." One evening Reid attended a gathering at her aunt's house "and until that memorable night," she later confessed, "I had not even heard his name." During the course of his visit, the impetuous Irishman happened to catch one or more glimpses of the young girl and was immediately

smitten, exclaiming inwardly, “This is Zoe!” — recalling the leading female character of a similar age in his book, The Scalp Hunters. That same night, before taking leave of his hostess, Reid confessed to Eliza Hyde that he had fallen in love with her niece. In contrast, the young girl barely noticed her future husband. When another guest, who had not yet seen Reid, asked her what he was like, Elizabeth replied indifferently: “Oh, he is a middle-aged gentleman.”<sup>31</sup>

Mrs. Reid later recalled that shortly after her then-future husband became infatuated with her, her aunt wrote to her father, informing him of the author’s interest in his daughter but apparently, George Hyde (who had never met Reid) did not take the “love affair” seriously. According to Elizabeth, both her father as well as all her friends were “only amused at the thought of such a mere child captivating so great a man.”<sup>32</sup>

Today in Great Britain or in any modern nation, if a thirty-four-year-old man expressed romantic interest in a thirteen-year-old girl such news would almost certainly be received with alarm. But in mid-nineteenth century England, while such a thing may have raised eyebrows in some quarters, it was neither uncommon nor unlawful. In England, between 1823 and 1929, girls as young as twelve were permitted by law to marry, while the legal age for males was fourteen — although the law stipulated that anyone under the age of twenty-one who wished to marry required parental consent.<sup>33</sup> In any case, Elizabeth Reid’s aunt seems not to have had any misgivings about Reid’s interest because the very next morning she enthusiastically informed her niece, “Captain Mayne Reid has fallen desperately in love with you, my child! He did nothing but talk of you the whole of the evening!” Unfazed by this turn of events, the young girl’s indifferent response was: “You can tell

Captain Mayne Reid that I have not fallen in love with him.”<sup>34</sup>

Still sorrowing for her recently deceased Uncle Clarendon, to whom she was especially devoted, Elizabeth Hyde gave Reid no more thought until a few weeks later when she had a second encounter with her would-be suitor. “One afternoon,” she later reminisced, “as I was seated alone in the drawing room, busily employed upon a doll’s outfit, a gentleman entered the room, and coming towards me, extended his hand, saying: ‘Do you not remember me?’” Just as she was about to answer this man, who to her “had a very foreign appearance,” Reid blurted out his name. After asking her age and receiving a reply, the smitten Irishman confided that he thought Elizabeth was “getting old enough to have a lover,” adding, “and you must have me!” But as before, the girl was non-committal.<sup>35</sup>

For a period of several weeks, Reid contrived to visit Eliza Hyde “on one pretext or another,” calling nearly daily in “hope of seeing the niece,” who for her part invariably went out of her way to avoid him. The author’s ploy nearly backfired. When Reid learned of Eliza’s fondness for novels he “plied her with no end of ‘light literature’” until, after awhile, the woman began to think he had an interest in her rather than her young charge. Even an “old Quaker lady” who was a friend of the family and a frequent guest got the same impression, confiding her thoughts to Elizabeth Reid following the young girl’s marriage to the impetuous author.<sup>36</sup>

If Elizabeth’s disinterest in her suitor was bruising to his ego, her “brave frankness” in answering some of Reid’s questions must have been an especially bitter pill to swallow. One day he asked her if she thought him handsome, to which the girl replied without hesitation: “No.” Her male ideal, she confessed, was “my own dear father and my dead

uncle, who each represented to my mind all that was good and handsome.” The “frank, boyish face” of a young midshipman who had become Reid’s competitor for Elizabeth’s affections also appealed to her. She later remembered that a transparently jealous Reid had been “present on the day when the young sailor-boy called to say farewell before leaving to rejoin his ship” and that even he admitted “young ‘W.’ was the handsomest youth whom he had ever seen.” Although neither ever saw him again, Elizabeth recalled that her husband had “a long memory.” In later years, she remembered, Reid “frequently expressed himself thus to his friends: ‘My wife is very fond of sailors. I am sure she prefers the Navy to the Army!’” Even after she and Reid had been married for nearly thirty years, when the couple learned “that his ‘hated rival’ had been swallowed up by an earthquake a few years back,” she noticed “a smile of intense satisfaction” cross her husband’s face “while he looked at me out of the ‘tail of his eye.’”<sup>37</sup>

Because Elizabeth “had heard his name in connection with the refugees” whose political causes he championed, she thought perhaps Reid was one of them and began to pity him, not quite understanding what a refugee was and thinking, “that perhaps Mayne Reid had no parents or friends.” While this was surely not the sort of interest he hoped to spark in her, it seems to have given him an opening. On one of his visits he presented Elizabeth with a copy of The Scalp Hunters, asking her to read it and revealing that to him, she was the incarnation of Zöe — the twelve-year-old heroine who captures the heart of Henry Haller, the novel’s principal male character. Elizabeth’s reaction to the book has gone unrecorded but she later recalled that up until that time, her favorite novel (and the only book she had ever read) was John Bunyon’s Pilgrim’s Progress.<sup>38</sup>

About this time the girl's aunt began making plans to remarry and to afterward move to a village outside London. When Reid "called one day to wish us good-bye, as he was going on a trip to Paris," Eliza Hyde was not at home, leaving the niece to receive the love-struck author on her own. Years later, Elizabeth Reid recalled that her future husband was worried, saying: "I shall not know where to find my little Zöe on my return." Although she later wrote, "I could not enlighten him, since I did not myself know our future whereabouts," she told Charles Ollivant that she had "refused to give him my new address" but afterward regretted it.<sup>39</sup> In either event their parting, she later remembered, was poignant:

There was a rather sad expression on the face of my would-be lover as he retained my hand in the good-bye; but I somewhat impatiently turned away, little thinking how long it would be ere we should meet again.

The door had no sooner closed on his retreating figure than I relented, thinking to myself I might have been kinder. I walked to a side window which looked down the street, and as I stood watching the figure of Mayne Reid he suddenly looked back and kissed his hand to me; and from that day, for two years, we never saw or heard of each other. For when Captain Reid returned from Paris he lost sight of my aunt, and they never renewed their acquaintance. Thus he had no tidings of myself, and after my aunt's remarriage I had left her to live with my father in the country. My aunt's new husband had told her that he should not like to have the responsibility of myself, since I was 'likely to grow up very attractive.' Perhaps having heard of my conquests so early in life, his reverence imagined that he might find me a difficult little article to manage.<sup>40</sup>

Reid's purpose in traveling to Paris was to find both a translator and a publisher for The Scalp Hunter. Unable to arrange for either one,<sup>41</sup> he returned to London, where in the meantime he produced his second juvenile novel for Bogue, The Boy Hunters; or, Adventures in Search of a White Buffalo, which arrived in bookshops at the end of 1852. Ticknor & Fields published the American edition. Like The Desert Home, this newest book soon found its way into the hands of eager readers on both sides of the ocean and Reid, cognizant of his transatlantic audience, addressed them in the book's preface:

For the boy readers of England and America, this book has been written, and to them it is dedicated. That it may interest them so as to rival in their affections the top, the ball, and the kite; that it may impress them, so as to create a taste for that most refining study, the study of Nature; that it may benefit them, by begetting a fondness for books, the antidotes of ignorance, of idleness, and vice, has been the design, as it is the sincere wish of their friend the author.<sup>42</sup>

Reid was still living in Islington and writing his next adventure book for boys (a sequel to The Boy Hunters), when in February 1853 news reached London that an uprising aimed at overthrowing Austrian rule had begun in Milan, Italy. Upon hearing this report, Louis Kossuth, from all accounts, “was anxious to join the insurgents as soon as possible.” Eager to aid his newfound friend and perhaps hoping to make up for having missed the revolution of 1848-1849, the impetuous author went to visit Kossuth at his home near Regent’s Park, where he readily agreed to a plan concocted by the former Hungarian leader whereby the two men would travel together to Italy, with Kossuth disguised as Reid’s servant in order to escape detection by Austrian authorities. The would-be Magyar liberator also feared that if he were caught crossing France, “Louis Napoleon, the upstart Emperor of the French, would be sure to place him under arrest, and keep him so, as long as his liberty was deemed dangerous to the crowned heads of Europe.” But in order for the scheme to work, a passport was needed. According to Henry Vizetelly, the engraver for many of the illustrations that appeared in Reid’s boys’ books, the impulsive Irishman approached him following his return from a recent trip to Europe, hoping “to obtain the passport with which I and Mr. Birket Foster had lately been travelling.” After explaining the plan, Reid advised Vizetelly that if he “had any scruples about handing over the document direct to him I might easily contrive to lose it” and “suggested that at a given time on a particular day I should accidentally draw it out of my pocket with my handkerchief and let it drop on the ground at a

certain spot in Lincoln's-inn-fields where a trusty person would be on the lookout to pick it up." Understandably reluctant, the engraver begged off, telling "the fire-eating captain that with every disposition to oblige him neither I nor Mr. Birket would care to become marked individuals in the eyes of the police authorities all over Europe."<sup>43</sup> In the end, despite Vizetelly's refusal to become involved in the two men's machinations, Reid somehow managed to obtain a passport from the British Foreign Office that called upon the authorities of other countries to allow "Captain Mayne Reid (British subject)" to travel "on the Continent with a manservant, James Hawkins (British subject)...without let or hindrance."<sup>44</sup>

Thus equipped and with Kossuth sporting a recently shaved chin so as to disguise his appearance, the two men were ready to set out when "fortunately for Mayne Reid," remarked his wife many years later, "he was spared risking his life on the altar of friendship, as he was quite prepared to do." On the eve of their departure Kossuth received "a telegram in cipher" from General Turr, one of the rebellion's leaders, "stating that the uprising had proved only an *émeute*," or sham uprising, that the Hungarian regiments had been disarmed, and that at that very moment, even as he was writing, many of them were being executed by firing squad. Turr added: "Mazzini, myself, and other fellows are likely to share the same fate — unless some miraculous chance turns up in our favour." He concluded by writing: "We are surrounded on all sides, and can scarcely escape. For deliverance, must trust to the God of Liberty."<sup>45</sup>

In a letter to Charles Ollivant, Reid later made light of the incident, saying that "he could not help smiling at the idea" that a "man who had held mastery over a whole nation, who had created an army of two hundred thousand men, who had caused trembling



throughout the thrones of Europe — that man to be obsequiously waiting upon him, brushing his coat, handing him his hat, and packing his portmanteau!” But, revealed Ollivant, Reid had also been well aware of the risks and “reflected that, if taken in France, he would have to share Kossuth’s prison — if upon Austrian territory, his neck, like Kossuth’s would be in danger of a halter.”<sup>46</sup>

Soon after this aborted escapade, instead of battling Austrians Reid became embroiled in a contest of words with The Times, London’s leading establishment newspaper. On February 10, 1853 the paper published a fiery call to arms addressed to the Hungarian freedom fighters in Italy. It was attributed to Kossuth.<sup>47</sup> Five days later the combative Irish author, “quick to resent an injury to anyone and especially a friend of his, promptly wrote a scathing letter to The Times in which he pronounced the proclamation a forgery.”<sup>48</sup> Although it was not printed in the offending publication, the Times acknowledged receipt of Reid’s missive, writing dismissively:

At 2 o’clock this morning we received a letter, signed “MAYNE REID,” denying in absurdly bombastic language, the genuineness of the proclamation which we published on the 10th inst., and which we introduced as “professing to be addressed by M. Kossuth to the Hungarian soldiers in Italy.” Such documents are seldom very formal, but we had good reason for believing it to be genuine, and shall certainly not discredit it without better authority than that of “MAYNE REID.”<sup>49</sup>

Angered by the Times’ response, Reid promptly sent copies of his letter to the Sun and the Morning Advertiser, both of which printed it the following day, along with a “postscript” by Reid, criticizing the Times. The evening edition of the Sun also carried an editorial defending both men while the editor of the Morning Advertiser, condemned the Times as “unprincipled and ungenerous” and praised Reid for coming to Kossuth’s defense.<sup>50</sup>

On February 18, after receiving a written communiqué from Kossuth appended with a

declaration addressed to “the Hungarian Soldiers Quartered in Italy,” in which the Magyar nationalist adamantly disclaimed the proclamation attributed to him, Reid forwarded these documents to the Times along with a short introductory letter of his own. Accurately predicting that the paper’s editors would choose to ignore them, Reid mailed copies to the Morning Advertiser, which as he also seems to have expected, was quite willing to print them and did so in their edition of February 19. Not surprisingly, while Kossuth disowned the proclamation printed by the Times on February 10, he praised its contents, declaring:

Do I then disavow the sentiments contained in that document? No sir; all my life is, and will be, summed up in this idea: my country’s freedom, my country’s rights; and consistently with this I am, and will remain, an irreconcilable enemy to Francis Joseph of Austria, who stole by perjury from my country sacred rights, freedom, constitution, laws, and national existence; and beaten back in his criminal attack, robbed it by treason and by foreign force — and now murders it.<sup>51</sup>

Among those taking notice of the Reid-Kossuth dispute with the Times was the German political philosopher Karl Marx (who by chance was born the same year as Mayne Reid and also by coincidence lived to the same age). At this time the co-author (along with Friedrich Engels) of The Communist Manifesto (1848) was living in London, where in a letter dated February 23, 1853, he wrote to Engels in Manchester, saying: “You will have seen that Kossuth, through an American filibuster, Captain Mayne Reid, has disavowed his alleged Milan proclamations.” But like the editors of the Times, the future author of Das Kapital (1867) was not convinced. “Yesterday,” he informed his friend and colleague, “[Bertalan] Szemer [the former Hungarian Prime Minister who had tried to claim authority after Kossuth’s downfall but was now also living in exile] wrote me from Paris, saying he knew for certain that the proclamation was authentic, as was evident in any case from its contents.” Marx also commented on one of the two leaders of the revolt, Giuseppe Mazzini,

remarking that he did not believe the Italian was “present in person at Milan.” Wrote Marx: “At critical moments like these he absents himself from England so that he may be suspected of being in the theatre of war.”<sup>52</sup>

During the early 1850s both Marx and Engels held Kossuth in high regard but over time the esteem they accorded him began to wane. By 1859 Marx was denouncing the Magyar revolutionary “as a petty, bourgeois nationalist, a ‘swindler’ who, ‘like the Apostle Paul is all things to all men.’” Interestingly, while touring the United States in 1852, Kossuth came under similar fire from abolitionist publisher William Lloyd Garrison, who was both angered and disappointed by the would-be liberator’s refusal to speak out in public against slavery. Kossuth, from all accounts, was worried that to take a stand on the issue might incur the displeasure of Southern politicians, with whom he hoped to curry favor.<sup>53</sup> There is no evidence, however, that Reid became similarly disenchanted with the Magyar nationalist. On the contrary, sometime during the spring of 1853 Reid moved from Islington to St. John’s Wood, where Kossuth then resided at 21 Alpha Road. Clearly, the tempestuous author’s change of residence was motivated by a either a want or need to be near his new-found friend, the better to aid him in his battles with the establishment press and the English oligarchy, some members of which had serious misgivings about the harboring of foreign revolutionaries in their midst.<sup>54</sup> Reid’s house, on which he took out a long lease, was located at 14 Alpha Road.<sup>55</sup>

Fifteen years later, when Reid recalled this eventful period of his life in the most obviously biographical of his novels, The Child Wife, he described this now-vanished neighborhood in the same great detail that he usually reserved for more exotic locales:

Lying west of the Regent's Park, and separated from it by Park Road, is a tract of land, sparsely studded with those genteel cottages, which the Londoner delights to invest with the more aristocratic appellation of "villas."

Each stands in its own grounds of a quarter to half an acre, embowered in a shrubbery of lilacs, laburnums, and laurels.

They are of all styles of architecture known to ancient or modern times. And of all sizes; though the biggest of them, in real estate value, is not worth the tenth part of the ground it occupies.

From all this it may be inferred, that they are lease-holds, soon to lapse to the fee-simple owner of the soil.

The same will explain their generally dilapidated condition, and the neglect observable about their grounds.

It was different a few years ago; when their leases had some time to run, and it was worthy while keeping them in repair. Then, if not fashionable, they were at least "desirable residences;" and a villa in St. John's Wood (the name of the neighbourhood), was the ambition of a retired tradesman. There he could have his grounds, his shrubbery, his walks, and even six feet of a fish-pond. There he could sit in the open air, in tasseled robe and smoking cap, or stroll about amidst a Pantheon of Plaster-of-Paris statues — imagining himself a Mæcenas.

Indeed, so classic in their ideas have been the residents of this district, that one of its chief thoroughfares is called Alpha Road; another Omega Terrace.

St. John's Wood was, and still is, a favorite place of abode for "professionals" — for the artist, the actor, and the second-class author. The rents are moderate — the villas, most of them, being small.<sup>56</sup>

Reid also remarked on the canal that ran through the district, remembering how it added to the area's pastoral charm:

Through this quarter runs the Regent's Canal, its banks on both sides rising high above the water level, in consequence of a swell in the ground that required a cutting. It passes under Park Road, into the Regent's Park, and though this eastward to the City.

In its traverse of St. John's Wood district, its sides are occupied by a double string of dwellings, respectively called North and South bank, each fronted by another row with a lamp-lit road running between them.

They are varied in style; many of them of picturesque appearance, and all, more or less, embowered in shrubbery.

Those bordering on the canal have gardens sloping down to the water's edge, and quite private on the side opposite to the tow-path — which is the southern.

Ornamental evergreens, with trees of the weeping kind, drooping over the water, render these back-gardens exceedingly attractive. Standing upon the bridge in Park Road, and looking west up the canal vista, you could scarce believe yourself to be in the city of London, and surrounded by closely packed buildings extending more than a mile beyond.<sup>57</sup>



Figure 20. Louis Kossuth. From the Library of Congress.

Between February's heated exchange of words with The Times and a similar but even angrier dispute that erupted in April, the American publication, Harper's New Monthly Magazine, printed an article about the new Emperor of France, Joseph Bonaparte, in which it was alleged that Reid, "formerly a lieutenant of the New York Volunteers, is an officer of the Emperor's staff." How such an outrageous rumor got started is unknown.<sup>58</sup>

On-April 15, 1853 the flames of controversy regarding Louis Kossuth were fanned higher when the Times reported that during the early morning hours of April 13 police had gone across the Thames to Rotherhithe and raided "a house in the occupation of M. Kossuth" where they found "a large store of arms, ammunition, and materials of war, which may be the stock in trade of a political incendiary, but certainly form no part of the household goods of a private gentleman living in pacific retirement." Adding editorial content to the report, the Times railed:

If M. Kossuth comes to this country for the purpose of levying war against foreign nations on his own account, and if he uses the resources he may have at his disposal to prepare means of destruction against our neighbors, he violates the laws of England, as well as the law of nations. We assert as stoutly as we have ever done the right of this country to protect those who seek shelter in the Queen's dominions from their political enemies. The English government has declared that it will never deviate from these maxims of our forefathers...But the more this country is resolved to maintain inviolate its right of protection to foreigners, the more it is bound to keep them within the bounds of the law, and to punish those infractions of it which are dangerous to other nations...All that we have hitherto learnt of M. Kossuth's character, of his conspiracies, and of his absurd delusions, had prepared us to believe that if any plot was ever detected he would be found to be engaged in it. We trust that the evidence which is in the hands of the authorities on this occasion is such that no doubt will remain as to the true nature of these schemes, and that the persons principally engaged in them will receive the punishment they deserve. Our readers will do us the justice to remember that when a certain portion of our fellow-citizens thought M. Kossuth a person deserving of all honour, and when Lord Dudley Stuart, Mr. Cobden, and the Corporation of London took him to their hearts, we described him as he is, and as he will be yet more clearly proved to be. Guildhall, after all, is not very far from the Old Bailey.<sup>59</sup>

Although the paper later clarified its report, saying, “In using the expression ‘a house in occupation of M. Kossuth,’ we never intended to describe his dwelling house, because we were aware that this seizure had been made at a manufactory in or near Rotherhithe, while M. Kossuth lives at Bayswater,” it refused to retract its opinion regarding the incident. “For, whatever may hereafter be proved on behalf of M. Kossuth,” the paper’s editors wrote, “the essential facts of this case remain unexplained, and very much need in of explanation.”<sup>60</sup>

The day following the Times’ initial report, Lord Palmerston, a prominent Whig politician who was then only two years away from becoming prime minister, brought the matter up in the House of Commons. Although he was careful to say that the arms were discovered in “a house not occupied by M. Kossuth,” the bewhiskered member added that when the police entered, they found “70 cases ready for transmission, containing ball-rockets for war purposes, a considerable number of rockets in various stages of preparation, iron cases, unloaded shells, composition for filling the rockets, and 500 lb. of gunpowder, all of which articles were seized.” Echoing the Times, Palmerston opined: “While shelter [is] afforded to foreign exiles, care should be taken that that shelter should not be abused for the purpose of organizing or carrying on hostile proceedings against foreign states.”<sup>61</sup>

The first to rise to Kossuth’s defense was the dapper Liberal M. P. for Finsbury, Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, who called the accusation against the Hungarian “a perfect fabrication” and asked Palmerston “whether he did not know that the house was no private house at all and that a Mr. Hale [who operated the manufactory]...had taken out a patent for the manufacture of rockets, which he sold to foreign Governments.” This rejoinder was followed by fellow Liberal John Bright inquiring “whether there was at present any reason to

believe, upon any evidence before the noble lord, that M. Kossuth was in any way compromised in this matter.” Lord Dudley Stuart, the Liberal member for Marylebone, added that Kossuth had denied “all knowledge whatever of the transaction” while yet a fourth M. P. harrumphed “that it was hard for the illustrious exile to be charged with an offense as if it were already proved.”<sup>62</sup>

Backing down under this barrage, Palmerston admitted to not knowing “so much about this subject as Mr. Duncombe evidently did” and suggested that for the time being the members should forego any further discussion of the matter. “Without casting any imputation whatever,” the Times reported, the future chief minister would say only, “it remained to be ascertained to whom the premises in question belonged, and who were the persons chiefly concerned.”<sup>63</sup>

Not surprisingly, Mayne Reid also entered the fray in defense of his friend, on April 16 firing off a letter to the Times, which the paper acknowledged in its April 18 edition but declined to print, characterizing it as a “whole sheet full of abuse,” adding that Reid’s “balderdash” could probably “be read in another place” anyway. Fully expecting this reaction, the furious Irishman had indeed sent a copy to the Morning Advertiser, which as before obligingly published Reid’s angry outburst in its entirety. The Times, he wrote with ferocity, had “created an abyss of infamy” into which it seemed determined to push Kossuth. Pouring forth the power of his pen, he declared further:

From the declarations of the gentleman himself, from my own personal knowledge of facts, I pronounce your whole statement regarding M. Kossuth and the Rotherhithe arsenal a web of wicked falsehoods. But the cold-blooded audacity, the harlotic abandon with which you have uttered these falsehoods, and commented upon them, are positively astounding. It is difficult to believe you in earnest; and one is inclined to fancy you the dupe of some gross deception.<sup>64</sup>



The same day that the Times refused to publish Reid's letter, it printed an editorial that must have enraged him even further. Comparing Kossuth to the Venezuelan-born filibuster Gen. Narciso Lopez, who had sailed from the United States in 1851 in a vain attempt to overthrow Spanish rule of Cuba, the paper's editors questioned Duncombe's "attempt to explain to explain the whole affair into a common manufactory of rockets, doing business for the last six months at Rotherhithe," adding that if that were the case, "its character would be well known, and it would have not been molested by the police." The refusal of Lord Palmerston, they added, "to exonerate M. Kossuth from the suspicion which his friends were endeavouring to shake off is at least strong presumptive evidence that" the charge was not "altogether unfounded." An explanation was demanded.<sup>65</sup>

On Saturday, April 23, William Hale, his twenty-year-old son Robert, and an assistant named James Boylin, appeared at the Bow Street Police Court to answer charges that they had "in their possession on certain premises at Rotherhithe a greater quantity of gunpowder than is permitted by law and that at the same place they made "or caused to be made, divers large quantities of rockets" contrary to law. There, it emerged that the premises in question were "a cottage residence and workshops...situated near the rice mills, adjoining the Grand Surrey Canal, in the lower Deptford road." It also became known that the father and son had been "under the careful *surveillance* of the detective police" for several months and that it was upon the recommendation of the detectives that the raid had been made.<sup>66</sup>

On the very same day that Hale and his son appeared in court, Kossuth addressed a letter to Reid, who, "using the privilege granted to me by the author," passed it on to the Times, which probably to the surprise and delight of both the Irish author and his Hungarian

friend published it on April 26. It was a lengthy missive, no doubt intended for publication, in which Kossuth commented upon English law and “the nature of the right of political asylum,” adding: “I sincerely believe that Englishmen meant to be hospitable to political exiles; but few of you know what sort of hospitality England affords to us.” To his way of thinking, wrote Kossuth, “Hospitality...means the admitting of a guest to be, at least, on the same terms as the members of the family; but forgive my saying that I for one am not thus treated.”<sup>67</sup>

The Hungarian leader went on to complain that Englishmen did not have to endure being constantly having their letters intercepted or being “dogged by spies, surrounded by political espionage, and the names of all who visit them kept in a black book.” He added that he lived in “daily terror” that one morning he would “find that my writing desk has been torn open, and my private memorandums rifled by virtue of a search-warrant, obtained by, I know not what one-sided deposition, from a secret, irresponsible tribunal, like that of the inquisitions, obtained by anonymous accusations, the charge and the judge unknown to me.” His fears, he wrote in case anyone was unconvinced, “were not unfounded.” A trusted friend, he remarked, revealed to him that when he was living at 11 Kensington Park Terrace, Ladbroke Square,<sup>68</sup> “men from the detective police, in plain clothes, were appointed to watch my house,” that they took note of all visitors and sometimes even followed them. Later, his friend informed him further, when he was “removing from my late residence at Notting-hill to that which I presently occupy in Alpha-road, Regents-park, one of the detective police, in the disguise of a labouring man, and upon the plea that he was out of work, insinuated himself into the service of the person employed to remove my furniture, and in this character

assisted to its removal, thus having free access to my house, adopting what I am certain, you, sir, would pronounce a base means of becoming acquainted with my private affairs.” In closing, Kossuth commented: “I used to read that an Englishman’s home was his castle, and according to my Hungarian notions, the stranger who is receive among you should have equally sacred rights.” “But perhaps,” he remarked in conclusion, “I am wrong” and “refugees are placed under exceptional law, in order to please foreign tyrants.”<sup>69</sup>

Although the Times alleged that Kossuth had been “in frequent contact with the Hales” and had recommended “his Hungarian friends to their services,” it appears he not only escaped prosecution for his part (if any) in what became known as “the war-rocket affair,” but was also defended once more by his Liberal friends in Parliament, one of whom, Lord Dudley Stuart, suggested that Kossuth sue the Times for libel, “assuring the Hungarian that nothing but the immense cost and uncertainty of British law would stand in the way of [the newspaper’s] conviction and punishment.”<sup>70</sup>

The evening following their defense of Kossuth in the House of Commons on May 5, Lord Dudley Stuart, along with several other members of Parliament including Richard Cobden, appeared at the London Tavern in a public show of support for Kossuth, who delivered a lengthy address to an apparently standing-room only crowd that included “a number of ladies” and “a sufficiently large proportion of foreigners.” There can be but little doubt that Reid was there, listening intently to his Hungarian friend as he railed against the Austrian emperor and as Richard Cobden, in turn, fulminated against the Times.<sup>71</sup>

In view of the Hungarian leader’s clandestine attempt to enlist Reid’s aid in smuggling him into Italy during the uprising at Milan, it appears in his indignant

protestations regarding the Rotherhithe rocket affair and other matters that Kossuth was only acting the innocent. Although he was never indicted in the rocket imbroglio, The Times may very well have had Kossuth pegged correctly.

Remarkably, Reid's participation in the world of political intrigue seems not to have got in the way of his literary accomplishments. One of his goals since 1852 had been to expand his readership to include the non-English speaking world. Clearly, this made good business sense and whether he thought of it himself or was guided by someone's advice, we do not know. In any event, although his earlier trip to Paris had been unproductive, two years later Reid somehow made contact with Allyre Bureau, a political writer, composer, and "a trained musician who had been director of the Odeon, a national theater in Paris." In many ways, Bureau was a man after Reid's own heart. Born in Cherbourg in 1810, he attended both the Ecole Polytechnique and the Paris Conservatory and as young man, fought against Charles X in the revolution of July 1830 and as an adherent of Fourierism — a socialist philosophy, Bureau agitated for social change. He was even jailed for a time after participating in the Paris Riots of June 1848.<sup>72</sup> After receiving Bureau's proposition, Reid replied on February 20, 1854, sending the Frenchman a letter authorizing him "to translate into French, and publish or have published, my romance of 'The Scalp Hunters, or 'Adventures in Northern Mexico.'" The letter that accompanied the authorization, written in English, read:

Dear Sir

I was aware that neither my Scalp Hunters nor Rifle Rangers had been registered according to the legal formula of the copyright convention, which I hold with you to be a most absurd regulation, but I believe my later productions have been — at least I gave such directions to my publisher here. What I mean to give you, and what I now forward to you is my own sanction and permission to translate and publish the Scalp

Hunters — which authorization must at least have some weight in the eyes of the public — at all events it certainly must be an advantage equivalent to a sum of 400 fr. You may learn how little such a sum can interest me when I assure you that I receive from M. Bogue [word illegible] of the work I am now writing (a book of exactly the same class as the *Scalp Hunters*) something above 10,000 fr. (500 guineas). The American publisher who has no security farther than the accommodation of early proof sheets pays £100 (2500 fr.) for the same work. I shall have the formula of registration attended to in regard to this new novel. Its name will be the “War Trail,” or “The Hunt of the Wild Horse.” Permit me again to call your attention to my 3 juvenile volumes, the *Desert Home*, the “Boy Hunters,” and *Young Voyageurs*. I can assure you sir, that these three volumes will repay your trouble better than any other of my productions. They are in this country fast taking rank among standard works and there is hardly a boy in England who has not read them. You would find it worth while to translate and publish them. I tried to find a publisher while in Paris in 1852, but could not succeed. In fact I found your literature prostrate — your publishers without a spark of enterprise.; I think you may see copies of [those?] three books by calling and giving my name to M. Mandeville, Rue [illegible word] between the Bouse [sic] and [illegible word]. Should you think of translating them I can give you an important advantage in [carts?] of the engravings (12 in each volume).

I need only add that if you know such a word as family in France then little volumes would be worth publishing.

May I beg of you to send me by post or otherwise a copy of La [illegible word] so long as the “Scalp Hunters” is the [illegible word] and deduct the subscription from the 400 fr. Which you agree to pay me. The 400 fr. you can pay me by either of the conditions you have proposed, and I leave the choice to yourself. I believe I can fully rely on your honour.<sup>73</sup>

Bureau’s translation of *The Scalp Hunters* (*Les Chasseurs de Chevelures*), the first of Reid’s books to be published in a language other than English, appeared in French bookstores later that same year. In all probability, it was the last English language book that the idealistic Frenchman translated. In September, at Brussels, Belgium, Bureau signed on as a director of the Société de Colonisation Europeo-Americaine au Texas — the Fourierist society that founded the short-lived *La Reunion* colony on the west bank of the Trinity River near Dallas, Texas in 1855. A little less than two years later, Bureau and his family joined the settlement, reportedly bringing with them Dallas’ first piano. Sadly, Bureau met a tragic end. In 1859, while on his way to the Texas coast to board a ship, to return to France for a visit, he

died of yellow fever in a Grimes County hospital.<sup>74</sup>

In her 1978 book about Reid, Joan Steele calls attention to the fact that the popular Irish novelist also tried to find a German publisher in 1854 and quotes from a letter he wrote on October 10 to Nicholas Trübner, in which he defended himself against the German's charge that his works "very much" resembled those of Charles Sealsfield, another writer of Wild West stories whose work was already popular in Germany at that time. Steele offers this incident as proof of her own debatable charge that after 1853 Reid was continually defending himself against accusations of plagiarism throughout his career.<sup>75</sup>

In 1854 Reid also furnished publisher David Bogue with a second boy's book, The Boy Hunters; or, In Search of the White Buffalo — a tale that one English critic (who misidentified Reid as an American author) rather harshly observed, had "some facts of natural history scattered through the pages, which may render them profitable after their crazy kind."<sup>76</sup> The following year, on July 1st, a new English periodical, the London Illustrated Magazine, avowing "to be profusely illustrated by the best English artists," was launched "under the editorship of Richard Brinkley Knowles, and with the assistance of William Carleton, the Irish novelist, Thomas Miller, the basket-maker, Captain Mayne Reid, and others."<sup>77</sup> And before 1853 came to a close, despite his involvement in the controversy surrounding Kossuth, Reid managed to complete a sequel to The Boy Hunters, called The Young Voyageurs; or The Boy Hunters in the North, which was dedicated to his Irish parents. It arrived on bookshelves in time for Christmas.<sup>78</sup> Both of the "Boy Hunter" books were set, as was thus far usual for the Irish writer, in North America, although each contained far less autobiographical material, if any, than his previous works. (At any rate he made no

such claim, as he had for The Desert Home.)

Although Reid was apparently most popular with boys at this time, we know he had at least one adult admirer — the transcendentalist and naturalist Henry David Thoreau, whose journals are peppered with references to the Irish novelist's works. In what Thoreau called his "Indian Books," a collection of notebooks that he kept from 1849 to 1861 (and which are today preserved in the J. Pierpont Morgan Library in New York), the author of Walden, Cape Cod, and other well-known works cited passages from no fewer than six of Reid's novels, mostly the so-called "boys' books." Some of these same references can also be found in Thoreau's "CommonPlace Books," which are presently a part of the special collections at Harvard's Widener Library.<sup>79</sup>

As might be expected, in view of Thoreau's well-known abiding interest in natural history, all these extracts draw not from Reid's storylines but rather his descriptions of the flora and fauna of his books' settings, as well as customs and habits of the native people that inhabit them. From The Young Yägers, Thoreau copied information regarding the preparation of poisoned arrows; from The Boy Hunters, he cited data pertaining to topics as diverse as alligator eggs, trees that were native to the Mississippi Valley, root plants that Indians and trappers used for food, and wildlife such as bears and prairie wolves; from The Desert Home, he noted the type of trees that Indians used to make canoes; from The Forest Exiles, his interest was in South American foods such as quinoa and coca, animals — principally the llama, and the blow-tubes that Indians used to shoot poisoned arrows; from The Young Voyageurs, he copied the names of berries eaten by Indians of the Red River Valley, information about the type of bark used to make canoes, and the type of bread that

was made and eaten by Indians west of the Rocky Mountains, to name but a few of the myriad topics that seem to intrigue him. Thoreau's extracts from The Hunters' Feast were the most extensive of all, embracing a range of subjects as diverse as tents, Indian guides, native foods, prairie animals, and cooking methods. It is interesting to note further that the identity of Reid's "hunter-naturalist" character, i.e., Audubon, was readily apparent to Thoreau, who commented upon his rather thin disguise.<sup>80</sup>

Thoreau also mentioned one of Reid's books in volume six of his Journal. On March 9, 1854 he reported boiling "a handful of rock-tripe...for more than an hour." The result, he noted, "was a black pulp, looking somewhat like boiled tea leaves, and was insipid like rice or starch." He added: "The dark water in which it was boiled had a bitter taste and was slightly gelatinous." In conclusion, he remarked, "The account in 'The Young Voyageurs' [one of Reid's juvenile novels] is correct."<sup>81</sup>

Following her aunt's remarriage, Elizabeth Hyde had returned to live with her father near Nottingham, believing then that there was no "probability of my ever meeting Mayne Reid again" although she confided many years later that following their parting in 1852 she "could not forget him [Reid] for a single day." Whether the up-and-coming young author made an effort to learn her whereabouts after returning from his trip to Paris is uncertain but if he did, he was apparently unsuccessful. Nearly two years would elapse during which time there would be no contact of any kind between them. Then, on November 28, 1853, Reid chanced to journey to Nottingham, "where he had been invited to address a public meeting on behalf of the Polish refugees."<sup>82</sup>

Reid's Nottingham appearance followed close on the heels of a similar gathering at



the London Tavern, called a month earlier by Lord Dudley-Stuart — a meeting held in support of Turkey in its struggle with Russia. Reid, his revolutionary ardor apparently undiminished, not only attended but also delivered a fiery speech in which he railed against secret diplomacy. His fervent eloquence led some of his friends to urge him to enter politics.<sup>83</sup> Perhaps one of these was Richard Cobden, who either was or afterward became “firm friends” with the spirited writer, “so much so,” wrote Charles Ollivant that “the great free trader and the popular novelist might often be seen walking the streets of London, arm-in-arm.”<sup>84</sup> Others left the meeting convinced that this Irish firebrand was ready to strap on a sword and sail straightaway for the theater of war.

Reid afterward recalled the Nottingham meeting in an undated letter to his father, in which he not only gave an account of his participation but also revealed a new and growing awareness of the plight of ordinary Britons and their own struggle for equality and freedom, in a land in which most ordinary citizens could not even vote:

My Dear Father,

There are paragraphs going the rounds of the papers, one of which I inclose [sic] you. Let these not annoy you. You will perhaps be gratified to know that they are not true. I do not intend to take any part in the struggle between Turkey and Russia. I had at one time designed to throw myself into the fight, but that was conditional on the war becoming a war of principles — in other words a revolutionary struggle in which Hungary should bear a part. That is now somewhat unlikely; and even if such a war [should] take place, I have given up the intention to join in it.

This change of purpose has been brought about by recent circumstances. I have been studying the people of my own country in reference to their political condition. I have compared that condition with those of the other nations — the very nations who are in a revolutionary state. There is no people in Europe who have more need of revolution than the British — therefore none who have more claim upon the sympathy of the philanthropist and reformer. It has occurred to me therefore, that for my work there is ample material at home; and as I find that with my pen and my tongue I can accomplish more good — far more than I could with my sword. I have resolved to make that the object of my life’s activity.

I am no lover of war as a trade, and of military glory I have had enough to satisfy

me. Do not fear therefore that I am going out from England. Kossuth is aware of the change of my purpose. He not only sanctions and approves of it, but flatters me by expressing his confidence that I am likely to be the agent of much good at no distant future. I could at this moment take a high stand were it not that the necessity of devoting much of time to gaining a livelihood cripples to some extent my energies and opportunities.

I addressed a crowded meeting at Nottingham on Monday night, the mayor in the chair. I went down with Mr. Urquhart, formerly M.P. for Stafford, and who has taken a great lead in the Turco-Russian question. By a strange condition of [things?], this gentleman has fallen into the leadership on this question. The people do not know his politics. They believe that he must be a liberal, as it is the Liberal Party who generally move in such matters. But such is not the case. Mr. U. is a Tory — a man who believes in a state of pure absolutism — so pure that he would increase the prerogative of the Crown, and abolish all representation in situations of whatever sort. It is only after they obtain a hearing of Mr. U. that their confidence in him subsides, and they stand with blank faces not knowing what to make of him.

It was so at my meeting in the Tower Hamlets, when Mr. U. failed, and it was the same at Nottingham, where the people received him with much enthusiasm; but after hearing his absurd oration, did not seem to care any more about him. He spoke nonsense for a mortal hour and a half, and scarcely received a cheer. In fact he acted as a breakwater for the beautiful tide of enthusiasm that rolled upon him, and it was painful to see it thus broken. He has fallen into this leadership because the old chiefs of the people in England have hung back from these demonstrations. But Urquhart is doing much harm. Indeed, if the government were employing him, he could not better spoil the business for the people.

My own speech at Nottingham was a very successful one. I could hardly proceed for the applause, and when the meeting was about to disperse, my collaborator Urquhart seemed to have been forgotten. For some reason best known to himself, the reporter of the Morning Advertiser — which I send you — has not reported me; but that is of little consequence. The people of Nottingham will remember me.<sup>85</sup>

Reid also informed his father that he had originally intended to accompany Urquhart to Derby, Leicester, and Manchester “where similar meetings are being held.” However, a belief that the Tory politician was “doing a serious injury to the cause of Liberty” combined with a fear that he might be seen “in a false position in regard to my political faith” led the Irish author to return to London instead.<sup>86</sup>

One of the people of Nottingham who most certainly remembered Reid that evening was Elizabeth Hyde, who by this time was about fifteen years old. She later recalled that

along with her father “and other friends,” she was “one of the audience at the Mechanic’s Hall, where the meeting was held” and that when Reid came into the room, an “electric thrill seemed to pass” through her. In light of her previous indifference to his advances, the transformation that came over her that night was little short of remarkable:

...Instantly, as though drawn by an invisible hand, and without a word to my friends, I left my seat and followed in the direction I saw him take. There was a platform at one end, occupied by the speakers and a few ladies and gentlemen. He took his seat on the platform, and I mine also, just opposite to him. As yet we had not spoken, our eyes only seeking each other through the whole evening.

It was like being in a dream. There was a sea of faces below me, but I seemed to distinguish nothing. Of the speeches made I have not the faintest recollection!

At last it all came to an end — near midnight. The audience were fast dispersing in the body of the hall: the lights were being extinguished. The few who remained on the platform were hand-shaking and congratulating the speakers. Captain Reid had a number around him. I might also have joined them — we were standing only a few feet apart — but something held me back.

The place was no almost in darkness — all were leaving the platform. I caught a glimpse of my father hurrying toward me, and could just dimly see two or three gentlemen, evidently waiting for the Captain, who was still engaged in earnest conversation with one person.

It seemed as though we were again about to be severed. At that moment Captain Reid came towards me, grasped my hand, and I just caught the hurried words:

“I leave for London by the next train. Send me your address.”

Speech seemed to have left me, but it flashed upon me that I was in ignorance of his, and managed to stammer out:

“I do not know where.”

He instantly handed me his card, and was gone. My father lifted me in his arms down from the platform, and we groped our way out in the darkness. I then learned that Captain Reid had only arrived that evening and was obliged to leave by the midnight train for London.<sup>87</sup>

The following morning, Elizabeth later remembered, she wondered if the previous evening had only been a dream and “immediately sprang out of bed to see if the card which I had left on my table...was still there.” It was, and after breakfast she wrote and mailed a note to the man who, for reasons that even she seemed unable to fathom, now seemed much more appealing to her than two years earlier. A few days later she had a reply. “My little Zöe,” the

impassioned author wrote, “only say that you love me, and I will be with you at once.”<sup>88</sup>

When Reid received Elizabeth’s answer, in which she affirmed her love for him as well, he “put himself in an express train, and quickly covered the hundred and fifty miles” that lay between them. Upon arrival, he explained to the girl that owing to her unresponsiveness to his earlier overtures, he had given up hope that she would return his affections. Even so, he said, he had never forgotten her “and in spite of all obstacles, had the firm conviction that I should yet be his.” In short order he asked her to marry him and she, apparently without any hesitation, agreed.<sup>89</sup>

Not surprisingly, George Hyde was not very enthusiastic about giving his teenage daughter permission to marry a man who was nearly the same age as himself but in the end, the girl prevailed upon him to allow it, threatening to marry Reid with or without his consent. When he received word that his future father-in-law had given in, Reid, who seems to have understood the nature of spontaneity very well, wrote to Elizabeth expressing his worry that her affection for him was only fleeting, asking: “Do you think you can love me in my dressing gown and slippers?”<sup>90</sup>

On August 15, 1854, Mayne Reid (full age), “bachelor author,” and Elizabeth Hyde (under age), “spinster,” were married at the Parish Church of St. Mary [the Virgin], in the town of Nottingham. The ceremony was performed by T. R. Matthews, Curate, and witnessed by George William Hyde (the bride’s father) and Sarah Moore — presumably a relative or one of the bride’s friends.<sup>91</sup>

It is interesting to note that although Reid came from a long line of Presbyterian ministers, he was married in an Anglican Church. On the marriage certificate, Reid’s father’s

occupation is given as “Dissenting Minister.” George W. Hyde’s occupation was “Hosier.”<sup>92</sup>

Following their wedding, Reid brought Elizabeth to London to live with him at 14 Alpha Road, where they spent most of the first year of their marriage. During that time they traveled to Northern Ireland to visit his parents.<sup>93</sup> The details of this trip as well as what the Reverend and Mrs. Reid thought of their young English daughter-in-law have gone unrecorded. Neither do we know precisely what she thought of them, although one of the few mentions of Reid’s mother in Elizabeth Reid’s book gives the impression that the younger woman believed her mother-in-law to be something of a crank. That Reid’s mother was aware of her daughter-in-law’s opinion of her is evidenced in a letter she wrote her son, in which she had made a somewhat outlandish suggestion, then added: “I think I see you, my dear Elizabeth, curl your lip.”<sup>94</sup>

During the early years of their marriage, the noticeable difference in ages between the author and his wife, Elizabeth Reid later wrote, led to “many amusing incidents.” On one occasion, while browsing in “a fashionable milliner’s on Regent Street” the shop owner repeatedly “addressed Mrs. Reid as ‘Miss.’” After the writer corrected him, saying, “‘This lady is my wife’,” the astonished milliner apologized, explaining that he “thought the young lady was about returning to school, and that you were choosing a bonnet for her to take.”<sup>95</sup>

Recalling the scene many years later, Elizabeth Reid added:

These funny incidents were constantly occurring. Sometimes Mrs. Reid was supposed to be in no way related to Captain Mayne Reid, and would hear all kinds of remarks and comments passed upon the famous author, which she would afterwards relate for his amusement.

Mayne Reid used to say that he could not have endured having an old wife. On one occasion, when attending a large soiree, a somewhat elderly dame of his acquaintance attached herself to him, and promenaded the room by his side for a great part of the evening. Mrs. Reid wondered what was making her husband look so savage. Finally,

he came across to her and said:

“I want you to keep close by me for the rest of the evening, or people will be taking that old thing for my wife!”<sup>96</sup>

“Mayne Reid,” she remarked further, “was proud of his ‘child-wife,’ and liked her to remain the ‘child-wife’ until the end.”<sup>97</sup>

Married life seems not to have interfered in the least with Reid’s work. While living on Alpha Road, the prolific wordsmith composed The Forest Exiles, a juvenile tale set in South America, as well as The Hunters’ Feast, a novel dedicated to a friend, Capt. Frederick Brockwell. Both books were published in time for Christmas 1854.<sup>98</sup>

Set on America’s Great Plains at an indeterminate time (but most probably the 1840s), The Hunters’ Feast was based, at least partly, on the author’s own experiences — that is if the paragraphs Reid penned for the book’s preface can in be taken at face value:

I have spent some years in the “Far West,” I have ridden wildly with the hunter, and strolled quietly with the naturalist, I excel not in the chase, I excel not in a knowledge of natural history — but both I love. In my memory of prairie life, these two things are intimately connected with each other; for the reason, perhaps, that both were followed at the same time. In the same excursion I was hunter and naturalist.

And now, from the world’s metropolis, as I look back upon these wild scenes, my mind yields itself up to sweet remembrances — sweeter than the retrospect of war — a fresher memory — sweeter even than the recollections of school and college days, or the days of childhood. I love to paint those scenes with words; for, while so occupied, I feel as if they were again passing before me.<sup>99</sup>

Like all the Irish author’s semi-autobiographical works, The Hunters’ Feast is narrated in the first person. It consists of thirty-four chapters that tell the story of a ten-man hunting expedition that Reid may have accompanied in the autumn of 1841 (possibly during the “lost year” discussed in Chapter Two). Two of the characters, a “free negro” named Jake and an Irish cook — “Mike Lanty from Limerick,” are only incidental. One of the eight principal characters is Mr. Thompson, an Englishman — dressed from head to toe in tweed

but every inch the experienced hunter. The others are a Kentucky planter, Dr. John Jopper — a jolly Yankee doctor, Jules Besancon — a young Louisiana Creole, Mr. A—, a world-famous naturalist who bears a striking resemblance to John James Audubon, two rustic trapper-guides — Isaac Bradley and Mark Redwood, and of course the book’s unnamed narrator — who the author described thusly:

I was then but a young fellow educated somewhat better than common; fond of wild sports; not indifferent to a knowledge of nature; fond almost to folly of good horses, and possessing one of the very best; not ill-looking in the face, and of middle stature; costumed in a light hunting shirt, of embroidered buckskin, with fringed cape and skirt; leggings of scarlet cloth, and cloth forage cap, covering a flock of dark hair.<sup>100</sup>

In sum, the book consists of a series of stories told by the eight principal characters as they sit around their campfire each night (hence the book’s subtitle “Conversations Around a Campfire”). All are the sorts of tall tales that Reid probably picked up from the trappers with whom is said to have come into contact during his years in America. And in keeping with the schoolteacher-turned-writer’s characteristic style, each tale includes a liberal helping of facts about wildlife — Passenger Pigeons, Cougars, Muskrats, Mosquitoes, Raccoons, Peccaries, Vicunas, Squirrels, Bears, Deer, Swans, Moose, the South-American Tapir, and of course, the North American Bison.<sup>101</sup>

The Forest Exiles, the juvenile tale that came out nearly simultaneously with The Hunters’ Feast, was well received. In January 1855, an American publication, The Living Age, reviewed it:

We venture to say that no boy will ever refuse this book. True, we judge only from ourself; but a mere look at the table of contents is enough, beginning with the Biggest Wood in the World, and running through Poison Trees, Supper of Guapo, Puna, Wild Bull of the Puna, Lamas, Alpacas, Vicunas, *Capturing a Condor*, the Lone Cross in the Forest, Coral Snake, *Tracking the Tapir*, Poisoned Arrows, Cannibal Fish, and so on to the number of fifty. Then here are the very good drawings, well engraved, of scenes

that we should like to read about. See the monkeys on the bridge of vines! But we have no time to loiter over these enticing wonders If the publishers wish our readers to know what kind of book it is, let them show it up in our *advertising pages*.<sup>102</sup>

Putnam's Magazine was a little kinder:

Captain Mayne Reid seems to be following in Marryat's footsteps; for he has ascended from the manufacture of exaggerated Indian stories, to the higher position of a bookmaker for boys, His *Forest Exiles* is a well-conceived and quite interesting little story, of the "Swiss Family Robinson" class, but much more consistent and truthful. It is well established to insinuate natural history and botany, in a narrative form, into a boy's mind.<sup>103</sup>

In September 1855 Reid and his wife, along with a man-servant and probably a housemaid or cook, moved to the vicinity of the tiny village of Stokenchurch in Oxfordshire, about thirty-six miles northwest of London, where the up-and-coming author rented a furnished cottage called Longworth Studley, at a place known as Beacon's Bottom.<sup>104</sup> They stayed about a year — retaining the London house, on which they had a lease through 1857.<sup>105</sup>

The couple's move was prompted by Reid's "fancy for rural life" as well as an urge for "some shooting for the winter." It was a remote spot. Stokenchurch was two miles away and the nearest railway station was at High Wycombe, five miles distant. "There was," Elizabeth. Reid later recalled, "no postal delivery and very little sign of human life, save for an occasional wagon passing in the distance, and a coach on the high road once a week." Left alone for long hours while her husband went out hunting small game and wild birds, an activity in which he seems to have taken a great delight, she grew restless. Sometimes, to relieve her boredom, she would saddle her pony and ride "about the solitary roads" on her own. But it was not enough. Although young, Elizabeth was apparently not reluctant to say what was on her mind. Finally, one day when the situation became unbearable, she



threatened to return to London. All indications are that Reid did not take it seriously.

One wintry day not long afterward, Elizabeth went out for a walk through some nearby snow-covered woods, “accompanied by her little dog.” Returning about an hour later, she was “amused to see her husband and the man-servant in a stooping position not far from the house, closely engaged in scrutinising the ground.” Puzzled, she stood nearby, watching the two men, until after a few moments her dog suddenly “ran forward,” startling them. Looking up and seeing her standing there, she later remembered, “an expression of joy” crossed Reid’s face. Explaining that because she left her hatbox open and none of the servants had seen her leave, he had begun to wonder if she “had carried out your threat and gone off to London.” He and his servant were examining the ground, he added, hoping “to track your footsteps in the snow.”<sup>106</sup>

From time-to-time, her husband’s waking in the middle of the night, imagining that someone might be breaking into the cottage, relieved Elizabeth’s boredom. “At such times,” she wrote, “Mayne Reid, armed with his sword, and followed by his wife bearing a lighted candle, would make a tour of the house.” Although they never found a burglar, Elizabeth speculated that if they had, the “resolute and impetuous ex-soldier” would not have allowed the unfortunate intruder to escape “with a whole skin!”<sup>107</sup>

Reid’s impulsive nature also led him on a number of occasions to wake his wife in the wee hours of the morning, and propose that they go to London, even during the coldest weather. Oftentimes leaving as early as 3 a.m., a lamp-bearing servant guided the couple’s carriage out the drive to the road. By the time they reached London, the sun was up, revealing “icicles hanging from the horse’s bits, while the moustaches of the master and

whiskers of the groom were white with frost.”<sup>108</sup>

The White Chief, a thrilling tale set in Northern Mexico, was Reid’s next book. It came out in 1855, along with The Bush Boys, a South African adventure that the author dedicated to Louis Kossuth’s children — Franz, Louis, and Vilma. It was published in time for the Christmas trade.<sup>109</sup>

During his sojourn at Stokenchurch, Reid composed a sequel to The Bush Boys, called The Young Yägers, which was also set in South Africa. David Bogue published it in 1856. That same year he completed The Quadroon; or, A Lover’s Adventures in Louisiana, on which he had begun work some three or four years earlier. On November 19, 1856, he and Elizabeth set out for London, to take the manuscript to David Bogue so that it could be published. On their way to the railway station at High Wycombe, the manuscript, wrapped in brown paper and tied with string, fell unnoticed from their carriage, which was being driven by a manservant. When they reached the station and couldn’t find the parcel, they began to panic. There was no other copy. While Reid and his wife waited at the station, the manservant went back down the road to look for the lost manuscript. On his way he hailed a passing wagon, whose driver had found the bundle lying in the road and thinking it might be of some value to someone, picked it up. Not surprisingly, Reid was greatly relieved when his servant returned, the manuscript safe in hand.<sup>110</sup>

Although Reid was obviously pleased that he recovered his manuscript, as chance would have it, he faced a worse problem. Upon arrival in London he went to his publisher’s office, only to find it closed and to learn that earlier that very day, the forty-eight-year-old Bogue, who suffered from heart disease, had suddenly and unexpectedly died at his home in

Camden Town. Charles Ollivant remarked that as a result of this unfortunate occurrence, Reid ended up putting out the first edition of The Quadroon himself but gives the date of publication as September 1856, which is obviously an error since Bogue died in November. To confuse matters further, there were no less than three different publishers for The Quadroon in England in 1856: One was Reid's father-in-law or brother-in-law, George W. Hyde (both men had the same first and last name, so we cannot be certain which)<sup>111</sup> The other two were J. & C. Brown and Co. and George Routledge, each of which gave the book a slightly different title: The Quadroon; or, Adventures in the Far West. In the United States, Robert M. DeWitt was the publisher, retaining the original title (The Quadroon; or, a Lover's Adventures in Louisiana).

In the autumn of 1856, Reid and his wife removed to the village of Gerrard's Cross in Buckinghamshire, about 20 miles northeast of London. Her husband had "taken a great fancy to the neighbourhood," Mrs. Reid wrote later, while passing through on "their frequent drives to and from London." Their first residence at this place was a small house, "situated on the high-road" about a mile south of the village. The following year the successful author bought "the long lease of this and a cottage on the opposite side of the road." In time, Reid began enlarging the house in which he and his wife resided, and took to calling it "the Rancho."<sup>112</sup> Describing Reid's improvements, Charles Ollivant revealed he "built out the back parlour facing the sunny south, enlarging the room." This had the effect of creating "a roomy balcony" above the parlor. "The room over this parlour," added Ollivant, was "made into his study and the window opened on it [the balcony], thus forming a pleasant lounge in fine weather — a table and chairs being easily carried outside through the low casement

windows.” In this agreeable place, remarked the former private secretary, “Mayne Reid spent much of his time engaged in literary work.”<sup>113</sup> In her widowhood, Elizabeth Reid added that the “greater number of Mayne Reid’s books were written in this rural retreat.” The list, she said, included The Young Yägers, War Trail; or, Hunt of the Wild Horse, The Plant Hunters, Oscela; or the Half Blood, Ran Away to Sea, The Boy Tar, The Wild Huntress, Odd People, The Maroon, The White Gauntlet, The Ocean Waifs, The Boy Slaves, The Cliff Climbers, Afloat in the Forest, and The Headless Horseman; a Strange Tale of Texas. Reid also composed a treatise on croquet while living in Buckinghamshire as well as several short stories.<sup>114</sup>

When she and her husband first came to reside at Gerrard’s Cross, recalled Elizabeth Reid many years later, there was no church nearby, prompting the author’s mother to suggest that “a portable house on wheels” that Reid kept “for the accommodation of his men-servants” be converted into “a place of worship.” She even offered “to send over a young minister from the north of Ireland.” It appears, however, that neither the suggestion nor the offer was ever seriously considered.<sup>115</sup>

In time, “the Memorial Church on Gerrard’s Cross Common” was constructed and the Reids became regular worshipers, the Presbyterian author apparently not caring that it was an Anglican church. “It was said,” however, that he went to church “more for the purpose of ‘studying the bonnets’ than for the good of his soul.” His bright yellow gloves, his “non-use of a prayer-book,” and his “inattention to the service” were all “frequently commented upon.” One day, recalled his wife, he received a letter, “sent anonymously by a young lady,” who wrote: A friend who is deeply interested in Captain Mayne Reid’s spiritual

welfare forwards a prayer-book, with the sincere wish that it may induce him to behave more reverently in church; and in reminding him that there is such a colour as lavender, hopes that the everlasting lemon kids may be varied!”<sup>116</sup>

Reid seems to have thoroughly enjoyed the years he spent living in Buckinghamshire. He took a particular delight in riding on horseback over the countryside. Almost daily, he would go galloping off on “a fiery black horse” at “headlong speed.” “In these wild rides,” his wife later wrote, “level tracts and deep forests were traversed — some reminder of prairie and chaparral — at times varied by ascending a steep and narrow trail, offering scarce a foothold, leading to some old quarry pits.” One gorge, she remarked, “on the side of this trail,” resembled “a miniature *barranca*.” Imagining himself roaming “once more...over the trackless prairies and virgin forests of the South-Western United States,” Reid would then return “home to his study,” where he “was enabled to infuse into his story much of the life and realism thus recalled.”<sup>117</sup>

Gerrard’s Cross was also the scene of some further amusing incidents resulting from the disparity in ages between the author and his wife. One day, Elizabeth Reid later recalled, shortly after she and her husband had taken up residence in the “Ranche,” she was “in the village baker’s shop, ordering, among some other things, some biscuits.” When the baker offered her a free sample, she “thought it rather odd, but not liking to appear offended, took a biscuit.” He then inquired, “How is [sic] Captain and Mrs. Reid?” When the young woman replied that the Captain was quite well and identified herself as his wife, the surprised baker immediately apologized, adding, “I thought you was the young lady visiting at the house during the holidays.”<sup>118</sup>



Figure 21. The parish church of St. James, Gerrard's Cross, Buckinghamshire, where the Reids were regular worshippers. Photo by the author.

Mrs. Reid also remembered that people were constantly mistaking her husband for her father and George Hyde, who was nearly the same age as his celebrated son-in-law, but very “much the younger-looking of the two,” for “something else.” When she went horseback riding with him, an almost daily occurrence, people wondered, ““Who is that young gentleman who is always riding out with Mrs. Reid?”” The confusion continued even after she reached middle age. On one occasion, not long after his father-in-law’s death, Reid and his wife “were spending an evening at a friend’s house” when a distinguished guest told her, ‘I have had a very pleasant surprise in meeting your father again; he is as entertaining as ever.’” When their hostess, who noticed Elizabeth Reid’s puzzled look, corrected him, “there was a general laugh all round.”<sup>119</sup>

Although the Irish author took delight in his country surroundings, he still made frequent trips to London. Some journeys no doubt were necessary — to meet with a publisher, for instance. Others were made upon a whim, although, as Mrs. Reid recalled, he now began leaving “at a more reasonable hour.” Although there was a train station at nearby Uxbridge, Reid “possessed a variety of vehicles as well as a number of horses.” More often than not, he drove himself “in a large yellow brake, with a pair of black horses,” and was “invariably accompanied by one or two spotted carriage dogs, his wife mounted on the box seat beside him.” The impulsive author particularly enjoyed auctions and frequently bought back to Gerrard’s Cross, piled high in his carriage, “the strangest collection of things for which he had no earthly use.”<sup>120</sup>

One morning, Mrs. Reid later recalled, she and her husband were on the road to London and just “happened to be...at the rear of a circus. “ When they reached “the toll gate

just beyond Uxbridge, the gate keeper said to Mayne Reid: ‘Are you going to pay for all? You’re Mr. Cook’ (the proprietor of the circus), ‘aren’t you sir? The last one as went through said the next would pay for all.’” Probably due to the bright yellow color of his rig and the presence of the Dalmatians (and perhaps his own dandified appearance), Reid reportedly had “some difficulty in convincing the man that the author was not connected with the circus in any way” and “that the showmen” had deceived the gate keeper in order to get through “without paying [the] toll.”<sup>121</sup>

In the mid-1850s a change occurred in the way that Reid and other Victorian authors put their work before the public. With the notable exception of War Life, all the Irish author’s first few novels initially came out as books. In Great Britain, as previously noted, they were published in two or three volume sets and as single volumes in the United States. Later British editions tended to be the less expensive single volumes. Even then there was a problem, as Reid himself later pointed out in a letter to an American newspaper editor: Few people could read and not all could afford to buy books, which were then something of a luxury, especially in Great Britain. Starting with The War Trail, which was serialized in Chambers’ Journal beginning January 3, 1857, the process was reversed. Chambers paid Reid 300 guineas for the right to publish, with the author retaining the copyright. It was only after the serial had finished its run that J. & C. Brown and Company<sup>122</sup> and S. Low, Son and Company published The War Trail in book form in the United Kingdom. In the United States, Carleton was the publisher, charging \$1.50 per copy. Almost all of Reid’s subsequent novels first saw the light of day as serials, showing up in bookstores only after the last chapter of the serialized version had been printed.



The reason for this transformation was the rise in popularity of cheap illustrated magazines for both juveniles and adults. Clearly, both periodical publishers and writers saw serialization as being of mutual benefit. The author could put his work before the public while he or she was still in the process of writing and not have to wait for book publication to make any money from it. People who missed the serialized version of a work could then buy the book, which came out later in the year. One only has to glance at the date when most of the popular Irish author's serials began to figure out the formula: Start the serial in January or February, finish it by summer, and have the book on shop shelves in time for the Christmas trade. (Many motion picture studios seem to have a similar process in place today, in respect to DVD sales.) Of course, magazines benefited by attracting popular writers whose names would almost certainly assure a boost in circulation. Captain Mayne Reid was fortunate in being one of those. Right up to the time of his death and even afterward, many of his novels first appeared as serials in such popular British publications as the Penny Illustrated Newspaper, The Boys' Journal, Chambers' Journal, and Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper. Beginning in the 1860s, readers in the United States found his tales in The Fireside Companion, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, Our Young Folks, Beadle & Adams' Saturday Journal, and the Youth's Companion. Reid was certainly in good company. People today tend to forget (if indeed they ever knew) that Harriet Beecher Stowe's classic work, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Mark Twain's masterful Huckleberry Finn, and some of the best-known novels of Charles Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson first saw the light of day as serials.

The War Trail was set in Texas and Northern Mexico during the United States war with Mexico. For this work, the author no doubt drew upon his own wartime experiences,

although the locale was not one in which he had fought. The “hero” of the tale is the brave Captain Henry (there’s that name again!) Warfield — leader of a company of U.S. Rangers. Their mission: To scout the frontier, in order to prevent a surprise attack upon their soldiers by the Mexicans. At the same time, the rangers have a charge to protect the civilian population from a common enemy, the Comanche Indians. The narrative, which is spread out over no fewer than one hundred and one chapters, is a sensational collection of encounters with girls, guerrillas, wild animals, Indians, and two old friends — Reuben Rawlings (“Old Rube”) and Bill Garey, the colorful mountain men who also inhabited the pages of Reid’s earlier Scalp Hunters. Interestingly, one of the rangers was named Elijah Quackenboss,<sup>123</sup> who, apart from the addition of an additional “s,” bore the same surname as the editor of The Literary American, the New York periodical that had serialized War Life, Reid’s first novel, in 1849. (This was almost certainly *not* a mere coincidence.) Not surprisingly, the dashing Captain’s requisite love interest is a beautiful brunette, in this case the charming Isolina de Vargas, daughter of a wealthy Mexican landowner.

In May 1857 Reid and his wife decided to make another visit to his family in Northern Ireland. They set out from Gerrard’s Cross on a Monday in a landau with a removable top, pulled by a pair of “Norwegian cobs” or grey mares. With them travelled a coachman, who drove the landau, a maidservant, and “a spotted carriage dog,” i.e., a Dalmatian. Around noon each day they would stop alongside the road at some spot that took their fancy and Reid would unload the cooking gear they brought along and prepare an al fresco meal “of bacon and eggs — or whatever dish they had fixed upon for their midday meal.” A rug spread on the grass served as their table.<sup>124</sup>

While Reid cooked, the coachman would rub down and feed the horses. When their food was ready, Reid and his wife ate first, then the two servants. Travelling in this manner, they covered, on average, about thirty miles a day, spending each night at hotels “in the towns they happened to be passing through.”<sup>125</sup>

One evening, as the sun was setting, they had not yet reached a town. To make matters worse, a thunderstorm came up. Quickly, they pulled to the side of the road and Reid and his coachman fastened some large waterproof sheets to some trees, to which they also tethered the horses. After driving the carriage under the tarpaulins, all four spent the night sleeping as best they could in the landau. The next morning they discovered to their chagrin that there was a farmhouse only a little further along the road where they might have been able to take shelter for the night. Stopping there, the little party bought some milk from the farmer and then went on to the next town, where they had breakfast.<sup>126</sup>

One clear night, instead of staying in a hotel, Reid and his wife gave up the landau to the servants and spent the night sleeping on the grass in the open air, beneath a “star-studded vault of heaven,” covered only by a light blanket.<sup>127</sup>

No doubt Reid, his wife, and his servants as well, found it amusing that as they passed through several rural communities, the local people mistook them for nobility, nodding, touching their caps, and addressing the inhabitants of the coach as “my lord” and “my lady.” One person they passed remarked that they looked as if they were eloping. Other “rustics” mistook them for the advance party of a circus and the Irish coachman, who possessed a ready wit, frequently assured the confused parties that it was indeed the case and with a straight face told them they could see it at the next town on the following evening.<sup>128</sup>

Thunderstorms were not the only inconvenience they had to bear. In Staffordshire, they encountered a hill so steep that it was necessary for Reid and his wife and the maidservant disembark from the landau and walk while the coachman drove the two horses, who were barely able to get to the top.<sup>129</sup>

It took six days to reach Liverpool, where they arrived on a Saturday morning, buying tickets for the steamer leaving later the same day for Dundalk. Carriage, servants, and dog all came aboard for the journey. The next morning, after the steamer docked, Reid's coachman drove them to his parents' home in Ballyrone, where they stayed until August.<sup>130</sup>

During their stay in Ireland, Reid and his wife "took long drives about the country and also explored the Mourne Mountains." From all accounts, his Norwegian ponies seem to have made a particular impression on family and friends alike.<sup>131</sup>

On the way home from Liverpool to Gerrard's Cross, they decided to take a different route home. Passing through Derby, some locals thought Reid was a certain "Mr. Wallet," a "celebrated clown" or "Queen's Jester," who was expected to arrive in town that same day.<sup>132</sup> We do know whether Reid was amused or miffed by this case of mistaken identity.

During the late 1850s Reid continued to write at a seemingly frantic pace. On January 2, 1858 Chamber's Journal began serializing Oceola, a tale of adventure based on the life of the American Indian chief of the same name. That same year, J. & C. Brown and Company published The Plant Hunters, a book for boys that Reid dedicated to the Rev. David McKee, of Anaghlonge, a beloved former teacher in Northern Ireland. About six months later Brown and Company brought out another boys' book, Ran Away to Sea: An Autobiography (which wasn't).<sup>133</sup>

In 1859 Hurst and Blackett published Oceola in three volumes. That same year Routledge, Warne, and Routledge published The Boy Tar, with illustrations by Charles Keene, and on July 7, three days after the Reids entertained publisher James T. Fields and his wife, then visiting England, on American Independence Day, Chamber's Journal began serialization of The Wild Huntress.<sup>134</sup>

In early 1860 a New York publication, The Living Age, printed a long list of the “Ages of Living English Writers.” We do not know if Reid saw the magazine but if he did it would surely have pleased “Captain Mayne Reid, 41,” to find himself among such illustrious company as Florence Nightingale (36), Robert Browning (47), Charles Dickens (47), William M. Thackeray (48), Alfred, Lord Tennyson (49), Fanny Kemble (49), William Gladstone (50), Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (54), Benjamin Disraeli (54), Thomas Carlyle (64), Frances Trollope (72), and Walter Savage Landor (84) — to name but a few of the literary and public figures included in the article.<sup>135</sup> While most of the people on the list are still recognizable names today — in marked contrast to the relative oblivion to which Reid has been relegated (at least in the English-speaking world), this inventory of Great Britain’s best and brightest demonstrates the level of recognition to which the now-forgotten author achieved.

That same year, owing to the absence of any sort of public transportation in that “sparely populated district,” the eccentric writer took the unusual step of starting an omnibus service from Gerrard’s Cross to Uxbridge, the nearest town with a train station, “employing one of his own servants, Hugh Green by name, as driver.”<sup>136</sup> The year 1860 also saw the publication, by Charles H. Clarke, of the first of Reid’s only two non-fiction books for

juveniles, Quadrupeds: What They Are and Where Found, A Book of Zoology for Boys. On the surface, this scientific tome seemed an uncommon departure from Reid's usual style of work. In reality it wasn't such a far cry from what he was doing already. All of Reid's novels, whether written for adults or juveniles, contained nuggets of factual information about plants, animals, geology, geography, native cultures and so on, tucked in between exciting incidents in whichever tale of adventure they happened to be found. In essence, Quadrupeds was like a Reid novel but with all the daring exploits removed. No doubt if he had wanted to do so the imaginative wordsmith could have easily invented some sort of hair-raising tale to wrap around the material found in this book.

Reid's Quadrupeds resembled John James Audubon's work of the same name in title only. The celebrated naturalist's book, its full designation being Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America, was a costly, beautifully illustrated folio consisting of 150 hand-colored prints of North American mammals. His son John Woodhouse Audubon assisted him in this effort, which took three years (1845-1848) to complete.<sup>137</sup> Today, a single print from this magnificent collection can command prices in the thousands of dollars. Reid's work, in contrast, was a small, slender volume of only 168 pages — one of the shortest of his books — liberally illustrated in black and white by William Harvey. In fact, claimed Reid in the book's preface, it was Harvey's prints that provided the reason for it in the first place:

I have been called upon to write illustrative sketches for a series of engravings, designed by an eminent artist. In performing my part of the work I have thrown the Mammalia into twenty-four groups — corresponding more or less to the picture designs — and have dwelt chiefly on the geographical distribution of the animals. The *Cetaceæ* [marine mammals] and *Vespertiliondæ* [flying mammals, i.e., bats] are properly omitted.<sup>138</sup>

Reid's "usual manner of writing" and his methodology, wrote his wife, were

somewhat “peculiar.” Forsaking a table, he “reclined on a couch, arrayed in dressing-gown and slippers, with a portable desk, and fur robe across his knees, the latter even in hot weather.” While absorbed in writing, he nearly always had “a cigar between his lips, which was constantly going out and being relighted, while the floor all around him was strewn with matches.” In later years he wore “a Norfolk jacket, made from his own sheep’s wool” instead of a dressing gown. There, “he would sit and write at a window in a large armchair, with an improvised table in front of him resting on his knees, upon which at night he would have a couple of candles placed, the inevitable cigar ‘materials’ and matches being the accessories.”<sup>139</sup>

Mrs. Reid also recalled her husband’s “wonderful faculty of observation and description, which “is clearly evidenced in all his books.” She revealed that before Reid began writing a book “the scene of which he was not personally acquainted with” he “thoroughly studied his subject, from the best and various authorities, until he became an authority himself on the matter.” Facts, she wrote, were important to him, adding, “He conveyed them to his readers in such a delightful manner that they retained an impression of them through life.” As an example, she cited The Maroon, the setting of which was the island of Jamaica. “His descriptions relating to Jamaica,” she wrote, “and the wild maroons of the mountains, their peculiar habits and strange customs, are so accurate and true to life that more than one resident of the island has declared it almost impossible to believe that the author has never set foot there.”<sup>140</sup>

For a writer, Reid believed that being direct was best. Several years after the Irish novelist’s death, Robert Barr, a Scottish author and journalist, whose best-known work was

Eugène Valmont (1906), recalled the “worldly wisdom” that Reid imparted to him. “Never surprise the British public, my boy,” he said, “they don’t like it.”<sup>141</sup>

If you arrange a pail of water above a door so that when an obnoxious boy enters the room the water will come down upon him, take your readers into your confidence long before the deed is done. Let them help you to tie up the pail, then they will chuckle all through the chapter as the unfortunate lad approaches his fate, and when he is finally deluged, they will roar with delight and cry, “Now he has got his dose!”

When describing her husband’s writing habits, Mrs. Reid could have also added that he was a restless soul who quickly became bored — the sort of person who would become interested in something, throw himself into it with all his energy, and then just as abruptly put it aside for some new pursuit. This tendency, combined with the “hot and hasty temperament” he claimed to have inherited from his mother’s side of the family, may help explain not only the wide range of settings in his books, the numerous letters he would fire off to newspaper editors on a wide variety of topics, but also his frequent changes of residence. Between 1851 and 1870, the impulsive author lived at no fewer than eight addresses in England and five in the United States. Even chronic illness and advancing age did little to diminish his restiveness.

Reid’s inherent need for a change of scenery now and then may explain why then, in late 1860, he sub-let his home in Gerrard’s Cross and returned to London. Apparently, he was bored with country life. In the capital, the Reids either leased or rented a house at 23 Woburn Place in St. George’s Parish, Bloomsbury,<sup>142</sup> where they would reside for the next several months — and apparently not alone.

From the British government’s regular decennial census we learn that the Reids’ household in 1861 included not only the 42-year-old novelist and his 22-year-old wife but



also a 25-year-old female servant named Sarah Chapman, as well as the author's 51-year-old father-in-law, George W. Hyde, a retired merchant whose second wife, Sarah, was only ten years younger than her stepdaughter. The fact that Hyde had married a woman nineteen years his junior following his first wife's death is particularly ironic considering his initial reluctance to allow his teenage daughter to marry Reid some seven years earlier. The household also included two lodgers: Robert J. Haynes, the 28-year-old Barbados-born curate of St. George's, and his wife, also 28 and a Londoner by birth, who the census listed only by her initials, A. J.<sup>143</sup>

Questions are raised by the presence of Reid's in-laws, as well as the curate and his wife. Were Mr. and Mrs. Hyde permanent residents or just visiting? And if the former, was it because they were in financial difficulty? Or did Mrs. Reid simply like to be close to her family? And why would Reid and his wife take in lodgers, particularly if they could afford a servant? At this point in his career, the Irish author was at the height of his success. It seems unlikely that he needed to supplement his income, although the presence of two lodgers suggests otherwise. From all accounts, Reid was a notoriously profligate spender. On the other hand, simple charity may explain the situation. Perhaps the curate was new at his post and needed somewhere to live until suitable quarters could be found. It seems curious, however, that neither Reid's widow nor Charles Ollivant mentioned this living arrangement in the biographies they wrote. Was it meant to be a secret? Or did they simply think it wasn't worth mentioning? In Ollivant's case, we must take into account the fact that in 1861 he was a 15-year-old boy living with his parents in Cheshire and was five years away from meeting his favorite author. Any knowledge he later acquired about Reid's personal affairs prior to

making his acquaintance came to Ollivant second-hand. Mrs. Reid, in contrast, was there at the time. Perhaps she kept the arrangement private because her father and stepmother were the ones in need of a roof over their heads and she found it embarrassing.

In any event, considering Elizabeth Reid's youth at this time, the conspicuous absence of any children in the household is even more puzzling. As far as we know, the Reids never had any offspring, at this or any other point in their lives. The reason why can only be conjectured. Since nineteenth century methods of birth control were notoriously unreliable, it may be that either Reid or his wife was infertile — or perhaps they both were. There is also the possibility that Elizabeth Reid did have one or more children but that they died in infancy or that she became pregnant but miscarried. In view of the veil of privacy she seems to have drawn over any part of their lives that was not directly related to her husband's career, one of these scenarios is certainly possible. It seems ironic, nonetheless, that a man who was celebrated for the untold hours of reading pleasure he provided generations of boys should have no children of his own, which may explain his close relationship with Charles Ollivant. Perhaps he considered the admiring young Cheshire lad the son he never had. Of course, just because his wife probably had no children does not necessarily mean that Reid did not. There is at least one American living today who believes his great-great grandfather may have been the illegitimate Scottish-born son of the famous author and that when grown, the young man immigrated to the United States, dying in 1890 in Colorado. In the absence of any evidence to support the claim, however, it must be considered dubious.<sup>144</sup>

In November 1860, shortly after the Reids moved to Bloomsbury, Routledge published the second of the eccentric author's non-fiction works, Odd People. Being a

Popular Description of Singular Races of Man, which featured illustrations by J. B. Zwecker. Odd People was itself somewhat unusual. Like Quadrupeds before it, the book was a notable departure from the novelist's usual work, in that it was non-fiction. Interestingly, it was the sort of thing to which some critics later wrote he should have applied himself more frequently. Taking him to task for his wooden, one dimensional characters, at the same time they praised Reid for his ability to set a scene — to describe a place, along with its people, plants and animals, both accurately and with feeling.

Odd People, which was published in the United States by both Harper & Brothers and Ticknor & Fields, consisted of eighteen fact-filled chapters written in conversational style, focusing on groups of mostly primitive people that Reid himself probably found fascinating: the Bosjesmen or Bushmen” of South Africa; the Amazonian Indians and the Water-Dwellers of Maracaibo, both found in South America; the Esquimaux of the North American Arctic region; the Mundrucus, or Beheaders, who Reid regarded as the “*odd among the odd*” in respect to Amazonian Indians; the so-called Centaurs of the “Gran Chaco,” also found in South America; the Feegees, or Maneaters, and the Tongons, or Friendly Islanders, of the South Pacific; the Turcomans of Asia; the Ottomacs, or Dirt-Eaters, another South American group; the Comanches, or Prairie Indians, of North America; the Pehuenches Indians of the South American Pampas; the Yamparicos, or Root-Diggers, of the United States’ Great Basin; the Guaraons, or Palm-Dwellers, of South America; Finland’s Laplanders; the Andamaners, or Mud-Bedaubers, who lived in the Andaman Island chain of the Indian Ocean; the South American Patagonian Giants; and the Fuegian Dwarfs, who dwelled in the *Tierra del Fuego* (Land of Fire), located at the southern tip of South America.<sup>145</sup>

Probably because it was so far removed from his usual work, Odd People seems to have attracted very little critical attention; and while none of the notice it did receive was unflattering, on the other hand neither was it effusive. A writer for the New Englander and Yale Review was typical, remarking in a somewhat matter-of-fact tone: “This is a book, compiled by a popular author, Capt. Mayne Reid, which contains a variety of information, not easily accessible to most persons, with respect to ‘Singular Races of Men,’ the localities they inhabit; their history; their modes of life; their habits and customs.”<sup>146</sup> One notable exception to this lackluster treatment appeared in Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, whose anonymous book reviewer opined a little more ardently:

If one is in pursuit of human oddities he need not leave this country, or ever go far from this famous city, to discover a variety of specimens sufficiently striking to gratify the most eager curiosity. Captain Mayne Reid, however, sets out upon his travels, and penetrates into “deserts vast and antres wild” in the hunt for queer, out-of-the-way races of men, which vacation he seems to prefer to that of Nimrod and Gordon Cumming, whose taste was more decidedly in the line of the four-footed wonders of creation. He has certainly succeeded in bringing to light several odd enough patterns of humanity, and furnishing fresh proof of the old adage that “it takes all sorts of people to make the world.”<sup>147</sup>

Another, more notable critique came in the form of a private letter, about which Reid almost certainly had no knowledge, either at the time it was written or later. Between 1839 and 1870, the famed American frontier artist George Catlin, celebrated for his detailed visual interpretations of Native American life and culture, lived abroad, spending most of that time in England. Reid later claimed to have met him there, which was not unlikely, in 1851. On October 14, 1860, Catlin was passing through Liverpool, apparently returning from one of his expeditions to South America, when he chanced to read “in the Guardian of Yesterday, an extract from Capt. Mayne Reid’s Book on ‘Odd People’” What Catlin noticed — a portion of

the book's tenth chapter, which highlighted "The Ottomacs, or Dirt-Eaters" of South America — moved him to compose a seven-page critique, which he sent to journalist John Harland, head of the Guardian's reporting staff — not for publication, "but mainly," as he told the newspaperman, "for your own amusement."<sup>148</sup>

In view of the esteem in which the celebrated painter was held on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as the uncomplimentary character of the letter, if it had been published in the Guardian or any other leading newspaper or journal, it would almost certainly had not only an adverse affect on the book's sales but also Reid's reputation for accuracy. Fortunately for his sake, it appears that it did not make it into print.

"Reid's book," Catlin declared quite bluntly, "clearly shows the folly, if not wickedness, of making Books by filching from books, without giving [credit to] the Authors — assuming everything, and leaving the world to judge what is fact and what is fiction." In his view, the eminent artist and explorer continued, moving on to the topic with which the Guardian extract was concerned, "There is to me, nothing odd in 'dirt eating,' unless it be the absurd statement, that of a substance which 'is in no way nourishing,' 'the Indians eat one pound per day, and often times live upon it for several days together without food.'"<sup>149</sup>

These would be heavy pills for a people in a famished condition, who have no castor oil? Like a thousand other things seen but not understood, the customs which may be seen in every tribe of Indians in America, of eating charcoal as a tonic, to distress the stomach; and eating clay to relieve the pains of an overloaded stomach, or soothe the pangs of hunger are equally resorted to as medicine but not as food.

All Tribes collect & keep the balls of clay which Capt. Reid speaks of, for the purpose of cleaning their skin dresses, as Tribe clay is used for cleaning leather breeches in this country; and it is no unfrequent [sic] thing to see the Indians and their children biting off this clay and swallowing it for the purpose just named; and I have eaten it myself while in the Indian countries; and even in my boyhood I have been compelled to eat it for the heartburn. It is perfectly absurd to say that the Indians can eat a "pound a day" of clay, on an empty stomach; and if Capt. Reid cannot find things

odd enough in themselves, amongst the savages without making them odd, he had better take up the oddities of civilization — they (not the Savages, who are natural) are the odd people, strictly speaking.<sup>150</sup>

Catlin also challenged Reid's statement "That the savages are without food when the rivers are flooded." This, he told Harland, "is entirely the reverse of truth." Reading Catlin's words today, it is easy to visualize the seasoned explorer shaking his head as his pen scratched the paper. "Such things are easily imagined by writers of fiction to fill up a gap, which too often done in these days under the garb of truth."<sup>151</sup> In point of fact, he explained:

When the rivers are swollen and muddy, the fish leave the sweeping current in which they would lost and carried away from their accustomed haunts, and shelter themselves in the small streams and lagoons, where they live in clear and shallow water & are taken by the Indians with nets, spears & arrows, in greater abundance and with more facility, than at any other season.<sup>152</sup>

As he neared the end of this epistle, Catlin declared that if anything, a "stone eater" would be more odd than a "dirt eater," relating a story about himself that would not have been out-of-place in one of Reid's tales of adventure. While exploring in Guyana "amongst several contiguous Tribes at the base of the Tumucumacke [sic] Mountains at the sources of the Essequibo [River], the curious artist reported, he was "resting a few days in a small village," which was "situated on the shore of a small lake." There, he added:<sup>153</sup>

...I was attracted to the beach every morning at an early hour by the exquisite beauty of silicious [sic] fossils in the pebbles, which were in great abundance and of all colours.

With a small pocket hammer I was breaking these pebbles and in order to detect the richness of their colours, I was in the habit of wetting the fracture with my tongue. And when I found a very fine one of putting it in my pocket.

A troupe [sic] of little Indian children were in the habit of following me at a safe distance but not near enough to learn exactly what I was doing; and returning to their village, reported to their parents that I was the strangest man in the world — that I made my breakfast on stones, and put others in my pocket for my dinner! I therefore went by the name of Mixt-hus-sa (the Stone Eater).

But of course, Catlin concluded, referring back his original premise, which was that Reid had

mistaken the Indians' cure for stomach upset with food, he was "just about as much a stone eater, as the Ottomaks are 'dirt eaters.'" To drive home the point, he scrawled a footnote: "Dogs eat grass when are sick — birds & fishes eat gravel & pebbles to aid digestion — civilized people eat rhubarb and take pills — & Indians eat clay."<sup>154</sup>

Bruin; or, The Grand Bear Hunt, which also appeared in British and American bookshops in time for Christmas 1860, seems to have been greeted with slightly more interest than Odd People. Published by Routledge in England and Ticknor and Fields in the United States, Bruin too was unique in its own way, being the only one of Reid's works to be set, at least partly, in Russia. (Ironically, when Reid's titles began to be published in that country, the most popular became — and apparently still are — those that take place in the American Southwest!) This singular work also stands out for being a collaborative effort. In an author's note at the front of the book, Reid announced: "Captain Reid acknowledges with pleasure the assistance of an American Author, the results of whose labors he has been kindly enabled to incorporate with his own in the story of 'Bruin; or, The Grand Bear Hunt.'"<sup>155</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know the identity of the "American Author" nor do we know how much of the book is attributable to him.

If the book critic for the New Englander and Yale Review seemed less than captivated with Odd People, he made up for it by giving Bruin a better reception:

This book, as the title indicates, is all about bears — full of stories and stirring incidents — full of instruction and rational amusement. For under the comprehensive story of a Grand Bear-Hunt, extending into all corners of the world where bears are found, it introduces the reader to all known species of bears, interests him their natural history, habits, and manners, thrills him with startling adventures and hair-breadth escapes in their pursuits, and incidentally fills his mind with a vast fund of geographical, historical, and miscellaneous knowledge, presented in the most available and fascinating form; — in a word, it is just such a book as boys will eagerly devour almost

at a sitting, and then feel half angry with the graceful story-telling author, that he has not made it longer.<sup>156</sup>

The Irish author's next published work, which appeared at about this same time, was an even less original tale of adventure — an English-language adaptation of the late Louis de Bellemare's Les Coureurs de bois or, as it appeared under Reid's name, The Wood Rangers; or, A Hero in Spite of Himself, which Hurst and Blackett published in London, with illustrations by Zwecker. Although we do not know why Reid chose at this particular time to adapt another author's work rather than write a new one of his own, it was a suitable match. Bellemare, who was best known by his *nom de plume*, "Gabriel Ferry," was at one time as popular in France as Reid was in the English-speaking world, and during the same era. Moreover, apart from his nationality and the fact that he was nine years older than Reid, the two men had much in common, their lives having followed similar paths. Like Reid, Bellemare was a restless youth who left home at the age of 21 but instead of visiting the United States, the curious young Frenchman made his way to Mexico (although he did later spend some time the U.S. as well). Arriving in 1830, Bellemare stayed for most of a decade becoming thoroughly acquainted with Mexico's culture, its people, and its geography, much the same way Reid would do later in a much more compressed amount of time. Returning to France in 1840, at about the time that Reid was beginning his first American sojourn, Bellemare started to write about his experiences and soon became the successful author of several works of non-fiction as well as some novels that are similar to Reid's in terms of setting and characters. Interestingly, in 1847 Bellemare wrote a book about the war in which Reid was a soldier, titled La guerre des Etats-Unis et du Mexique. Four years after his untimely death in 1852 (at just about the time when Reid's career was beginning to take off),



one of his works was translated into English and published in the U.S. by Harper and Brothers. Titled A Vagabond Life in Mexico, it was from all appearances very popular. A lively critique published in the United States Democratic Review provides some idea of both the nature of the work and Bellemare's style:

We have not much faith in the bona-fide existence of Señor Gabriel Ferry, as an individual, but his book has delighted us. It is just what we had a right to expect it would be from its title—a series of adventures among the *manvais sujets* of priest-ridden revolutionary Mexico. We are introduced to bull-fighters, thieves, assassins, and similar “minions of the moon.” We share the pleasures and perils of Senor Gabriel, now drinking aguardente in his worshipful company at some dirty way-side inn, and now barely escaping the knife of some ill-looking, unwashed bravo. Our perceptions of right and wrong are hardly as active as they should be while we skim through his jaunty pages. Thievery does not seem as bad in Mexico as elsewhere, and as for assassination, murder, and other trifling peccadilloes, why, they are merely the institutions of the country! Señor Gabriel is no moralist, for what would a moralist be doing among such vagabonds? But he is something better all author-purposes — he is a lively, rollicking chronicler of Mexican manners and customs, some more honored in the breach than the observance.<sup>157</sup>

Shortly after The Wood Rangers appeared, apparently by coincidence Reid was discussed in a lengthy article about Gustave Aimard, who had lately succeeded the deceased Bellemare as France's leading author of Western fiction. The unsigned piece, which originally appeared in Bentley's Miscellany, was reprinted in The Living Age (the same New York magazine that placed Reid in a collection of illustrious British authors published the year before). Up until the appearance of Aimard, wrote the anonymous critic, Western fiction had been “almost indigenous to the Anglo-Americans,” speculating in terms that would have made the Indian-hating Gen. Philip Sheridan proud, that it was because “no other nation has come so much in contact with the savages as those who sent forth these daring pioneers from North and South to drive the Indians further and further back from their hunting grounds.” The most noteworthy examples of such authors, he added, were James Fenimore Cooper

(“Who is there among us who has not hung with breathless interest over the ‘Last of the Mohicans?’”), George Frederick Ruxton (“too soon taken from us, alas”), and Captain Mayne Reid (“who has his readers by tens of thousands, and whose novels are full of incident and vitality.”)<sup>158</sup>

The writer of the article went on to point out that there *had* been some good non-English speaking authors writing in a similar vein, most notably Bellemare and the Germans Charles Sealsfield and Kohl. But even Bellemare’s “deservedly great reputation,” the critic declared, “has paled before the rising lustre of Gustave Aimard, who is at once the French Mayne Reid and Fenimore Cooper.”<sup>159</sup>

If Reid ever saw this piece, the flattering acknowledgement no doubt pleased him. However, his delight would most certainly have changed to dismay if he read further that in the opinion of the writer, Aimard’s works were “superior to those of both the above-named authors.” Cooper, the unidentified essayist observed, “possessed a great talent for inventing a story,” but qualified the compliment by stating that the author of The Leatherstocking Tales had restricted himself to “a very confined space,” namely the eastern tribes, who were by the mid-nineteenth century, long subdued. Cooper was, “therefore, virtually right in calling one of his books ‘The Last of the Mohicans.’” Reid, “on the other hand,” wrote the anonymous critic, “acted wisely in laying the scene of his stories among the untamable tribes of the western prairies,” for through their depredations among “the degenerate descendants of Cortes,” the Pawnees, Apaches, and Comanches supplied “a thrilling subject for the romance writer.” But then, having praised the Irish novelist, the writer proceeded to dismantle him, adding (no doubt with some degree of truth):

Unfortunately...when you have read one of Captain Reid's stories, you have read them all, for a marvellous [sic] likeness pervades them. The feeling cannot be overcome that, having exhausted his stock of personal observation in his earlier works, he repeats himself, or is obliged to fall back on reading. Another great defect in these otherwise charming tales is the utter absence of plot; you have incidents piled on incidents, but the conclusion lies as plainly before you as the town you are travelling to on a Dutch road. It may be that Mayne Reid, having to write for a popular periodical, does not display that artistic finish of which we believe him quite capable, and that, under different circumstances, he might produce works in every way satisfactory to his readers; but there is nothing so injurious, he should remember, to a popular author than the whispered, "he is writing himself out," from which some of our best writers are now suffering, simply because, having made a reputation, they do nothing on their side to support it.<sup>160</sup>

In contrast, the unnamed journalist continued, "Aimard has written some dozen Indian tales, all interesting and unalike," explaining further: "The great charm of his stories is...the vitality he manages to throw into them; and he writes with such spirit, that, while reading, you cannot but imagine that he is describing to you scenes of which he was the eyewitness." The writer speculated that the reason for the superior quality of the Frenchman's work was due to his having spent "an age" among the Indians, had "fought, hunted, trapped by their side, and is thoroughly acquainted with their every ruse."<sup>161</sup> Although there are several recorded instances when Reid challenged some supposed slight, (particularly when it came to his war record), there seems to be no record of his response to this particular criticism of his work.

While living in London in the early months of 1861, Reid was no doubt dismayed to hear the news from across the Atlantic of the secession of several Southern states, the formation of the Confederacy, and the uneasy military stand-off at Charleston, South Carolina that threatened to ignite a great civil war. As a lifelong opponent of slavery, it was not surprising that even before the conflict began he "strongly sympathized with the Union."

His wife later wrote that once it started, “Like an old war-horse, as it were, he ‘sniffed the battle from afar,’ and longed to join the fray in defence of the starry flag under which he had so gallantly fought and shed his blood in the war with Mexico.” Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine that if he had been a few years younger and unmarried, the former lieutenant would have once again crossed the Atlantic in hopes of carrying a sword. But that was not to be. Having a young English wife who almost certainly refused to allow her husband to entertain such dangerous notions, he took up his pen instead. In late February the troubled old soldier composed the following lines, which were marked “Private” and sent to Frederick Hudson of the New York Herald, asking that they be given “circulation.” Mrs. Reid later reported that the verses, which stressed her husband’s fear of European gloating over the possibly imminent demise of the United States’ experiment in democracy, were “published in some American newspaper [no doubt the Herald] under the *nom-de-plume* ‘Prenez Garde.’”<sup>162</sup>

#### TO THE UNITED STATES

Oh land of my longings, beyond the Atlantic,  
 What horrible dream has disturbed thy repose?  
 What demon has driven thy citizens frantic —  
 A grief to their friends, and a joy to their foes?

Is it true they are arming to kill one another?  
 That sire and son are in hostile array?  
 That brother is baring his blade against brother —  
 Each madly preparing the other to slay?

Is it rue the star-banner, so dear to the sight  
 Of all freemen, may fall by a fusionist’s blow —  
 That banner I’ve borne through the midst of the fight,  
 Side by side with they sons as we charged on the foe?

I would not, I will not, I cannot believe it;  
 Oh! rally around it, and stand by the staff!  
 Or the childhood of men will have reason to grieve it,

And the tyrants of men will exultingly laugh.

Aye, sure will the priests and princes of earth  
 Greet the fall of thy flag with a joyous “hurrah!”  
 Even now scarce suppressing demoniac mirth,  
 They’ll hail thy decadence with fiendish “ha, ha!”

To him who would help them to win their foul game,  
 Whether or Northern or Southern — no matter which claims him —  
 Be a brand on his brow, and a blight on his fame,  
 And scorn on the lips of the humblest who names him!

Be palsied the arm that draws sword fratricidal!  
 May the steel of the traitor be broken in two!  
 May his maiden betrothed, on the day of his bridal,  
 Prove faithless to him, as he has been to you!

United, no power ‘neath heaven can shake thee,  
 No purple-robed despot e’er smile on thy shame;  
 Asunder, as reeds, they will bruise thee and break thee,  
 And waste thee like flax in the pitiless flame.

Woe, woe to the world, if this fatal division  
 Should ever arrive in the ranks of the free!  
 Oh brother! avoid then the deadly collision,  
 And millions unborn will sing praises to thee!<sup>163</sup>

In May 1861, a few months after these verses were composed, the Reids gave up their London residence and returned to Gerrard’s Cross. At around this same time the author-turned-businessman decided to put a halt to the omnibus service he had been operating from Gerrard’s Cross to the train station at Uxbridge, for the simple reason that it was losing money. It was also about this time that he purchased a portable wooden house on wheels — a sort of nineteenth century mobile home — in which his coachman would reside. Apparently this portable dwelling was quite tall. When it was being transported from London to Gerrard’s Cross on the back of a freight wagon, its wheels had to be removed in order to get it underneath a railway overpass at Uxbridge.<sup>164</sup>

In the summer of 1861, following the Reids' resumption of their residence in Buckinghamshire, the author began enlarging both the house in which he and his wife resided as well as the one they owned across the road. Although we cannot be sure, it is possible, even likely, that Mrs. Reid's father and stepmother occupied the other dwelling.

In the waning months of the year Reid became embroiled in a controversy surrounding the unauthorized adaptation of his book, The Quadroon, by dramatist Dion Boucicault, into a play titled The Octoroon: or, Life in Louisiana, which commenced at London's Adelphi Theatre on November 18. The drama had previously been produced in New York, where it had opened on December 16, 1859 at the Winter Garden Theater.<sup>165</sup>

Steele, who investigated the dispute, reckoned that Reid was probably flattered but at the same time "highly incensed over Boucicault's behavior." The Athenaeum, a periodical that was generally (but not always) favorably inclined toward the Irish author and his work, came to his defense, opining, "As the case now stands before the public, Capt. Mayne Reid appears in the position of a man of letters who has suffered a literary wrong." Complicating matters further, Steele added, an anonymous letter writer called "Suum Cinque" challenged Reid to prove that The Quadroon was not itself a plagiarized version of the story "Masks and Faces," which was published in an 1855 edition of The London Journal.<sup>166</sup> Reid responded by writing, on December 10, 1861 a response The Athenaeum printed in its issue of December 14. The letter, a transcription of which was included in Charles Ollivant's "Life of Mayne Reid," reads as follows:

During a residence of many years — commencing in 1839, and ending, with intervals of absence, in 1848 — the author of 'The Quadroon' was an eye-witness of nearly a score of slave auctions, at which beautiful Quadroon girls were sold in bankruptcy, and brought up, too, notoriously with the motives that actuated the

‘Gayarre’ of his tale; and that upon such actual incidents was the story of the ‘Quadroon’ founded. Most of the book was written in 1852; but, as truthfully stated in its Preface, in consequence of the appearance of ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’ its publication was delayed until 1856. The writing of it was finished early in 1855.

With regard to ‘The Quadroon,’ and the Adelphi drama the resemblance is just that which must ever exist between a melo-drama [sic] and the romance from which it is taken; and when ‘The Octoroon’ was first produced in New York — January 1860 — its scenes and characters were at once identified by the newspaper critics of that city as being transcribed from ‘The Quadroon.’ Some of its scenes, as at present performed, are original — at least, they are not from ‘The Quadroon’ — but these introduced incidents are generally believed not have improved the story; and one of them — the poisoning of the heroine — Mr. Boucicault has had the good taste to alter, restoring the beautiful Quadroon to the happier destiny to which the romance had consigned her. It might be equally in good taste if the clever dramatist were to come out before the public with a frank avowal of the source when his drama has been drawn.<sup>167</sup>

Neither Ollivant nor Steele tells us whether the dispute was ever resolved to Reid’s satisfaction but the UCLA graduate points out further that Boucicault’s apparent plagiarism was not the first time someone adapted the work in question for the stage. A drama titled The Quadroon, the Slave Bride, was staged on October 15, 1857 at the Victoria Theatre and Steele believed it might have been an adaptation made by Reid himself.<sup>168</sup> Unfortunately, neither Ollivant nor the author’s widow mentioned it in their respective biographies of Reid, so it is difficult to be certain.

We *can* be sure, however (thanks to Steele’s research), that several of Reid’s other books were also dramatized, either with or without his permission, on the London stage. The earliest, and one which Reid *is* known to have approved, was an adaptation of The Scalp Hunters. Re-titled “Seguin the Scalp Hunter,” the play was produced at the City of London Theatre in March 1854 with E. L. Davenport taking the role of Seguin and Fanny Vining playing Adele. Another Reid novel adapted for the stage was The War Trail, performed in October 1857 at Astley’s Amphitheatre. This was followed in April 1859 by a production of

Oceola at the Surrey Theater. In 1865, two of the Irish novelist's later works, The Maroon and The Headless Horseman, were produced at the Royal Victoria and the Britannia theatres, respectively.<sup>169</sup>

On January 18, 1862 Cassell's Family Paper began serializing the work that Reid had spent much of 1861 writing: The Maroon, an exhilarating tale of adventure set in Jamaica. That autumn Hurst and Blackett published it in three volumes.<sup>170</sup> The year 1862 also saw the publication of another adapted Bellemare work, Costal l' Indien, which was titled in English, The Tiger Hunter.<sup>171</sup>

The Maroon was particularly well received by critics. Reid's "more than ordinarily happy powers of description" convinced at least one commentator that he wrote from personal experience, although, as his wife pointed out, he had "never set foot" on the island of Jamaica.<sup>172</sup> A critic for The Athenaeum predicted the new novel would "rank amongst Captain Mayne Reid's most popular works," while a writer for The Press pronounced it "a capital romance, wherein young readers especially will take a delight." The Observer was equally effusive, as was the Morning Post, which proclaimed Reid's latest work "brilliant and exciting."<sup>173</sup>

In late 1862 or early 1863, when he was at the height of his success, Reid took the first step toward realizing a long-held dream: A house of his own, built to his own specifications. From Oxford University's Brazenose College, he purchased a "two nines" lease on twenty acres of meadowland adjoining his Oxford Road property, with eighty-nine years left to run. An extant letter addressed to a representative of the college, in which he asked that its solicitor be commanded "to do his work in a more prompt and professional



manner,” reveals that Reid returned the copied and signed contracts by mail on January 31, 1863. Around this same time he also bought some nearby freehold land for the clay it held, to be used in manufacturing his own bricks. The home he had in mind was almost certainly unlike like anything ever seen in England before. What Reid proposed to construct was something akin to the haciendas he had seen in Mexico and in due course the structure, which took three years to complete, began to take shape.<sup>174</sup>

In the fall of that same year, Ollivant tells us, “a singular figure habited in a rough blanket coat made in the style of a South American poncho, with a hole through the centre to admit the wearer’s head, called at Mayne Reid’s publisher, Charles H. Clarke, Paternoster Row, London, and inquired for ‘Captain Mayne Reid.’” The man “said he had a manuscript story, and wanted an advance of money upon it.” When Clarke “would not give him a sitting,” the oddly dressed stranger “set off to walk the twenty miles to Reid’s house” at Gerrard’s Cross.<sup>175</sup> Elizabeth Reid also remembered this peculiar character, but was almost certainly mistaken when she wrote in her biography of her late husband that the mysterious visitor called on them at their home on Woburn Place in London, although she agrees that the incident occurred in the fall of 1862.<sup>176</sup>

In either event, when he finally found Reid’s home, in short order he “was ushered into the presence” of the curious author. His name, the man said, was Charles Beach, “a native of the state of Maine in the U.S.A.” He was, he explained, “one of those wandering waifs whom chance had conducted to almost every corner of the earth, and that he had made the circuit of the globe some half a score of times.” The manuscript he wanted Reid to see, “a record of [his] adventures in various parts of the world,” was wrapped in “a brown paper

parcel under his arm.” He called it The Adventures of a Rolling Stone.

In addition to their disagreement about where this meeting took place, Ollivant and Mrs. Reid were also at variance on the man’s nickname. She called Beach, who claimed at one point in his adventures to have eaten human flesh, “Cannibal Charlie,” whereas Ollivant dubbed him “Cannibal Jack,” although he originally wrote “Charlie” in his manuscript but later scratched it out, replacing it with the other name. Once again, Mrs. Reid was probably mistaken. There is other evidence to support Ollivant’s contention that “Cannibal Jack” was the correct name.

In any event, Reid agreed to take a look at Beach’s work and after advancing him “a small sum of money to enable him to apparel himself decently,” invited him to stay for lunch. Having heard his stories of cannibalism, Mrs. Reid grew apprehensive when Beach accepted the invitation. During the meal, the fearful woman remembered, the roughly dressed character remarked he had “been away from civilization so long,” he hardly remembered how to use a knife and fork and when her husband left the table momentarily, “she was so horrified by the “uncouth guest,” that “she made an excuse for following him, fearing that the ‘man-eater’ might eat her up.” Or as Ollivant, wrote: “She beat a hasty retreat.”<sup>177</sup>

Two years later, after Reid had worked over Beach’s manuscript, it was published as “a three volume novel...under the title, ‘Lost Lenore; or, The Adventures of a Rolling Stone.’” Mrs. Reid, who included the book’s preface in her biography of her husband, claimed he “failed to do himself justice” by saying merely that he had polished a rough gem, “for he had recast and nearly rewritten the whole work before it was suitable for publication.” But, she added, “He possessed a generous and sympathising nature, and preferred that the

unfortunate Beach should have the major part of the credit.” Elizabeth Reid went on to report that thanks largely to her husband’s efforts, “‘the cannibal’...at length found some literary work to do in London, where he also found himself a wife, and lived in a sort of Bohemian fashion from hand to mouth.”<sup>178</sup> This is confirmed, more or less, by the fact that in 1863, at least one of Beach’s short pieces, “The Young Savage: A True Story,” was published in the Boys’ Journal — one of the same English juvenile periodicals to which Reid was a regular contributor around the same time. The story was attributed to “‘Cannibal Jack,’ who lived among the Savages Twelve Years.”<sup>179</sup>

It is interesting to note that after The Lost Lenore appeared in bookstores, Reid became distressed by the fact that having gone to a lot of trouble to shape Beach’s manuscript into something readable (and saleable), reviewers’ responses to it were less than enthusiastic. A letter, written on September 1, 1864 at “The Rancho” to an unnamed magazine publisher, reveals not only his obvious frustration but also how he attempted (unsuccessfully, it appears) to find the book a wider audience:

Dear Sir

By advice of Mr. Wills of All The Year Round [an English periodical], I write to you. It’s to say that I have a work edited by myself and published in 3 vols. entitled Lost Lenore, or the Adventures of a Rolling Stone. It has not yet received any attention from the public though I stand in the opinion expressed by me in the preface, that it is a book of much sterling merit. I feel some where before the real public of readers my opinion will be correct.

I wish to have this work run through a weekly periodical before printing in the cheap or railway edition and if you wish to have it for your journal you can get it for the trifling sum of £50.

I expended much time and labour editing or rather in re-writing it, and my name is at your service.

An early reply will much oblige.<sup>180</sup>

Today there is some doubt in literary circles as to whether the mysterious “Cannibal

Charlie” or “Cannibal Jack” actually existed. In other words, as Joan Steele put it, there is some belief “that the entire Cannibal Charlie story was manufactured by the captain himself.” This consensus is reflected in not only in published bibliographies of Reid’s work but also in library catalogs around the world, where the author Charles Beach is frequently identified as a pseudonym for Mayne Reid. Steele, who investigated the question, disagreed. She reached the conclusion that the books credited to Beach (and there were six others besides The Lost Lenore) “are in reality the work of some other writer, though not necessarily the person described in Mrs. Reid’s biography.” Basing her conclusion on “extreme stylistic differences between the two authors,” she explained:

Beach’s works read very much like Horatio Alger transplanted to far-off places. The rapid pace of the story line allows for none of the nature description common in Reid’s work; the mysteries are never solved (not even in three concluding paragraphs, as is Reid’s practice), and the works are weakened by extensive use of the passive voice not characteristic of Reid.<sup>181</sup>

Unfortunately, there seems to be no hard evidence to either prove or disprove the existence of an actual Charles Beach, a.k.a. “Cannibal Charlie” or “Cannibal Jack.” United States federal census records for Maine and New York, where Mrs. Reid claimed she and her husband last saw Beach in 1870, are of little use in clearing up the mystery. The only likely individuals listed are a 41-year-old Charles H. Beach, living in McLean County, Illinois, and a 21-year-old Charles H. Beach in York County, Maine.<sup>182</sup> Although both were natives of Maine, owing to their ages and their places of residence, neither seems a likely candidate. There is little else to go on. For anyone unwilling to accept Steele’s assessment or requiring more conclusive evidence, the question remains open.

Sometime probably in late 1862 or early 1863 there was an unexpected snowfall in

Buckinghamshire, which gave the occasionally-madcap Reid an opportunity to indulge both his whimsy and his creativity. More than a decade later, the impetuous author recalled it in a short article written for The Sporting and Dramatic News. At about nine o'clock in the morning, "While seated at breakfast in my house in the shire of Buckingham," the writer recalled, "I observed that the snow fallen throughout the night had attained to a thickness of three or four inches, and had the look of lying." Addressing his wife and a female friend or relative who was a guest of the Reids at that time, he announced: "You shall have a sleigh ride today." Disbelieving, one of the women replied, "You are jesting." But, as the author later remembered, he was "in earnest," stating confidently that by noon they would "be in a sleigh running across country, regardless of roads."<sup>183</sup>

Not surprisingly, the women wanted to know how this was possible, seeing that the Reids owned no sleigh, nor was there any "such vehicle in this neighbourhood...except that at Windsor Castle, the property of the Prince-Consort." Laughingly, Reid's wife mocked him, asking, "You don't intend borrowing it?" No, he replied, "I intend borrowing your pony phaeton, madam."<sup>184</sup>

At first Elizabeth Reid expressed a fear that this prized vehicle, apparently her favorite, would be damaged, "But," wrote her husband, "the thought of sport so rare as a sleigh ride, coupled with my assurance that the carriage would be perfectly safe, settled the question, and I was left free to do what I wished with it." Even so, the inventive writer admitted later, he wasn't entirely sure he could fulfill his promise. "It was a bright idea that had flashed across my brain," he reflected, "suggested by what I had seen in the other side of the Atlantic." Worrying that there might be "some preventative hitch I had not thought of,"

Reid finished his breakfast and then went “to the coach-house” where, no doubt to his relief, he assured himself that he “could convert the phaeton into as snug a sleigh as ever ran upon runners.”<sup>185</sup>

Fortunately, the author then “had carpenters at work upon the premises.” Calling the foreman over to the coach house, he “gave him directions what to do.” First, Reid ordered the workmen “to take two pieces of ordinary 9 in. deal, each of 8 feet in length, and plane them clean.” Next, they were to “round off one end of each in the shape of a quadrant.” These, he explained, “were to be the woodwork of the ‘runners,’” which were to be “set...parallel at the same distance apart as the hind wheels of the carriage” and then “firmly unite them by cross-bars and diagonal braces.” “This done,” he recalled, “I had a sleigh bed with runners complete, all except the shoeing of the latter.” Thinking ahead, Reid had sent “a messenger...to the nearest town, where I knew there was a forge capable of promptly executing any order for ironwork.” Remarkably, thanks to “a swift horse,” the man returned in less than an hour with all the hardware Reid wanted, except for sleigh bells, which “were not thought of in such a place.” Consequently, he wrote, they had to make do with “the ordinary house tinkler.”<sup>186</sup>

Having removed the phaeton’s wheels, the workmen now attached the improvised runners to its axles with the hardware Reid ordered and then used pieces of hoop iron to “shoe” the runners.” In all, he recalled with satisfaction, “It was but the work of a few minutes to attach the hooping, set the carriage body on the bed prepared for it, screw the staple bolts through the holes already bored for them, and voilà tout — a sleigh complete in every particular; elegant, to, in all, except the portion so briskly improvised.” Finally, after

the “pole fixed in the gearing of the front wheels” was removed — a necessity apparently — two “fast-trotting ponies” were harnessed together and they were ready to go.<sup>187</sup>

Reid admitted that even then, he was uncertain it would all work as he had imagined it. “I had a doubt whether without the pole the sleigh could be conveniently turned,” he remembered, “and also whether in a down-hill drive it would not run upon the heel of the horses.” Fortunately, he reported, “a trial set everything at rest, proving my fears groundless.”<sup>188</sup>

In fine, I kept my promise made at the breakfast table. By twelve o’clock — and indeed some minutes before — we were abroad and aboard the *ci-devant* carriage transformed into a sleigh, with fur robes floating and bells jingling, making way at the rate of twelve miles an hour, now then forsaking the high road and taking cuts across the beautiful commons with which Buckinghamshire abounds. And for several days, while the snow lasted, we enjoyed this exhilarating pastime, as much as we could have done either in Canada or the States; perhaps more, since there was the additional luxury of having it all to ourselves. That in the Chilterns a sleigh had been rarely or never seen was evinced by the universal stare of wonder evoked by the spectacle in every town and village through whose streets we passed.<sup>189</sup>

In 1863 the game of croquet, the origins of which are obscure, was all the rage in England, at least among the leisure class. That spring Reid, who was then earning considerable sums of money and owned a relatively large tract of land on which to indulge his whims, quickly became a devotee. But to the ever-busy mind of the Irish author, a pastime that many people “regarded merely as a fashionable amusement, and to a certain extent, frivolous,” quickly began to strike him as “something of yet greater value.” To his way of thinking, croquet was not simply a game but rather, “a great *civilizer*” — “a pastime in which the *whole family* could take part.” From the cradle to the grave, the imaginative author opined, croquet was potentially a sport in which everyone could “receive from it like delight.”<sup>190</sup> To make his case, he wrote:

There was no other game to do this. Bowls, billiards, and archery, had all proved unavailable; cricket required youth, strength, and health; about cards there was the taint of immorality; chess was a study, not a pastime; while draughts, backgammon, and bagatelle, had long proved to be but tame insipidities.

Here at length, had been discovered an amusement interesting and intellectual, healthful and refined; such as should keep the family at home, and, in the pleasantest of all intercourse, bind them affectionately together.<sup>191</sup>

Furthermore, he added, his republican streak showing, croquet was a great equalizer:

...in the game of croquet we discovered more. Besides the mere pleasure, we saw in it a means of extended usefulness, outside the family circle — outside the charming enclosures of park and parterre — away from the aristocratic lawn, its shrubberies and shade trees. We looked upon the naked village green, and glanced into the grass paddock attached to the humble farm-house. We there saw the poor indulging in the poorest of sports, football, marbles, or pitch and toss — cricket occasionally (we are speaking of England;) but the poor son of toil was too tired, after ten hours' hard field labor, either to show skill, or take much delight, in this.

Croquet — the very thing for him! Cheap, easy, healthful, exhilarating, refining.<sup>192</sup>

However, remarked the enthusiastic author, there was a problem. “To the ‘people,’ so called, the farmers and field laborers” in the “rural district, far away from the sound of spindles, or the clatter of commerce” in which he lived, “the game was altogether unknown.”<sup>193</sup>

They might have heard of it, or seen the play craning their necks over a park wall, or through the laurestinus trees surrounding a shrubbery. But the thing itself was a mystery to them; and the name being French, or foreign, they made no attempt to grapple with it.<sup>194</sup>

“Even inside the park,” he complained, “there was not much knowledge of the game” and “confusion reigned among its rules and regulations, sparse and imperfect as they were.” The absence of a system, he observed further, caused “endless disputes, at which we have heard venerable vicars use language very close edging on anathema” and “seen Lady Clara Vere de Vere looking very indignant, and grasping her mallet, as if she would have found some pleasure in croquétting the head of some fair adversary.” It was for this reason, Reid



concluded, that he had undertaken to write “a treatise upon it” — “a set of laws by which we all should abide.”<sup>195</sup>

The resulting booklet, published in the autumn of 1863, was, according to its author, the product of a great deal of effort. Not only did Reid exercise his mind “to the extremest effort of our intellect,” he also expended a “considerable sum in the experimental employment of turners, painters, turfcutters, workers in wood and iron,” in a concerted effort to “get perfect knowledge of the game, and the idiosyncrasy of the implements required for the correct playing of it.”<sup>196</sup>

Reid later reflected that the price of the treatise, a half-crown, was probably too high, which had the effect of limiting sales — almost certainly among the common people he claimed would most benefit from it. He also complained “that on the year of its appearance — 1863 — it came out too late,” i.e., in the fall when the metaphorical “Lady Clara” became “indifferent to rural delights” and began “to reflect upon the pleasures of the town.” If it had been published only three months earlier, he felt sure “it would...have been to this day the universally acknowledged guide-book upon croquet.”<sup>197</sup> But that did not happen.

That same year Reid began writing The Ocean Waifs, a sea-going adventure which was first serialized in the Boys' Journal before being published in 1864 by Bryce in England and by Ticknor and Fields in the United States.<sup>198</sup> He also received and responded to a letter from G. Linnaeus Banks, asking him join a committee that had been organized to erect a memorial to William Shakespeare. Reid's reply, dated June 29, 1863 at “The Rancho,” in light of the strong political sentiments it expresses, makes for some interesting reading:

Dear Sir

I must decline the honour you offer me. My name could be of no use to you; and I

make it a rule never to have it placed on any committee where I do not intend to act. In the matter of a National Shakespeare monument though I may deem it a worthy cause for our nation — afflicted as it is at the present moment with an excess of flunkeyism, and prince-worship — still there are too many other matters of far more important kind that have a prior claim on the attention of the philanthropist. Such as the suffering of millions of our fellow-countrymen from an over taxation, rivaling in baneful effects the worst forms of despotism. So long as this state of things continue, I cannot enter with spirit, into any affair that does not promise some advantage to the material well-being of my unhappy fellow citizens whom I see suffering in thousands — every day on the roads, in the streets — everywhere around me.<sup>199</sup>

When he was not hunched over his writing desk, sitting astride a galloping horse, playing croquet on his lawn, or agonizing about the plight of England's poor, Reid delighted in visiting London. During these visits it appears he found opportunities to make new acquaintances and perhaps renew old ones as well. The Irish novelist's reputation as a best-selling author of books with American settings, combined with the fact he had actually shed his blood in the service of the United States no doubt won him many friends who hailed from the other side of the Atlantic — Americans who either lived in London or were visiting there on business, pleasure, or both. It is not surprising, therefore, that on Thursday, November 26, 1863 Reid and his wife were invited guests at the American Thanksgiving Dinner, St. James' Hall, London, where he was asked to respond to a toast to the Army and Navy.<sup>200</sup>

The gathering was held in keeping with President Abraham Lincoln's October 3 proclamation calling upon his "fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea, and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November as a day of thanksgiving and prayer to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in Heaven." Up to that time, a day of thanks had been observed on different dates in different parts of the United States.<sup>201</sup> After 1863, the last Thursday of November became universal as "Thanksgiving Day" throughout the country, as it remains today.



Figure 22. Captain Mayne Reid, circa 1863, at the height of his success. From Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures (London: Greening & Co., Ltd., 1900).

St. James' Hall, "famous for its concerts," was relatively new in 1863, having been constructed only five years earlier. It stood on the site of the present-day Piccadilly Hotel, only a few steps from Piccadilly Circus, in the heart of central London.<sup>202</sup> On the evening of the 26th, a day during which "all business was suspended at the Legation and the Consulates,"<sup>203</sup> London's American expatriate community, together with officials of the United States government, assembled to eat, drink, and celebrate the fact that the great Civil War in which their nation was then engaged, seemed at long last to be winnable. Earlier that year the Union had achieved two great victories — Lee's retreat from the field at Gettysburg and Pemberton's surrender to Grant at Vicksburg. Both had occurred on the Fourth of July, which many Americans almost certainly took as a sign from Divine Providence that the war would soon be brought to a successful conclusion.

The Federal victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg also "all but ended the threat that the European powers would formally recognize the Confederacy," although "the rebels still received some tacit support from countries that depended upon Southern cotton for their textile industries." One of these was Great Britain, which "had permitted the construction of Confederate vessels at Liverpool and other ports." U.S. Ambassador Charles Francis Adams, who was a guest of honor at the Thanksgiving banquet in London, had only two months earlier confronted the British Foreign Minister, Lord Russell, in regard to Britain's plans to provide the Confederacy with two English-made "Laird rams," threatening war "if the British allowed these ships to sail." When Britain backed down, it "ended Lincoln's last major crisis in foreign affairs,"<sup>204</sup> which gave the Americans who gathered at St. James' Hall yet another good reason to give thanks.

The banquet, which was chaired by the Hon. Robert J. Walker, former Secretary of the Treasury under President Polk, began with a reading of Lincoln's proclamation, followed by a prayer, "offered up by Mr. Sella Martin, a negro, in whose adventures as a runaway the public were a short time since much interested." This, in turn, was followed by "a hymn composed for the occasion," which was sung "in unison" by the entire assemblage,<sup>205</sup> the British members of which, in addition to the Reids, included George Thompson, "the member whom the Tower Hamlets sent to Parliament — the hero of this century for the extinguishment of slavery."<sup>206</sup>

The toasts accompanying the meal began with one to "The Health of the President of the United States," "which was drunk with great enthusiasm." Ambassador Adams responded by speaking at length in defense of Lincoln, who, he observed, was routinely and unfairly being held responsible for "any mistake which is committed by anybody, and any misfortune which happens at any time." Enthusiastic cheers regularly punctuated Adams' speech, in which he hailed Lincoln as a great leader.<sup>207</sup>

When the ambassador finally sat down to more cheering, the gathering next toasted Queen Victoria, "whose health was drunk in a very hearty and cordial manner." Several other toasts followed: "The Day — devoted to thanking God for our victories in the cause of Liberty and Union," answered by George Thompson; "The Union — from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Lakes to the Gulf, from the source to the mouth of the Mississippi, for ever one and inseparable," answered by Judge J. G. Wraeter; and "The Emancipation Proclamation Slavery's Epitaph, written by the finger of God on the heart of the American President," answered by Freeman H. Moore. Finally, it was Reid's turn to give the response

to ““The Army and the Navy — immortal champions of freedom, who bleed that our country may live.””<sup>208</sup> Chairman Walker, who hailed the Mexican War veteran as “a gallant and distinguished representative of the flag, who has carried it forward to victory in many a bloody battle-field”, introduced him.<sup>209</sup>

Charles Ollivant later wrote that while his old friend was gifted with “oratorical powers of no mean order,” he rarely used them. But when he did, thought Ollivant, the soldier-turned-novelist was capable of “grace and power.” And although the younger man was not present — indeed, he had not even met Reid at the time, he was sure, obviously based on the reports of others, that the Irish author’s Thanksgiving Day speech was not only the finest address of the evening, but the very best his friend had ever made — on that or any other occasion. George Thompson, the M. P. for Tower Hamlets who *was* present that night, certainly agreed, saying, “Captain Reid made a rattling speech.”<sup>210</sup>

It may arguable whether the Reid’s speech was the best of the evening, or even the best of his career, but it was most certainly “rattling.” In his introductory remarks he made a token mention of the Army and Navy, then flattered the ladies present by calling them “some of America’s fairest daughters,” afterwards declaring that he was himself flattered by being exposed to “such eyes.” Declaring that he was “half an American in nationality [technically untrue] and wholly one in heart,” the former soldier also apologized for not taking up the sword himself in a cause that he described as one “between God and the devil,” but explained it was because “my duty to my fellow-woman has outweighed my duty to my fellow-man.”<sup>211</sup> Presumably, Reid meant his wife when referring to his “fellow-woman,” but perhaps not.



Figure 23. Elizabeth Reid, 1863. From Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures (London: Greening & Co., Ltd., 1900).

He continued by declaring his opposition to war in general and said he looked forward to the day when peace would reign. But in the meantime, as long as there were evil men on earth, he announced, “War will not only be a stern necessity, but a sacred duty.” Furthermore, he expounded, “What nobler cause than in which the army and navy of the United States are now contending!”<sup>212</sup>

Pausing for cheers, he continued, characterizing the present strife as not peculiarly American. Nor was it “confined within the limits of a continent or a hemisphere,” he insisted, but rather, it belonged “to the whole world.” The reason why, he preached — the skills he learned while training for the ministry now seeming to come to the fore and cloaking him in righteousness, “I repeat again, it is the cause of God against the enemy of mankind.” Then, in a heated discourse that united the plight of America’s slaves with the oppression of the British working class, the former divinity student railed:

If it [the cause of God] prevail, I look forward to the time, and that time ere long, when the down-trodden helots of earth shall taste that sweet cup which has been so long withheld from their lips — the cup of liberty. If it be the will of God it should falter and fail, and that the hour of man’s regeneration has yet arrived, then will the despot plant his heel more firmly, and grasp with his hand more tightly, not only will the bondsman of Africa retain his chains and his slavery, but the white bondsman of Europe, — aye, of England — tax his toil to his eternal degradation.

The throes of this great struggle are already felt to the remotest corners of the earth, but what are those throes when compared with their results? Not since the fiend fell from Paradise has there been such strife so eventful of consequences to the whole human race. Surely God has not designed such a destiny for the children of freedom. Sure he will not abandon the soldiers whom He has chosen to fight on His side. No, I cannot believe it. The army and the navy, which I have here the honour to represent, will crush the rebellion, because it is accursed. Accursed!<sup>213</sup>

Reid was now on a roll, the assembled guests rewarding his oratory with intermittent cheers and applause. Continuing to hold forth in a righteous manner that might have made his Presbyterian forebears proud, he declared the Southern war “a rebellion without a cause.”



The Confederacy, he proclaimed, had no “injury to be redressed,” nor any cause or creed, “unless we accept that infamous one it has unblushingly avowed in the face of the world — the perpetuation of human wrongs.” How dare the South, he challenged, proclaim such a cause at that time in history, “in the second half of a century which boasts of its civilization!” His voice no doubt rising in volume, the impassioned writer cried out: “Death to the champions of such a cause! Shame and confusion to its abettors!”<sup>214</sup>

At this point, Reid struck at what was for him the heart of the matter, taking a stand and making a charge with which many in the audience might have agreed — but which certainly did nothing to endear him to Britain’s established order. Some of the Confederacy’s abettors, he declared quite openly and apparently without any hesitation or fear, were to be found in right there in England; ironically, he remarked, in an “England, so long wedded to the detestation of slavery.”<sup>215</sup>

Censuring his countrymen as “shallow and hypocritical,” Reid recalled that when the British abolished slavery in their colonies in 1833, West Indian slave owners were compensated, by an act of Parliament, in the amount of £20 million. He also reminded his audience that when Harriet Beecher Stowe was acclaimed in England during the 1850s, it was “not so much for her literary talents but for her advocacy of abolitionism.” Her reception, he charged, constituted an effort “to stir up the bad blood which has since sprang up between you.” But now, he charged, “now that the hell broth has come to a boil, the twenty million expenditure is repented, and the authoress receives the cold shoulder.”<sup>216</sup>

The reason for British ambivalence, even enmity, Reid told his audience, was not “jealousy of your republic, but...pure hatred of it, and of every other on the face of the

earth.” This, he proclaimed, was what accounted for “this hostility which is called neutrality.”<sup>217</sup>

How could it be otherwise? The English child is generally trained to detest the word ‘republic,’ from the time that he is able to lisp it. He is taught hostility towards it, he is taught to hate it in his church and school, he finds it in his Common Prayer, and meets with it in his primer and spelling-book. The clergyman of his parish, and his subordinate satellite, the schoolmaster, if they teach him nothing else — and but little else do they teach him — take care emphatically to imbue his mind with this hatred of the republic. How then can you expect most Englishmen to do otherwise than hate your republic?

British “statesmen” (and he used the word sneeringly) who saw in the American Civil War a “failure of republican institutions” and who seemed to delight in it, Reid said, were sadly mistaken. Damning “the half-dozen lordlings — who, under the pseudonym of ‘statesmen,’ preside over the destinies of England,” he blasted “the terrible legacy they are leaving England’s people,” saving his most rancorous remarks for the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, who he did not call by name, labeling him instead, “the first bottleholder of the troupe” and adding:

...he who erst promised to pass himself off for the guardian of liberty — an eagle seated upon a rock, and watching over its destinies — he, too, has proved himself but a spurious bird — not even a peacock, with all his vanity, but a poor turkey, with bedraggled plumes, which, please God, I shall one day pluck out, leaving him in all the nakedness of his infamy! What cares he for the legacy he is leaving England! What cares he for the tears which are to follow at its administration!<sup>218</sup>

(Reid was not alone in his dislike of Palmerston; even Queen Victoria and Prince Albert detested him. In The Victorians, British author A. N. Wilson tells us that the longtime prime minister’s most maddening trait was his chameleon-like approach to politics, adding: “Palmerston...[was] an odd mixture of populism and hauteur, insensitivity and genuine good-hearted altruism. The only obvious political belief which you can trace from his long

career is the conviction that he had the right to be in the government, whether it called itself Tory, Whig, Peelite, or Liberal.”<sup>219</sup>)

At this point and perhaps sensing that he was straying too far off the subject, Reid at last returned to the toast to which he had been invited to respond. Hailing the United States’ soldiers and sailors as the “immortal champions of freedom,” he declared “they will not die! ‘Tis not death to fall in the fight of freedom.” Finally and in the same vein, he brought his address to an end by reciting the last few stanzas of a stirring poem, “Marco Bozzanis,” by Fitz Green Halleck, then sat down to “loud cheers.”<sup>220</sup>

In April 1864 Reid’s political passions were aroused once more when Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi, who had recently led an unauthorized and aborted expedition against the Papal States, visited England where, wrote biographer Jasper Ridley, “news of his arrest and his sufferings from his wounds [had] aroused great sympathy.”<sup>221</sup> Although there were some who suspected other, more unsettling motives, the now-limping leader’s visit — which occurred after King Victor Emanuel granted an amnesty to Garibaldi and his followers — was made, he said, for no “other reason than to express his gratitude to the British people for the aid they had given him” in 1860 when he mounted a successful attempt to liberate Sicily (English admirers had provided him with modern rifles and English volunteers had fought alongside him).<sup>222</sup>

Garibaldi arrived at Southampton on April 3. He stayed until April 28. In between he aristocrats and radicals alike received him. Men as politically unlike as Lord Palmerston and fellow revolutionary leader Giuseppe Mazzini, who lived in exile in South Kensington, met him. In London, thousands of working-class Britons filled Trafalgar Square to catch a

glimpse of him and on two occasions —April 18 and 19 — he journeyed to Sydenham in far South London, where the celebrated general addressed crowds of cheering admirers at the Crystal Palace (which had been moved from its original location in Hyde Park a few years earlier). Even the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII, took time to meet him, although Queen Victoria, for reasons that were chiefly political, did not.<sup>223</sup>

One of Garibaldi's oldest and most trusted English friends was George Jacob Holyoake, who Ridley calls "one of the most remarkable characters in the British Radical movement in the nineteenth century" — a man who became "secretary of the committee which organized the sending of British volunteers to fight with Garibaldi in 1860" and who, in 1842, "had served a sentence of six months" for saying publicly "that he did not believe in God."<sup>224</sup> Interestingly, Elizabeth Reid's brother, George Hyde, had been among the volunteers raised by Holyoake and, as noted in a previous chapter, had taken his celebrated brother-in-law's sword — the same presented to Reid in New York by Commodore Edwin Moore in 1849 — into battle, where it was lost.

Reid, who knew Holyoake, was also acquainted with his son, Maltus Questell Holyoake, with whom he occasionally corresponded. They had met some three years earlier, when the boy was fifteen and his father had "a publishing house in Fleet Street," which provided him with access to all the latest books. "None," he later wrote, "gave me more pleasure than those of Mayne Reid." In 1861, when Boucicault's The Octoroon opened at London's Adelphi Theatre, an incensed young Holyoake, who noticed the similarities between the play and Reid's book, The Quadroon, wrote a letter to The Morning Star, "calling attention to this dramatic piracy." To his surprise, it was printed. Excited and

encouraged by the sight of his own name in print (and in connection with his favorite author), he later wrote “some small literary efforts” that were published in a variety of journals under the *nom de plume* “Oceola,” which the youth borrowed from Reid’s novel of the same name.<sup>225</sup> Years later, he remembered his first meeting with the man he admired so much:

Shortly after the publication of my critical effusion, on June 20, 1862, I was sitting writing for my father in the committee room at his Fleet-street publishing house, which was then the centre for many now forgotten but successful public movements, when Captain Mayne Reid was announced. He had come to see my father on some business connected with the Garibaldian Committee, who had been engaged in despatching the English legion of volunteers to aid General Garibaldi in his struggle for the emancipation of Italy. My father, who was a personal friend of Garibaldi, was the acting secretary of this committee. In the course of conversation my father mentioned to the Captain, to whom I was introduced, the letter I had written to *The Morning Star*. Captain Reid was very cordial, shaking my hand with great energy, and warmly thanking me for my defence. He inquired why I had not sent him a copy of the letter, and requested that one might be sent. The Captain further declared that he should make it his business to give me a helping hand in the literary career that he concluded I should embrace. This interview with my living hero of heroes was as unexpected as it was delightful to me. I stood by, smiling and flushing, feeling uncomfortable, yet honoured and pleased. Being an enthusiastic peruser of the Captain’s exciting books (the interest of which, to me, was enhanced by the fact that the scenes and occurrences recounted with such fascinating and graphic power were as much part of the Captain’s life as *David Copperfield* was of Charles Dickens), I regarded Captain Reid with admiration and intensity, and subsequently made notes of my impressions of his appearance, conversation, and characteristics, which have been preserved to this day.<sup>226</sup>

“Captain Reid,” Holyoake later remembered, “was then about forty-four, was of slight build, ordinary height, and military bearing.” He was dressed “in a black frock coat, worn open, a light yellow waistcoat, light yellow gloves, light yellow scarf, and little yellow trousers, it being the sunny month of June.” The author’s face, he thought, was “Mexican” in appearance. He had a “yellowish complexion, a black mustache, and an aspect of determination that indicated a life of exposure, feats performed, and hardships undergone.”<sup>227</sup>

Enthusiastic in manner, fervid in speech, romantic in phraseology, his utterances sounded like extracts from his own novels. A handsome man, the nobility of whose

nature was apparent, he appeared the living embodiment of one of his own heroes of romance.<sup>228</sup>

Holyoake also recalled that when Reid departed his father's office that day, the nattily-attired author expressed "a wish to meet Garibaldi," adding dramatically: "But for that (naming the circumstance that prevented him) I would once more unsheath my sword upon the tented field."<sup>229</sup>

After the youth sent Reid the requested copy of his Morning Star letter, the flattered novelist soon replied with a letter of his own, calling Holyoake's composition "a very clever communication" and thanking him for his "chivalric defence." Three months later, young Holyoake penned "a notice of Captain Reid's new novel, 'The Maroon,'" which was published in The Newcastle Chronicle. This was followed by "a short sketch of the Captain's adventurous life," which The Canadian Illustrated News accepted for publication. Anticipating that the subject of both items would like to have clippings, Holyoake sent some and was rewarded by another letter from Reid, written on New Year's Eve, thanking him once more and encouraging him in his literary endeavors.<sup>230</sup>

After Garibaldi arrived in England in 1864, the elder Holyoake accompanied the celebrated Italian general to London. At Nine Elms Station, a "grand reception" was held in Garibaldi's honor and the younger Holyoake, who was then employed as his father's personal secretary, "had the good fortune to be present." He later recalled it took four hours to reach Charing Cross, "the concourse of people being so great." He also remembered that in London Garibaldi was a guest of the Duke of Sutherland, who put a suite of rooms at the general's disposal, where "he held morning receptions of his friends." After mentioning these "Garibaldian doings" in a letter to Reid, the Irish author responded by writing:

I am glad to hear that your father is by the side of Garibaldi, and I am sure no truer friend to the hero of Italy and Liberty can be found in England. I knew Garibaldi as a heroic apostle of freedom long before his name became familiar to English ears. I had noted his deeds of daring on the southern continent of America, while I was myself a sojourner in the North. He was winning immortal glory on the banks of La Plata, while I was wasting my foolish life hunting buffaloes on the banks of the Platte. I admired him then; it would be strange if I did not idolise him now. Say to your father that when Garibaldi is allowed a little leisure — if ever he is allowed it in England — I should esteem it a favour to be introduced to him.<sup>231</sup>

Not surprisingly, the youth soon wrote back “signifying my father’s willingness to bring about the desired introduction.” But in the interim Reid had a sudden change of heart, apparently brought about by a visit to London, where he heard Garibaldi’s “Valedictory to the British Press, at the Crystal Palace — a speech in which the famed Italian patriot praised Great Britain’s “institutions, ‘freedom of conscience, freedom of the press, speech, and association.’” In his reply to Holyoake’s letter, the cynical author withdrew his earlier request, explaining:

Please say to your father that I no longer desire an introduction to Garibaldi. His speech at the Crystal Palace, before the Italian Committee, will have a damaging effect upon England’s liberty, and an interview between him and myself, with those sentiments ringing in my ears — the adulation of Palmerston and Gladstone — the truest enemies of English freedom — alongside the poor sophism of our sham prosperity and civilization — the remembrance of these statements put forward in Garibaldi’s speech would render the interview between us (to me, at least), irksome, and un-candid. Thank you father for his very kind compliance with my former wish, now no longer entertained.<sup>232</sup>

On April 29, 1864, the day after his former idol departed England aboard the Duke of Sutherland’s yacht, Reid sat down at his home in Gerrard’s Cross, his blood in a boil, and composed a long open letter to Garibaldi, which was afterward published by Alfred W. Bennett as an eight-page pamphlet, selling for threepence a copy. The title: Garibaldi Rebuked by one of his Best Friends. While it is doubtful the Italian ever saw the disillusioned

author's little book, it is noteworthy all the same because it provides us with further insight into the mind of Mayne Reid.

What seemed to anger Reid most (as it did other critics) was not just Garibaldi openly consorting with England's aristocracy but also hearing him speak highly of men who some Britons viewed as the enemies of a truly free society — Palmerston and Gladstone in particular. The very freedoms that Garibaldi praised, the Irish author wrote, were a fraud in the British Isles, tolerated by the establishment so long as they did not become “dangerous to important hereditary privilege.”<sup>233</sup> But let that happen, wrote Reid angrily, and they “will be quickly stifled” as they had been in the past. Venting further, he added:

Ah! General! had you been the guest of England's *people* — those working classes, who, along with everybody else, you have so kindly complimented — had you been their exclusive guest, you would have left the land with a less firm faith in their “freedom of association.”

You came as Kossuth came — your equal in courage, your superior in intellect — fully believing in our “free institutions.” You would have gone, as Kossuth must have gone — he could not have otherwise — under the sad conviction that our much-vaunted “constitutional liberty” is a scandalous sham; that the word *tax* is synonymous with the *corvée* of the *serf*, and the compulsory service of the slave — in results as baneful as either. You would have left us with the knowledge that there are twenty millions of people in these islands who exercise scarce any of the rights which appertain to *citizenship* — and more than a moiety of them whose material condition will not favourably compare with that of the most depressed people in Europe — not even with those Slavonic [sic] serfs so often brought forward as a foil to befool them. You beheld England's people in their holiday dress. You came among them the representative of Liberty — its type — its ideal — almost its god! For a day they flung aside their working rags, and washed their faces, to worship you. In their hearts you had touched a cord [sic] tender and divine. It vibrated till the sound rose to a great and glorious throe; so glorious that their enemies — and yours too — for a moment forgot themselves, mingled their voices in the universal paean of your praise; grasped your hand in a spasmodic love of Liberty; and dragged you apart from perhaps truer friends, who would have clustered around you.<sup>234</sup>

When Reid's booklet appeared in print, recalled Charles Ollivant, a reviewer for The National Liberator expressed surprise after reading the Irish author's republican sentiments.



“In our ignorance,” he commented, “we imagined Captain Mayne Reid was the same in politics as the rest of those tale-writers who scribble their stories without having an aim; and who, in most cases, join with the snobocracy in politics, and trouble themselves very little about the grave questions of popular and national welfare.” Praising Reid for taking a stand, the unnamed critic concluded: “It is a glorious thing to see this well-known and polished writer stepping boldly forth out of the ranks of flunkeyism and publishing in black and white, and in unmistakable [sic] language, his detestations of those accursed institutions [i.e., monarchy and aristocracy].”<sup>235</sup>

Ollivant was himself astonished by how anyone familiar with Reid’s work could not easily discern “his strong political bias in favour of liberty in its only true form — the republican; along with a genuine condemnation of what he pronounced the ‘meanest sentiment that can find home in the human heart — *loyalty to a throne*.” “To the *people*,” wrote the novelist’s former secretary, Reid “was truly loyal, but the ‘one-man’ worship received the severest lash from his pen.” It was quite clear, he argued, that those values “run like a vein of gold throughout all his works.” How anyone could miss seeing them was simply beyond belief.<sup>236</sup>

Although Ollivant did not follow up this discourse with specific examples, by far the best is a romance Reid composed in 1863, The White Gauntlet — the first and one of only a few of the Irish author’s works that have an English setting. (More interestingly, The White Gauntlet takes place largely in Buckinghamshire, where Reid was living at the time he wrote it.) Whether writing the novel aroused the political sentiments he so passionately expressed during this period of his life or whether his politics inspired the novel, we cannot be certain.

(Perhaps it was a little of both.) In either event, The White Gauntlet is a novel about the English Civil War, in which the long-haired “Cavaliers” or supporters of King Charles I were pitted against the more closely-cropped “Roundheads” — the Puritan army led by Oliver Cromwell. Every English schoolboy (or girl) knows the outcome (or should): The King is defeated, tried for treason against his own people and beheaded, and under the leadership of Cromwell as “Lord Protector,” Parliament rules over a kingless England for nearly a decade. It is not difficult to guess whose side the author took.

One of the early scenes in the book is particularly interesting in that it recalls Reid’s Thanksgiving Day condemnation of Lord Palmerston’s and his ministers’ ambivalence. The place is a roadside inn at Uxbridge, where one of the book’s principal characters, a former courtier to the queen named Walter Wade, encounters a company of the King’s troops, who are standing in the yard of the inn enjoying a drink. When they proffer a toast to “THE KING,” Wade drinks it, but reluctantly. At this point in the story, a horseman rides up almost unnoticed, orders a goblet of wine from the landlord and then suggests another toast — to “THE PEOPLE.”

As he gave utterance to the phrase, he was in the act of raising the wine cup to his lips. Without appearing to notice the effect which his speech had produced, he coolly quaffed off the wine and with like *sang froid* returned the empty goblet to the giver.

The defiant insolence of the act had so taking [sic] the troopers by surprise, that they stood in their places — just as they had started up — silent and apparently stupefied. Even the officers, after hurrying forward, remained speechless for several seconds — as if under the influence of an angry amazement. The only sounds for awhile heard were the voices of the spectators — tapsters, stable-helpers, and other idlers — who had gathered in front of the inn — and who now formed an assemblage, as large as the troop itself.

Despite the presence of the armed representatives of royalty, the sentiments of these were unmistakably the same, as that to which the strange horseman had given voice; and they were emphatically complimenting *themselves*, when they clinked their pewter pots, and in chorus proclaimed — “THE PEOPLE!”

Most of them, but the moment before, and with equal enthusiasm, had drunk “THE KING;” but in this sudden change of sentiment they only resembled most politicians of modern times, who have been dignified with the name of “Statesmen!”<sup>237</sup>

When the outraged leader of the soldiers insists that the horseman also drink a toast to King Charles, he refuses and rides off, leaving the innkeeper to explain that “we only know him ‘bout here as the Black Horseman; an that he belongs some’ere among the hills up the Jarrett’s Heath way — beyond the great park o’ Bulstrode.”<sup>238</sup>

Jarrett’s Heath was, of course, the seventeenth century name of Gerrard’s Cross Common, which then as now, lies beyond Bulstrode Park, a large country estate that still exists; and just beyond the Common, to the south, is the area in which Reid resided during the 1860s. The “Black Horseman,” whose name is later revealed in the book to be Sir Henry Holtspur (yet another character named Henry!) — a colonel in Cromwell parliamentary army — was undoubtedly the fictional alter ego of the author himself, as the Irish novelist must have imagined he would be if he had lived two centuries earlier in that same place.

In The White Gauntlet Reid took aim at both contemporary British politicians and American slave owners. Near the book’s end he rebuked them simultaneously, as well as seventeenth century supporters of the king, while explaining the designations “Cavalier” and “Roundhead.” These were “terms of boasting and reproach,” he wrote, “proceeding principally from the lips of ribald royalists, humiliated by defeat, and giving way to the ferocious instincts that have distinguished ‘Toryism’ in all times,” which, he added, was “still rife at the present day, both in the tax-paying shires of England, and the slave-holding territories *outré* the Atlantic.” Furthermore, Reid commented, “Like that of the Southern slave driver,” the Cavalier and his so-called “chivalry” was “a ludicrous mis-application of

terms, self appropriated by a prurient conceit.”<sup>239</sup>

In January of that same year (1864), the Boys' Journal, one of several juvenile periodicals that regularly serialized Reid's work, announced that the first photographic likeness of the Irish author to ever be published would be soon be available to its readers as a one shilling *carte de visite*. Charles Ollivant, who had not yet met Reid at the time, was one of the author's devoted “boy readers” excited by this opportunity and in short order the eager young Cheshire lad sent away for one of the precious portraits, which had been taken at the prestigious London photography studio of Maull & Polyblank. When it arrived in the post, however, the boy was somewhat disappointed. Although the portrait “gave a full length figure, front face, and was a fair likeness,” it was “only a copy of the one originally taken,” in consequence of which “it was not very well printed.”<sup>240</sup>

Ollivant also recalled an incident that occurred in July 1864 that was reported in the Windsor and Eton Express. To him it was an “illustration of the humanity and kindness characteristic of Mayne Reid.” “A waggoner,” he remembered, “with two loads of hay in his cart, was on his way to London early in the morning.” At Gerrard's Cross, “he was overtaken by a woman” who had walked from Oxford, “who said she was very tired, and asked if she might be allowed to ride in the waggon [sic].” Although the fellow was initially reluctant to grant this request, thinking it might not be safe, he finally gave in to her entreaties and “she got up on the off-shaft.” They had not gone far, however, when “he looked behind and saw her lying in the road,” not moving and apparently unconscious. When he stopped and ran to her aid, the man “found she had recovered consciousness.” She told him she had fallen from the cart after feeling “giddy” and “had been run over...but could blame no one.”<sup>241</sup>



Figure 24. Photograph of Reid by Maull & Co., London. Courtesy Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas.

This accident, wrote Ollivant, occurred near Reid's house and when his assistance was sought, "he promptly ordered a bundle of straw to be thrown down off the waggon [sic], and a hurdle [a portable frame or sled made of wattling] to be fetched, upon which the woman was placed." After she was "brought on to his grounds" and given some wine, Reid "sent one of his servants to Uxbridge for medical assistance, and another to the police station, and the house of the nearest magistrate, thinking it might be necessary to take the woman's disposition, who, on being moved, cried out and said her thigh was broken."

When the magistrate arrived at the "Ranche," he ordered the unfortunate woman to be moved to the "French Horn," a nearby pub, to await the doctor, who got there "an hour later" from Uxbridge. After confirming "she had broken her right thighbone," the physician "ordered her removed to the Slough Workhouse" which was done with the help of the Irish author, who loaned "his own break with a van body" for the purpose. "Unhappily," concluded Ollivant, "the poor woman died immediately after reaching Slough," but a surgeon who had been called to attend to her afterward said he "considered the placing of the deceased in Mayne Reid's easy carriage for removal was possibly the best thing that could have been done." Reid, he remarked further, was afterward commended at an inquest held at the Eton Union Workhouse, for his "kindness and attention shown the deceased."<sup>242</sup>

In his unpublished biography of Reid, in a short section that was scratched out and marked through with a large "X," Ollivant revealed his generally easy-going friend could get testy from time-to-time:

Mayne Reid's temper was always of a passionate nature, but short-lived, and when his servants angered him by some act of neglect or carelessness he was in the habit of rating them soundly. One on occasion he had driven to London after one of these outbursts, when his wife overheard the following dialogue between the gardener and

[another servant]. The latter asked:

“Do you know what’s the matter with master?”

“Yes,” replied the former, “I’ll tell ‘e, his Honor’s got a few worms, and when one of ‘em has him to grip, he roars so!”<sup>243</sup>

Ollivant also remarked that when Reid’s wife shared this story with him, he was “highly amused” by it.<sup>244</sup>

Reid’s temper seems to have flared most spectacularly when he felt that he or a friend had been publicly wronged, as was demonstrated in the case of Louis Kossuth. In the summer of 1864 a different perceived slight resulted in a quarrel that was just as nasty as his earlier dispute with The Times, if not more so, only this time instead of politics the unpleasantness was connected to a far less serious subject — the game of croquet. Earlier, in the spring, Reid was shocked to learn that his treatise, published in the fall of 1863, now had competition in the form of two six-penny croquet rulebooks, one by “‘Monsieur Jacques,’ the toymaker” and “the other by the son of Routledge the publisher.” Owing to what he saw as an astonishing similarity to his work, Reid was immediately convinced that both men had spent the intervening months studying his rulebook and had plagiarized the greater part of it. “Even in their cheap garb,” he fulminated, “there could be no difficulty in recognizing our own thoughts.” But it seemed doubtful he could prove it. These “pirates” were too clever, he wrote, adding:

They knew that these were best suited to the capacity of the purchasers. The players of croquêt had not yet sufficient experience to detect the counterfeit. The stolen sixpen’orths were nearly as big, and looked quite as smart, as the original half-crown treatise.<sup>245</sup>

The result, he wrote, clearly seething with anger, was that “the treatise was no longer inquired for; the Protean pilferings — garbled and imperfect as they were, found their way

into every book-shop and upon every croquet ground in England.”<sup>246</sup>

Although they were popular, the irritated author commented, the availability of these inexpensive rulebooks, which he thought were poorly written, apparently “did little or nothing to *prevent the disputes*” that had thus far been commonplace among the players of the game. Apparently, Reid was not the only one to think so. In short order, a third six-penny rulebook appeared, “under the title of ‘*The Rules of Croquet, by an Old Hand.*’”<sup>247</sup>

Reid grew livid when this new book of rules appeared because, as he later complained, “upon examination they proved to be those already laid down in our treatise — word for word!” The toymaker and the book publisher, he seethed — referring to Jacques and Routledge, “took deftly — no doubt through a better understanding of trade marks but the “Old Hand,” revealed to be the Earl of Essex, “stole all; and herein lay the difficulty of concealing the stolen goods.”<sup>248</sup>

In July 1864 the aggrieved Irish author took steps toward filing a lawsuit against the Earl of Essex, for plagiarizing his treatise on croquet. When he learned of the impending action, the Earl wrote a letter to Reid’s solicitors (“somewhat hastily,” he later admitted), claiming he had “never seen his work and was so impressed with the utter groundlessness of his complaint” and that he doubted Reid’s ability “to sustain it.” Shortly afterward, Essex revealed, he “did see his work” and on August 18 wrote to the angry novelist, “stating that the ‘Rules by an Old Hand’ were not compiled by me, but for me by a lady, herself a great authority and adept in the game, but unversed in the laws of copyright, and entirely ignorant that she was transgressing them by taking what she had taken from Captain Reid’s work.” Admitting, “that wrong had (inadvertently) been done him,” the Earl “expressed...regret and



[his] readiness to make him a reasonable compensation,”<sup>249</sup> clearly hoping that Reid would drop the case and settle out of court.

Essex later said that he offered £100, which he also claimed that Reid insisted, “be increased to £125 and the payment of his lawyers’ expenses.” His Lordship maintained further that he gave Reid his “word and assurance that I would recall all copies in circulation, give a true account of all that had been issued, and issue no more, although doing so suddenly at once,” he afterward complained in a letter to The Times, “might put me to some inconvenience.” When Reid went ahead with legal action, the Earl took umbrage and in the aforementioned letter, asserted that he had acted as a gentleman and was now himself “the aggrieved party.”<sup>250</sup>

Reid’s recollection of the circumstances surrounding the case differed from the Earl’s. “In polite terms,” the wronged author later wrote, he “requested the plagiarism to be withdrawn; and received a defiant, and somewhat impertinent, reply.” The outcome, he added, “was the Chancery trial, in which the titled plagiarist was cast — with a verdict against him of costs, damages, and directions — for his croquêt books to be burned!”<sup>251</sup> Reid also denied that Essex had ever made him an offer of £100, adding, “I simply instructed my solicitors not to accept less than a certain sum, which I deemed reasonable.”<sup>252</sup>

The trial Reid mentioned, apparently a somewhat unorthodox affair, was held in August, in Hampshire, where Vice-Chancellor Kindersley, the judge assigned to the case, was then enjoying a holiday. According to Essex, Reid’s lawyers “pursued” him there, where Kindersley “consented to stand at bay,” ruling against the Earl and awarding Reid £125 in damages and payment of his legal expenses, rendering what Reid pronounced “a firm,

prompt, and...righteous judgment in my favor.” Instead of writing a letter of complaint to The Times, he added, Essex should have cut his losses and considered himself lucky. If the proceedings had been taken further, “there might have been a claim of many hundreds of pounds for obstructing the chances of my treatise becoming the standard manual of the game against a host of other sixpenny imitators.” Essex, who believed Reid padded his legal bill, wrote that he intended to “submit it to the scrutiny of the taxing master in the hope and belief that he will reduce it to somewhat more reasonable limits.”<sup>253</sup> Whether he was successful in this endeavor is unknown.

As for Miss Emily Faithful, the lady who turned out to be the “Old Hand,” i.e., the actual plagiarist of his treatise,<sup>254</sup> in his own letter to The Times, Reid commented:

For the lady’s sake, I regret that her ignorance of the *lex scripta* of copyright should have led her into error; but, despite my best wishes to be gallant, I am at a loss to understand how even a fair lady — more especially under the nom de plume of an “Old Hand” — could transcribe almost *verbatim et literatim* several pages of an author’s book (to be published without that author’s consent and to his certain detriment) without being sensible that she was treading a path more perilous than the turf of a croquet ground.<sup>255</sup>

Adding to the debate and risking Reid’s wrath, an anonymous letter writer identified only as “Another Old Hand,” immediately wrote to The Times in response to the Irish author’s missive, challenging his assertion that all subsequent croquet rulebooks were simply pirated versions of his own and criticizing the Captain’s work, calling it “deficient and unsatisfactory in many points.” There were far too many technical terms, the letter writer commented, as well as too much “slang,” much of it “unintelligible to me and my friends.” Furthermore, the uninvited critic wrote: “There is not a syllable of instruction touching the strategic combinations which form the great charm of the game, and, in the opinion of

enthusiasts, endow it with a scientific character.” In conclusion, the writer remarked: “I hope I have said enough to call critical attention to this boasted treatise and pave the way for the standard manual which it professes to be and is not.”<sup>256</sup>

In the same issue and directly beneath this anonymous letter, The Times also published a communication from Edward Routledge — author of one of the sixpenny books Reid claimed was based on his treatise. It read:

Sir, — As you have given Captain Mayne Reid an opportunity of accusing publicly the writers of the sixpenny handbooks of croquet of pirating his book on the subject, I am sure that your sense of fair play will allow me a corner in your journal to enter my protest, as the author of the most widely circulated sixpenny croquet handbook, against his accusation.

Considering that a part of my handbook was written before Captain Reid’s appeared; that on many of the chief points of the game, I entirely disagree with him; and that wherever we have adopted the same rule it has been derived from those originally issued with the game, it is rather a cool assumption on the part of the Captain to accuse me of stealing the product of his four months’ study of the game. I may be allowed to add that the *Field* of the 6th of August, in comparing critically the chief points of Mayne Reid’s, Mr. Jacques’s, and my own handbook, showed how widely they differed, and summed up the merits of the first in the following significant manner: — “Firstly, 126 rules, 35 long notes, 59 slang terms, is so utterly preposterous and out of proportion to the game that we dismiss it as a most unfortunate contribution to the literature of the game.”<sup>257</sup>

While there seems to be no record of Reid’s immediate response to these critiques, it is not difficult to imagine his annoyance. Several years later, when he was living in the United States again, he called the suggestion that his book contained too many rules “perversely absurd,” explaining, “The rules are not dependent on the will of him who writes a treatise on it.” Rather, “They are incidents of the play, of which he is merely the expounder and adjudicator,” adding, “if you would preserve croquêt an intellectual game, or one worth playing, you must go back to the original treatise, the one first written.” In any event, he wrote:

As for ourself, we care not a fig one way or the other what “croquêt-book” be adopted, as guide to the game. To confess the truth, we are rather regretful at having our name connected with a matter so apparently trifling — since the motive may never be understood. We can only say that the smiles of Lady Clara had less to do with it, than the hope philanthropic.<sup>258</sup>

In 1864 Reid found time to pen two more juvenile adventures, The Boy Slaves and the Cliff Climbers. Both were published before the year was out.<sup>259</sup> In September, this review of The Cliff Climbers appeared in The Atlantic Monthly:

Beloved of boys, the adventurous Mayne Reid continues from year to year his good work as a story-teller. Since he held the youthful student a spellbound reader of “The Desert Home,” he has sent abroad a dozen volumes, all excellent in their way, for the entertainment of his ever-increasing audiences. He has not, however, dealt quite fairly by his boy-friends. He kept them waiting several years for the completion of “The Plant-Hunters,” and is only now that he has found time to add “The Cliff Climbers” as a sequel to that fascinating story. While we thank him for the book that gives us further acquaintances with those stirring individuals, Karl and Caspar, we cannot help but reminding him how long ago it is since we read “The Plant-Hunters,” and wished for more.<sup>260</sup>

During the year, Reid also began work on the novel Charles Ollivant regarded as his friend’s magnum opus, The Headless Horseman: A Strange Tale of Texas. In the interim, when he was not writing, railing against the British government, or pursuing vengeance against aristocratic plagiarists, he seems to have completely thrown himself into the building of his new “Ranche,” not only acting as his own architect but also construction foreman. From all accounts, he was a tough taskmaster. He employed “a regular force of brickmakers” to manufacture a private supply of bricks from the clay on the freehold land he bought for that purpose, and every day during construction, his wife remembered, “he was up at six o’clock...to look after the workmen; and woe betide any who were the least negligent in their duties.” His voice, she recalled, “would be heard afar off, and one might fancy that he was again storming Chapultepec, or that a band of his wild Indians on the war path had suddenly

invaded the quiet village!” To say that his trumpet-like voice, “could be heard a mile away,” she claimed, was “no exaggeration.”<sup>261</sup>

When he wasn’t busy supervising the workmen constructing his new house, Reid applied himself as fervently as ever to his writing. In a late November letter to American publishers, Ticknor and Fields, he revealed how busy he had been:

Gentlemen:

I write to catch the mail of to morrow via Southern [?] [word illegible] in hopes that this might reach you a day or two earlier than the packet from Liverpool of Sat. 2P. The matters [?] are important. 1st you will get by the Saturday steamer an article in Mss [?] called Trapped in a Tree: It is for your Jany number of your magazine [Our Young Folks] and if it reach you in time you should by all means publish it in the January no. and shunt The Turkey Hunt in Texas for a future number, and then for two good reasons. First, because it is to be published here in the Christmas number of Fun and therefore you cannot let it run and secondly because it is about the smartest sketch I have ever written and will give your new enterprise a fillip.

(2) The Boy Slaves complete clichés and all will reach you by the Saturday 2P steamer and you must [word illegible] no time in getting it out. Brown has taken me quite by surprise by telling me that he is going to print the conclusion of it in his December journal to be out about the 1st of December. This is of course quite unexpected I am nearly run off my feet getting the proof sheet & clichés ready for you in time for the steamer. So look out for these arrivals and be ready for them and along with these you will receive another adventure [?] carefully written [word illegible].<sup>262</sup>

“The first public announcement of the forthcoming serial publication of Mayne Reid’s masterpiece,” The Headless Horseman, recalled Charles Ollivant, appeared in the February 1865 issue of The Athenaeum. It read:

The prolific and unwearied Captain Mayne Reid announces another literary adventure of the tremendously exciting kind, if we may judge from the title. The gallant captain, not to be outdone by the ‘great hundred guinea prize sensation authors’ of the halfpenny Heralds and Journals, has gone back to a rival of Mrs. Anne Radcliffe for a title — ‘The Headless Horseman: a Strange Tale of Texas.’ The book is to appear in monthly parts. As is well known, Mr. Dickens selects green for the colour of his covers; Wm. Thackeray used to prefer yellow — the favourite yellow-plush of his Snob Papers; Mr. Charles Lever affects pink, and ‘Soapy Sponge red chocolate; but what tint Captain Reid has hit upon will remain a secret until the first of March, when No. 1 of his new novel will appear, with an illustration by an artist of some celebrity.’<sup>263</sup>



Figure 25. The “Ranche,” Reid’s home at Gerrard’s Cross, Buckinghamshire, England. From the Strand Magazine, July 1891.

Hailing it as “a work of such entrancing interest that it may be taken up again and again to be perused with unflinching delight,” Ollivant also recollected that after twenty months of serialization, The Headless Horseman was finally published in November 1866 as a two volume set by “Chapman & Hall, Piccadilly,” later by “Richard Bentley & Son, New Burlington Street.” When they first began corresponding, Reid confided to his young admirer that the first artist hired to illustrate the book version, L. Huard, “had to be changed to R. J. Hamerton — and the last few pictures [assigned] to still another artist” for “want of attention to their duties.”<sup>264</sup> In the United States, Robert M. De Witt, with N. Orr as the illustrator, published the book in 1867.

While to most Americans the title “Headless Horseman” undoubtedly brings to mind the celebrated tale by Washington Irving, Reid’s work was set not in the Hudson River Valley of New York but rather, in the so-called “Nueces Strip” — the land that lies between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande in South Texas. Reid was inspired, apparently, by the story of an incident that occurred in that region in 1848. Reportedly, “Bigfoot” Wallace and John McPeters, two Texas frontiersmen, “tracked and killed a number of Mexican horse thieves near the Nueces, south of present-day Uvalde” and on one occasion, Wallace “decided to use the ringleader’s body as a warning to others.” After decapitating the corpse of a man known as Vuavis or Vidal, Wallace and McPeters “put his body on a wild stallion that the two had caught and tied between two trees.” Afterward, “They thrust his head into his sombrero, secured by a strap and tied to the pommel of the saddle” and then turned the “horse...loose to roam the hilly countryside.” Soon, “Travelers and soldiers at Fort Inge near Uvalde...were reporting sightings of a wily headless rider.”<sup>265</sup>



Figure 26. Illustration from The Headless Horseman. From The Headless Horseman: A Strange Tale of Texas (New York: Robert M. De Witt, 1867).



Reid's book opens on the South Texas plains. A group of emigrants from Louisiana are making their way southwestward, toward the border, where they plan to homestead. At the head of the ten-wagon train is a planter, Woodley Pointdexter, "one of the highest and haughtiest of his class; one of the most profuse in aristocratic hospitalities." (Already we can sense Reid doesn't like him.) Riding with Pointdexter are two youths — one is his son, Henry (How many times is Reid going to use that name!), the other is a nephew, Cassius Calhoun, a former soldier. A daughter, Louise, rides in one of the wagons. The planter's slaves are walking silently in the hot sun. The presence of these unfortunates provides the author an opportunity to excoriate the "scribblers in Lucifer's pay" who advocate slavery, holding that it is a beneficent system. "Such arguments," wrote Reid, "at which a world might weep — have of late but too often been urged." Reprising his 1863 Thanksgiving Day speech, he added: "Woe to the man who speaks, and the nation that gives ear to them."<sup>266</sup>

Also making his appearance is Maurice Gerald or "Maurice the Mustanger," a maverick Irishman who falls in love with Louise Pointdexter. Not unnaturally, in view of the story's locale, several other characters are Hispanic. One of the principals is twenty-year-old Dona Isidora Covarubio de los Llanos, who is typical of the mustachioed Latin beauties Reid seems to adore (and which we can't help but wonder what Mrs. Reid thought of):

In her beauty there is no decadence. She is fair to look upon, as in her "buen quince" (beautiful fifteen). Perhaps fairer. Do not suppose that the dark lining on her lip damages the feminine expression of her face. Rather does it add to its attractiveness. Accustomed to the glowing complexion of the Saxon blonde, you may at first sight deem it a deformity. Do not pronounce, till you have looked again. A second glance, and — my word for it — you will modify your opinion. A third will do away with your indifference; a fourth change it to admiration.

Continue the scrutiny, and it will end in your becoming convinced: that a woman wearing a moustache — young, beautiful, and brunette — is one of the grandest sights that a beneficent nature offers to the eye of man.<sup>267</sup>

The book, like most of Reid's tales of adventure, is lengthy — one hundred chapters exactly — chock full, as usual, of the most exciting, hair-raising adventures involving cowboys, Indians, settlers, and of course, the mysterious “Headless Horseman” of the title, who is finally revealed, near the very end of the story, to be none other than Henry Pointdexter, killed and beheaded, not by Maurice Gerald, who is at first taken for the offender, but by his own cousin Cassius Calhoun!<sup>268</sup>

Critics seemed to share Ollivant's view that The Headless Horseman was one of Reid's finest works. “Of all the writers of [wild nature] novels...we may place Captain Mayne Reid among the best,” wrote a reviewer for The Queen, adding: “Many of our readers will doubtless remember his ‘Scalp Hunters,’ and ‘Rifle Rangers,’ and now we have to add to the list perhaps his best effort, ‘The Headless Horseman.’” Calling it “muscular,” a critic for The Review predicted that readers “who love the manly,” both male and female alike, “will be delighted with Captain Mayne Reid's book.”<sup>269</sup>

Ollivant also reveals that in order to head off any unauthorized dramatization of The Headless Horseman, Reid announced in mid-1865 that he was writing a theatrical version himself and insofar as any theatrical managers were concerned, “it must be ‘hands off’ with the ‘Headless Horseman.’”<sup>270</sup> Even so, Joan Steele tells us, “C. H. Hazelwood's version was performed at the Britannia Theatre as *The Headless Horseman*; or, *The Ride of Death* that same year.”<sup>271</sup> It is uncertain, however, whether this was with or without Reid's consent.

On Monday, July 24, 1865, at his home at “Aroma Bank, Sale Moor, Cheshire,” twenty-one-year-old Charles Ollivant finally worked up the nerve to do something he had probably been thinking of doing for a very long time — write a letter to Captain Mayne Reid,

telling him how much he admired him, how much he enjoyed his work, and how it had changed his life. “Dear Captain,” he began, initiating his very first contact with a man to who he would eventually devote a substantial portion of his life, “I feel that I have the right to address you thus, as one of your ardent boy readers.”<sup>272</sup>

If I do not know you personally, I have been acquainted with you for ten years through your delightful books. Words fail to express my admiration of them. Ah! Captain, I shudder to think how I might have been floundering in the mires of Toryism and king-worship, but for the pure teachings, and love of republican liberty, inculcated in your writings. However, to come to the point, I write specially to ask you when you will publish in a volume the “Adventures of Cannibal Jack,” which came out in “Young England,” and finished in December 1864. I like it very much and should like to have it in a book, as I have all your other works. If you would write and tell me, I should be much obliged<sup>273</sup>

Apparently the news of Reid’s dispute with the Earl of Essex had resulted in the Irish author’s receiving a deluge of letters on the subject of croquet. Worried that he might not receive a reply, the young man concluded with a postscript:

In the last number the “Englishman’s Domestic Magazine,” you say — “for mercy’s sake don’t write to me again.” However, since this is not “Croquet” I hope you will not disappoint me. I have no need to write to you about Croquet since I have read your “Rules” and play according to them with Bernard’s “Star Croquet.”<sup>274</sup>

On August 12, probably grateful that Ollivant’s missive contained no questions about croquet (and undoubtedly flattered that someone had not only read his rulebook but claimed to abide by it), Reid responded, apologizing for the delay in doing so, and thanking the youth “for the very real interest you have taken in my writings.” Assuring his “Dear Young Friend” that “Cannibal Jack” would be put out in book form “as soon as I can find a suitable publisher,” the obliging author also sent the lad a photograph of himself “printed by Messrs. Maull & Polyblank themselves.”<sup>275</sup>

Years later, after the man he admired so much was dead, Ollivant remembered his

“cherished wish at this time was to abandon commercial pursuits, in which I had been engaged since leaving school, and enter upon a literary career — not exactly on my own account, but as private secretary to the author whom above all others had then, as now, my warmest regards — Mayne Reid.” Almost immediately after receiving the author’s “friendly letter,” the youth “conceived the idea offering my services to him in that capacity.”<sup>276</sup> On August 17, he recalled, Reid sent him a prompt and very tactful reply:

I am very much flattered and gratified by your letter; but regret to say that, as I am situated, it would be impossible for me to offer you any situation such as you speak of. I shall always be happy to hear from you, and know that you are prosperous in life; and whenever you find occasion to write to me, I shall feel pleased to hear from you.<sup>277</sup>

Of course, Ollivant had no way of knowing at the time that the bills for the construction of Reid’s new “Ranche” were mounting up and that it was all the author could do to stay ahead of his obligations, both literary and financial. As a result, when the youth sent a third letter, shortly after his offer to work for Reid was considerably declined, he did not hear back from him right away. After patiently waiting three weeks, Ollivant tried again, posting “a few lines as a reminder.” This time, there was a quick response. On November 1, in a short letter that has every appearance of being dashed off in haste, Reid wrote:

I did not intend to leave your kind note unanswered, but what with the trouble I have with a residence I have been building at for nearly three years (of which I am my own architect) and my literary labours, I am overweighted with work, and my brain gets no rest.<sup>278</sup>

Two months later Reid followed up by sending the lad an inscribed copy of “the first volume of his new romance, “The Headless Horseman,” which had just been published — with a second volume to follow. Ollivant remembered that the book, which he treasured for the rest of his life, arrived at his parents’ home in Cheshire on January 10, 1866. Inside, on the

flyleaf, his idol had written simply, “With the kind regards of the author.”<sup>279</sup> No doubt when Reid sent it, he never imagined that the recipient, a fawning young admirer, would soon become an important figure in his life.

In the meantime life went on as usual in Buckinghamshire, where, from time to time, the Irish author involved himself in local affairs. An inveterate writer of letters-to-the-editor (one cannot help but wonder how many of his missives did *not* make it into print), one he penned in 1866, which was printed in The Times, was, to Charles Ollivant’s way of thinking, a testament to Reid’s “laudable exertions on behalf of the poorer portion of the inhabitants among which he resided.”<sup>280</sup>

In the letter, dated April 28, 1866, Reid explained that he was passing through Uxbridge on Monday evening, April 23, when he “found it in possession of a band of ‘roughs’ — ruffians would be nearer the name” who had turned the town’s “tranquility...into...a picture of Pandemonium.”<sup>281</sup>

Men with the aspect of demons were traversing the streets in squads of three, four, and half-a-dozen. The most respectable inns were entered by them, drink was demanded without stint under threats of ‘raising a row,’ bottles were being hurled at Boniface, his barmaids, and such gentlemen customers as chanced to be on the spot for their protection.<sup>282</sup>

“That was not all,” he continued: “The scenes outside were ten times more disgusting.”<sup>283</sup>

Young girls were being chased, caught, and kissed in the open street — the sisters and daughters of the most respectable citizens; for among the demons there was no discrimination, even ladies were fleeing to shun the contact of lips loaded with blasphemy, and the embrace of swart arms fresh reeking with the effluvia of Whitechapel and the Dials.<sup>284</sup>

When the astonished writer stopped and asked for “an explanation from a score of

citizens who stood excited — I will not say trembling — around me,” he was “told that it was an annual visitation to which they were compelled to submit for six weeks in every year and which one and all dreaded more than cattle plague or cholera.” The “roughs,” Reid learned, were soldiers, members of the Royal Elthorne Militia. When he asked why their officers did not stop the “disgraceful exhibition,” he was informed that they had tried but were unable.<sup>285</sup> In conclusion, the disgusted author wrote:

Now, Sir, I write to ask whether you will do something to put a stop to it. I shall not offer argument to prove what a poor school of discipline it is for our future defenders, not attempt to show how much more efficiently these cubs could be licked into shape in an open camp — to say nothing of the gain of the community in getting a six week’s clearance of them. All I ask is that you use your influence in rescuing the town of Uxbridge from this periodical — worse than pestilence, and I can promise in return that you will not only gain gratitude from Uxbridgians, but from the citizens of a score of other towns similarly cursed, without bating one iota of loyalty to their country and Queen.<sup>286</sup>

The following day, May 2, another letter, composed by an “F. S. J.,” was printed in The Times, corroborating Reid’s complaint and adding his voice to the call for a solution. The writer also made it clear why none of the observers took it upon themselves to intervene.

The officers are powerless to check the proceedings of their men, and any luckless one among the handful of police stationed in the town who may interfere and attempt the capture of a malefactor receives fearful maltreatment. One of the Bucks constabulary now lies seriously maimed from the effects of a scuffle with a party of these brutes.<sup>287</sup>

Finally, C. A. Hall, the Rector of Denham in Uxbridge, weighed in with yet a third letter, also printed in The Times, saying:

I had occasion last year to complain to the commandant respecting the conduct of his men. I have also again been obliged to do the same during their present training, and though I fully believe he has done all in his power to preserve order among his men, yet, as these scenes of disorder are not only perpetually occurring, but seem to be on the increase, I think there is only one conclusion to arrive at, namely, that, however much the commandant may have the will, he has not got the power to control them.<sup>288</sup>

In the end, whether the problem of uncontrollable rowdy soldiers in Uxbridge was ever resolved is unknown. After giving The Times his opinion, Reid seems to have lost interest in the debate. In all likelihood, he forgot it as quickly as it came to his attention, immersing himself in his writing, the construction of his house, or some other passing fancy.

By the summer of 1866, Mayne Reid had reached the pinnacle of his success. From obscurity, he had become in less than sixteen years one of the English-speaking world's most celebrated literary figures. Along with fame came money, which enabled him to have servants, horses, and all sorts of fine carriages, as well as expensive clothes and a beautiful new home — built to his exact specifications. It was at this point in his life that the Irish author finally met the young Englishman who was destined to not only become his most loyal friend, but someone whose devotion would assure, when the chips were down, that Reid would persevere in spite of the travail that was about to come his way.

That same summer, Charles Ollivant traveled to London “for a two weeks holiday.” Departing from Manchester on July 13, he spent nine days “in viewing the places of note in and out of the metropolis.” Perhaps it was his first time away from home. But seeing the sights of London was apparently not the primary purpose of his journey, which he remembered with exceptional clarity some twenty years later. Friday, July 22, he later wrote, “saw me seated in a railway carriage booked for Uxbridge, Bucks, and bound for Mayne Reid's beautiful residence, “The Ranche,” Gerrard's Cross.” Reid did not know he was coming. “Indeed,” recalled Ollivant, “he was not even aware I was in London.”<sup>289</sup>

At Uxbridge station the young man asked someone the distance to Gerrard's Cross and was told it was about four miles. The weather being “lovely,” he decided to travel the

remaining distance by foot. In middle age, he wrote:

The road [to Gerrard's Cross] is the old coach route, London to Oxford, a fine, hilly, and picturesque highway; and it proved a pleasant and interesting walk. When about three miles from Uxbridge, on ascending Red Hill, I came within sight of a noble looking mansion, lying a little to the left and south, glittering white in the sunlight, with a flat roof, surmounted by a round dome, and no chimneys visible. "This," I reflected, "is the new house Mayne Reid wrote me he was building for himself."<sup>290</sup>

His excitement mounting, Ollivant "hurried onward, anxious to reach my journey's end." As his footsteps quickened, he was passed on the road by "a pony chaise" being driven by "a man in livery." It was pulled by "a pair of pretty spotted ponies." Very soon, he "reached the house originally occupied by Mayne Reid," and shortly afterward "arrived at the lodge gates of the flat-roofed mansion" he had spotted from a distance. "Entering," he recollected, "I walked up the broad carriage drive to the hall door." After he rang the bell, "a maid servant appeared" and when he asked if Reid was home, the woman told him "that he was not, but would probably be found in the Common, close by." Inquiring after Mrs. Reid, the anxious young man "was told that she had gone to London, though expected home in about an hour." It was then that Ollivant realized the carriage that passed him a few moments before was Reid's and that it had been on its way "to meet the London train at Uxbridge."<sup>291</sup>

Although he was invited to come inside and wait, in view of the pleasant weather Ollivant decided he would rather remain outdoors; and so, after handing the maidservant his card, he walked out the lodge gates, turned left, and continued up the Oxford road to the village common, where he hoped to catch sight of his idol.

I traversed it for some distance, but was unsuccessful in meeting with the object of my search and finally abandoned the attempt as idle. The day was excessively warm — indeed, sultry to a degree — and feeling rather tired after my uphill walk from Uxbridge, I flung myself bodily upon the purple heather which thickly carpeted the common, and gave it the name by which it was formerly known — "Jarrett's Heath."



To protect my eyes from the fervid rays of the sun, shining from a cloudless sky, I tilted my hat over them; and thus shaded from its glare, soon lapsed into a kind of reverie between sleeping and waking.

I remained in this half-somnolent state for several minutes, and was fast yielding to the drowsy god, when I was suddenly aroused by a voice making inquiry: “Are you tired my young friend?”

Now fully awake, with all my faculties in the alert, I hastily tossed aside my hat, and opening my eyes, I beheld a gentleman standing before me, attired in a light tweed suit, the coat of which had a belt around the waist, being what is known as a “Norfolk Jacket.” In his right hand, he held a short silver-headed Malacca cane. He was slightly over the middle height, of erect military bearing, his hair was dark and curly, worn rather long, with a heavy moustache and imperial, the rest of his face being bare. His eyes were dark hazel, nose medium-sized and straight, with a small mouth and rather prominent chin. Altogether he possessed a face of that square outline which is usually indicative of a determined and daring nature. I judged his age to be about forty-six.

Need I say that in this striking figure thus suddenly presented to my eyes, I at once recognized the ideal of my boyhood — often pictured to my imagination — my favourite author, the famous novelist, Captain Mayne Reid. I knew him from the photograph he had sent me, which was an exact likeness. But I was personally a stranger to him; though, as he afterwards explained, he at first mistook me for a youthful friend residing in the neighbourhood — hence his familiar address. Not for long was I a stranger, however. On mentioning my name, he grasped my hand warmly, and taking my arm in his, we walked together across the Common to his house; he talking all the way in that fascinating manner which made him so popular among those who were fortunate enough to be honored with his acquaintance.<sup>292</sup>

All the way to Reid’s house, Ollivant recalled, he was in his glory. “The ambition of my life,” he wrote, “seemed at length attained: to talk face to face with my favorite author.” And happily, he added, “I found him no dry bookworm of the closet, but a practical and warm-hearted man who talked like his books.” Neither was he disappointed when, upon arrival at the “Ranche,” he was introduced to Reid’s young wife, who “entered the room with a light and graceful step.” Considering the falling out the two of them had after Reid’s death, it seems a wonder that he did not delete this flattering description from his manuscript:

Her complexion was fair, with hair that rippled lightly from a low white forehead, and was worn in the simplest fashion. Eyes that glanced softly beneath eyebrows delicately pencilled and truly arched. Her slim but well-made figure slightly below the medium height, was set off to advantage in a dress of pale blue cashmere, which suited

admirably her blonde style of beauty.<sup>293</sup>

Ollivant reveals he first learned the house was called the “Ranche” when Elizabeth Reid “extended her hand,” welcoming him “with a pleasant smile.”<sup>294</sup> Although she later wrote that this was “the same name which he [Reid] had called his former residence,”<sup>295</sup> she was mistaken (or simply forgetful). We know that the author referred to his previous dwelling as the “Rancho” by the letters he sent the youth in late 1865 and early 1866. That name, not “Ranche,” is clearly inscribed at the top of each one. Although Ollivant explained in his manuscript that “Ranche” was a derivative of “Rancho,” a Spanish word “in common use in Mexico” for “a small dwelling,” he did not say why Reid chose the Anglicized variant of the word for his more recently completed residence. The most logical explanation is that he simply wanted to distinguish the new dwelling from the old one. Mrs. Reid, however, said it was because “people would come to grief over the pronunciation of the proper name — *hacienda*.”<sup>296</sup> Today, the land where Reid’s self-designed home once stood is erroneously identified both by locals and on official British government maps as “The Rancho.” The mistake is understandable. Reid lived in the “Rancho,” which stood adjacent to the twenty acres on which his new house was built, for more than a decade whereas he dwelt in the “Ranche” for less than six months. Indeed, recalled Ollivant, the author and his wife had just moved in less than two months prior to his visit. Regrettably, before the year was out (although none of them knew it at the time), the couple would be moving out.

Invited to stay at the “Ranche” as a guest for the remainder of his holiday, Ollivant was no doubt overjoyed. In later life he clearly appreciated that he was one of the fortunate few to have spent time under the Reid’s roof during their brief residence in their new home.

His remembrance of the property, which clearly impressed him, is quite detailed:

It [the house] was set back nearly a quarter of a mile from the turnpike road, where two handsome dome-shaped lodges, each surmounted by a golden eagle, had been erected. They were built of brick, like the house, and then plastered with Portland cement — the brick being made by the author in his own kilns. The gate-posts were made to match, the gates themselves of wood, painted a pretty shade of light green, which contrasted well with the greyish white of the lodges. A wide carriage-drive swept thence straight towards the house, bordered with greensward and planted at regular intervals with young trees. When about fifty yards off, it forked to the right and left, embracing a circular fish-pond of some thirty yards in diameter, joining again before the hall door, where it formed a fine carriage sweep. The drive then branched in the same manner to the stables at the back, encircling the house; thus forming a figure eight, the fish pond and house being inside the two loops — though, of course, the “house loop” was the largest.

This walk was specially designed by the fertile brain of the author, at all times rich in novel expedients. It enabled a vehicle to approach the house and return without once turning, or to continue on to the stables in the rear — a manifest advantage.

The house itself, seen in the distance, presented an unusually picturesque appearance — quite unlike anything seen before in England. Like the lodges, it was white, being covered with Portland cement, and formed a solid square of two stories. The roof was flat, and surrounded on all sides by balustrades made of cement in a new plan invented by Mayne Reid. In the centre rose a small dome, with doorway, whence the roof could be reached from the inside by a winding staircase. On each side of this was a low, oblong tower, also surmounted with balustrades, but a smaller size than those which surrounded the roof of the house. In fact, they were intended to represent the house in miniature.

Those hideous excrescences — chimneys — were noticeable by their absence. While the house was in process of construction, Mayne Reid had many a joke with his neighbours about this — telling them that he intended to consume his own smoke. Not until its completion was the mystery solved; when it was discovered, from the smoke seen ascending therefrom, that all the chimney flues were conducted into these handsome looking towers; and only by the smoke ascending from them could it be told that they served the purpose of chimneys.

The front-door had a porch supported on Corinthian pillars, the flat top having balustrades in keeping with those on the roof — a window from the landing above opening on to it. On each side were wide-casement windows, opening to the floor. These belonged to the dining and drawing rooms, a library with windows on the side of the house and the kitchen at the back, completing the square. The bedroom windows above corresponded; while higher still were three circular imitation windows, fitted with green jalousies, which formed an effective contrast to the white walls.

Entering the spacious hall, the staircase was in the centre, a passage on each side leading to the back.

The four lower rooms projected on each side, the flat roofs of which — also

guarded with balustrades — formed pleasant lounging places on a fine day, being entered from the casement windows of the bedrooms above. I occupied one of these, and in spite of the lapse of years, remember rising early the first morning after my arrival, stepping out upon the leaded floor of this wing, and inhaling the balmy air blowing fresh from the woods of Bulstrode Park.

The room adjoining this was occupied by the author as his study; and, when the weather permitted, he had his chair and table carried outside, so that he could pursue his literary work in the open air. Here I spent many happy hours with him.<sup>297</sup>

If Ollivant was impressed with the “Ranche,” he was more taken by its owner. “I found Mayne Reid to fulfil [sic] my highest expectations,” he wrote, adding that the author was “a man full of life and energy, able and willing to converse eloquently on any topic which interested him; and showing an insight into human nature rarely to be met with, which made him a most fascinating *raconteur*.”<sup>298</sup>

Ollivant also remarked that Reid had a sense of humor, which he occasionally demonstrated when dealing with the workmen who were putting the final touches to the property during his young admirer’s visit. One evening at twilight, Ollivant recalled, while a plasterer was finishing the inside of the fishpond, Reid jokingly called to the old man, “in his ringing voice,” from the rooftop:

“John! John!”

“Yes sir?” replied the man.

“Are you spoiling my pond?”

“No sir.

“You can’t see John; must I send you out some candles?”<sup>299</sup>

In addition to the “Ranche,” Ollivant also tells us, Reid “was erecting a row of eight or ten model cottages” in the village of Gerrard’s Cross, each one “built on the same plan as his own house, with flat roofs, but of plain red brick.” Unfortunately, he did not indicate whether Reid intended to sell or rent these dwellings. It is equally uncertain whether any are still standing today.<sup>300</sup>

When he wasn't entertaining his young admirer during the lad's five-day visit, Reid kept busy writing The Headless Horseman, which at that point in time, had reached the seventeenth month of its serialization, "the strange mystery underlying the plot of this remarkable work" being as yet "unsolved." A number of the author's neighbors, Ollivant observed, "while guests at his house, fruitlessly endeavored to extract from him the secret of the man riding headless over the wild Texan prairie."<sup>301</sup> If he made an exception and took the young man into his confidence, Ollivant doesn't mention it and one cannot help but wonder, given the way Reid typically ended his books in a rather abrupt manner, whether the author himself had decided just how he would wind things up. Additionally, Reid was "engaged in revising, for book-publication, 'The Bandolero, or, Mountain Marriage,'" which, as Ollivant remarks, was "originally written for 'The Queen' newspaper."<sup>302</sup>

Having promised his parents he would be home by July 27, Ollivant reluctantly declined Reid's invitation ("cordially seconded by his amiable wife") to stay a little longer. In need of a meeting with his publisher, the older man decided to extend their time together by giving his youthful friend a ride to Uxbridge Station in his carriage and then accompanying him on the train to London. By starting out early, they would have a few more hours in the capital before Ollivant needed to leave in order to reach home by the end of the day. Upon arrival at London's Paddington Station, the two men hired a cab to take them to Regent Street, where they planned to have lunch at Reid's favorite restaurant (which Ollivant failed to name, but may have been the still popular Café Royal). It was the "day after the great scare in the metropolis," Ollivant later recalled, and along the way, they passed the spot where four days earlier (not the day before as he mistakenly recollected) "Hyde Park's

railings yielded to an impassioned London mob — a day memorable in the annals of England.”<sup>303</sup> The incident to which he referred, known as the “Hyde Park Riots,” had followed a rally held in London on July 23 — attended by as many as 18,000 people and called to protest the defeat the month before of Gladstone’s proposed Reform Bill and the Liberal government he had headed. The bill was part of a democratic movement, then underway in the island nation, to make Britain, some said — and no doubt to the dread of the Conservatives, more like the United States.<sup>304</sup>

At Marble Arch, Ollivant remembered, “we beheld the lofty park railings, and coping stones on which they had rested, lying prone upon the ground; while the grass and shrubbery in their vicinity were trampled rudely under foot — a sight to be held in the memory as long as life lasts.”<sup>305</sup> It is not too hard to imagine, in view of his republican leanings, that Reid approved of the mob’s action; doubtless the toppled railings, hated symbols of class distinction, were one of the major topics of conversation as they ate.

It might have been during their meal together on Regent Street that Ollivant learned from Reid (unless he witnessed it during his visit) that a deputation of the outspoken author’s neighbors had recently asked him to consider standing for election to the House of Commons as a Liberal candidate. At least this is what Mrs. Reid remembered, adding: “As Mayne Reid was universally popular with the Liberals and the working classes he would have stood a fair chance of election for the county.”<sup>306</sup> The way Ollivant recollected it however, there was no doubt in Reid’s mind: “At this time his intention was to enter Parliament, and he proposed contesting the county of Bucks as a Radical.”<sup>307</sup> Why he did not is anyone’s guess.

Following lunch the two men went their separate ways, with Reid hailing a hansom

cab to take him to his publisher's office (probably Charles Clarke, in the City), and Ollivant hurrying off to Euston Station "to catch my train to the North." Whatever emotions the Irish wordsmith might have felt as he said goodbye to his young admirer have gone unrecorded. As for Ollivant, who had quickly formed an affection for his favorite author, which only grew stronger over time, "the parting was a painful one" that left him with "a sad heart."<sup>308</sup>

Ollivant had been fortunate to meet Reid while he was still at the top of his form. If he had waited a few more months, one cannot help but wonder if the author, no matter how flattering the youth's admiration, would have been in any mood to receive him. Certainly, Ollivant would not have found him at Gerrard's Cross. Shortly after the young Cheshire lad's visit, Reid's financial fortunes began a rapid and dramatic decline.

On October 29, 1866, in a letter marked "Strictly Confidential," and almost certainly the last one he sent to Ollivant from Gerrard's Cross, Reid confided to his young friend that "troubles have come upon me of a pecuniary nature." The problem, he explained, was that "Beeton and two other publishers whom I trusted too rashly have become bankrupt, and I am left to pay their bills given me, and dishonoured in my bank." If he could not raise "a large sum of money" soon, he would "be in danger of losing my beautiful residence (much endeared to me) [along] with other valuable properties on which I have set my heart."<sup>309</sup>

The reason why he was writing to Ollivant, Reid explained further, was to ask his help with a plan that the desperate author had concocted. "I chance to be a good elocutionist," he began, "I have friends who believe me the best in England!" What he was thinking of do, he added, was "giving a series of poetical readings" to raise money "to redeem my imperiled property," explaining that only a false sense of pride had prevented him

from doing this beforehand. Reid even included a tentative two-part program. But he was fearful of making “a commencement in London” where, if he bombed, it would be in the public spotlight. Instead, he thought it best to begin in the provinces, where if he failed he “could withdraw without all the world being aware of what I had intended,” or, if successful, then he could “make a more elaborate start in the metropolis.”<sup>310</sup>

“Now do you think,” he asked the young man, “that my name possesses enough magic in Manchester, to get me an audience in the Assembly rooms — say two or three hundred people...and at prices [the] same as charged by Dickens and Thackeray?” Imploring the youth to give him his candid opinion and for all intents and purposes placing his future in Ollivant’s hands, the worried author concluded: “If you think it can be done — allowing a proper amount of advertizing in the papers, then I think I shall run down and try it.” In closing, he also asked the young man to seek the opinions of his friends, but “without saying aught of my intentions.”

Apparently, Ollivant replied “as soon as possible,” which Reid had asked him to do (unfortunately, the letter seems not to have survived so we do not know its contents), but before either could act on the proposed poetical readings, the author’s “imperiled property” was seized by or on behalf of his creditors. The next communication the young man received from his idol, dated November 16, came from London, where Reid and his wife had rented or leased a house at 10 Fulham Place, Maida Hill — near the Grand Union Canal. It began with an explanation for the lack of response to Ollivant’s letter. “The Times of Wednesday last,” Reid wrote dolefully, “contains my name on the list of Bankrupts!” He was bankrupt, he explained, “for £7,200 of debt with estimated assets of £14,000!” Mournfully, he added: “I



give up everything — even to my last pound to obtain my protective order. I have been perhaps over scrupulous since I have left myself crippled even for the means of present subsistence, but I wish no stain affixed to my name for enemies to point at.”<sup>311</sup>

Of course, the dejected writer continued, there was no chance at that point he could “carry out the scheme” outlined in his previous letter but, he added, “as soon as I am recovered from the shock, and can get hold of £10 or £20 by scribbling for it, I shall sink the dignity hitherto dear to me and endeavour to solace myself by making money as proposed.”<sup>312</sup>

On November 21, in another letter, Reid told Ollivant not to worry. “My fall,” he wrote optimistically, “will only imbue me with fresh energy to rise again.” Apparently in a note of his own the young man had proposed a visit. “Don’t come to London on my account only,” Reid replied politely, “but if you should come for any other purpose do not talk of staying elsewhere than at my little home here where there is both a spare bed and a spare plate at your service.”<sup>313</sup>

Within a few days, the author changed his mind. On November 25, in a brief note that seems not to have survived, Reid wrote once more to his young admirer, asking him to come to London right away. Dutifully, Ollivant arrived from Manchester on the 28th and went straight to Reid’s home at Maida Hill. By this time The Headless Horseman had been published in two volumes, selling for six shillings per volume or twelve shillings a set. Reid got to the point immediately, proposing that Ollivant form a committee for the purpose of encouraging sales of the book so as to raise money “to add to the assets of his estate.” Ollivant would be honorary secretary.<sup>314</sup> Clearly, Reid had come to the conclusion that if he

were seen to be the originator of the scheme, it would appear unseemly. However, if a devoted reader was behind it, no one could criticize. Not surprisingly, Ollivant agreed and on November 30 an advertisement appeared in The Times, reading:

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID in the BANKRUPTCY COURT. — There are few who will read this announcement without pain, especially among the numerous boy readers who have derived pleasure from the perusal of Captain Reid's very interesting books. Among these a Committee has been formed to inquire into the nature of the embarrassments that beset their favourite author. It is found that they have arisen from his having become liable for others, and, moreover, that the assets of his estate exceed the amount of his debts. Under these circumstances a subscription was proposed, but the reply of the gallant Captain leaves no hope that gratuitous aid would be accepted. The Committee, however, have considered a plan by which the desired end may be obtained without placing Captain Reid under the slightest obligation, or in any way touching his susceptibility. They propose that each of his admirers shall purchase a copy of his last and greatest work, "The Headless Horseman," a romance that when read cannot fail to place its author at the head of the novel writers of the day. The Committee confidently hop that among the thousands, the hundreds of thousands, who have derived delight and instruction from Captain Mayne Reid's writings not a few will respond to this appeal. Those who desire to do so by forwarding their address, with a post-office order, to the Secretary, will receive, postage free, a copy of "The Headless Horseman." The only edition published is in demy 8 vo., splendidly illustrated, price 12s. Address 47 Mortimer Street, Cavendish square, W.

CHARLES OLLIVANT, Jun. Hon. Sec.<sup>315</sup>

The date selected for the placement of this notice, whether deliberate or not, was well timed. As Reid had earlier confided to Ollivant, The Times of Wednesday, November 14, 1866 had carried his name in the bankruptcy notices.<sup>316</sup> On November 29, only one day before Ollivant's appeal appeared on its front page, The Times reported further that "a first meeting" had been held the previous day in the Court of Bankruptcy, Registrar Brougham presiding, with Captain Mayne Reid "of 'The Ranche,' Gerrard's-cross, Bucks...the well-known author of *The Headless Horseman* and other works of fiction." Corroborating the amounts confided to his young admirer, the paper reported that the profligate author had unpaid debts of £7,000, with assets worth about £15,000, "consisting of freehold property, on

which there are mortgages.” “The bankrupt” attributed “his failure,” the report added, “to difficulty in raising money on his property.” A Mr. James, The Times concluded, “a manager of the London and County Bank, Uxbridge, was appointed an assignee.”<sup>317</sup>

The response to his appeal, Ollivant later remembered, “was immediate.” Orders for the book came rolling in but unfortunately, after a week, his regular duties obliged the young man to return to Manchester, where he was living at the time. Before departing, he transferred responsibility for the committee to George W. Hyde, Reid’s brother-in-law, who the faithful Ollivant called “a most intelligent and assiduous assistant in all [Reid’s] undertakings.”<sup>318</sup>

Hyde, who Ollivant also described as “kind, generous, and noble-hearted,” is something of a mystery. Ollivant, who apparently met the man for the first time when he came to London in November 1866, tactfully remarked that Mrs. Reid’s brother’s “life had been a varied one, and full of vicissitudes.” He had been (as previously mentioned in this chapter), “a ‘Garibaldian,’”<sup>319</sup> apparently during the Italian leader’s 1860 exertions. There is also some reason to believe that he suffered from a mental illness of some sort, and that he came to live with the author and his wife following the death of George W. Hyde, Sr.

Soon after his return to Manchester, the dutiful Ollivant placed similar advertisements in the papers there. He also personally canvassed the city, calling mainly on “friends and acquaintances,” asking them to place an order for Reid’s new book. In the end, he was “tolerably successful disposing of forty-five copies of the book, all at twelve shillings each.” Among the “public men” who subscribed, he boasted, were John Bright, “the sturdy champion of liberty everywhere,” and Thomas Bayley Potter, Richard Cobden’s successor as

Member of Parliament for Rochester and “a great free trade advocate.” Potter, Ollivant remarked, was already a fan of Reid’s, possessing a shelf full of his works. He and Bright each purchased two copies of The Headless Horseman.<sup>320</sup>

We do not know if Reid was aware of it, but he almost certainly would have been embarrassed to learn that his money problems were no secret on the other side of the Atlantic. On December 27 The New York Times carried this somewhat judgmental notice:

Capt. Mayne Reid, the prince of adventurous and sensation story tellers, who delights all British boys with his tales of American, Mexican, and West Indian border and forest life, has gone into bankruptcy. He was a little too fast even for so successful an author. He bought an estate for £15,000, and owes £7,000. The cost of the estate was no so bad, but when a man has a fine place he must live accordingly. So the gallant Captain must take in sail.<sup>321</sup>

On January 11, 1867 the London Morning Star printed a detailed report concerning Reid’s petition to the bankruptcy court “for an order of discharge.” An examination of his accounts, the paper noted, revealed “debts of £7,400, with a considerable surplus in the form of assets and property held as security — the latter being returned at £9,794, and embracing copyrights of the Headless Horseman, and other works, and a mansion called “The Ranche,” at Gerrard’s-cross, valued at £6,684.” A Mr. Cunningham, acting for the London and County Bank of Uxbridge, estimated a surplus of about £4,000 and “therefore recommended that the bankrupt should receive his order of discharge” but Mr. Bagley, the representative for Reid’s creditors — “Messrs. Osborne and Stevens, of Uxbridge,” doubted the author’s house was worth “more than was secured on it” and opposed a grant of the request.<sup>322</sup>

When questioned by the court, Reid stated several publishers owed him money: Chapman and Hall — £249; S. O. Beeton — £250; and £100 by Mr. Brown, “publisher of the Boys’ Journal.” He added that he doubted he would ever see the money Beeton owed

him. He also mentioned there had been “accommodation transactions” between he and Brown, implying apparently that the amount in that case was reduced. He testified further that in addition to the money owed him, when “he was made bankrupt,” his property included the “Ranche,” valued at £7,000, along with “copyrights, [and] freehold and leasehold property,” as well as “a riding horse, a horse for his brougham, two ponies, a pony carriage, and other horses.”<sup>323</sup>

In the end, reported the Morning Sun, the court concluded that Reid’s “property at Gerrard’s Cross was evidently of considerable value.” Furthermore, “there was no pretence for charging the bankrupt with contracting debts without reasonable means of payment.” Holding “that nothing had been shown to prevent the bankrupt receiving his order,” the court granted Reid the requested discharge.”<sup>324</sup>

Shortly after this report appeared in the paper Reid, who had since moved to 20 Fulham Place, Maida Hill, sent a note to his industrious young admirer, apologizing for not writing sooner (“I have been so busy first with my bankruptcy business, and now with trying to get money to inaugurate my readings”) and thanking him for his “gallant effort.” Sales of his new book generated by the notice in The Times, he commented, combined “with your exertion has yielded already over £80, a good help toward my assets.” He also remarked, optimistically, that he had been “down at Gerrard’s X on Monday and everyone was full of kind thoughts about me all wishing my return.” At that time his property was apparently still unsold because he added that he hoped to redeem some of it, particularly “the mansion if possible.”<sup>325</sup> Sadly, he never did.

In closing, Reid remarked that he was still planning to give a poetry reading, perhaps

at the Hanover Square Rooms in London, on either January 30 or 31. He mentioned too that he had been to hear Charles Dickens speak “the evening before last,” adding critically: “It was the poorest entertainment I ever remember being present at.”<sup>326</sup>

Although Reid’s “unfortunate mania for building” was a factor in his bankruptcy, his wife ambiguously ascribed it to “other failures” as well. The worst of these, revealed Charles Ollivant, was “the disastrous failure of Overend, Gurney & Company, in whose affairs he [Reid] had become involved.”<sup>327</sup> Respected English historian Stephen Inwood tell us, “no City financial institution was held in higher regard than the great discount house of Overend, Gurney, and Co., the ‘Corner House’ at the junction of Lombardy and Birchin Lane.” Concentrating on short-term credit, Inwood adds, the firm had prospered under the “skilful and tireless management” of Samuel Gurney. But when “the business fell into the ambitious but less capable hands of Henry Gurney and David Chapman,” the company retreated from “the known world of bill discounting into the unknown one of shipping, shipbuilding, grain dealing, iron-making, and railways.” With its money “tied up in speculative, insecure, or inaccessible investments,” the insiders who made up London’s tight-knit financial community “were not surprised when a few smaller business failures brought Overend, Gurney, and Co., Ltd., to bankruptcy on 10 May 1866, with debts of over £5 million, a sum almost equal to the Bank of England’s reserves.” Not surprisingly, this set off a financial panic, which was checked by the Bank of England coming to the aid of other institutions. But even so, “the consequences of Overend and Gurney’s collapse were felt, as the *Times* put it, ‘in the remotest corners of the kingdom.’”<sup>328</sup> One of those corners, quite clearly, was “The Ranche, Gerrard’s Cross, Bucks,” where the unlucky author who lived there saw “the whole

of the modest fortune (£15,000) he had succeeded in amassing by his literary industry” disappear in the massive failure of the old London banking firm that “brought ruin to so many innocent families.”<sup>329</sup>

The most gut-wrenching result of Reid’s financial misfortune was the loss of his beloved “Ranche,” into which he had poured not only money, but also three years of what would today be termed “sweat equity.” The fact that the loss occurred following a residence of only six months no doubt made it an all-the-more-bitter pill to swallow. In one of his later novels, The Death Shot, Reid included a paragraph that may have been inspired by the angst he almost certainly felt when he watched (if indeed he was present) his beautiful mansion and its belongings auctioned off, an event that may have occurred shortly after his January letter to Ollivant.

Tell me a more trying test to the sensibilities of a gentleman, or his equanimity, then to see his gate piers pasted over with the black and white show bills of the auctioneer; a strip of stair carpet dangling down from one of his bed-room windows, and a crowd of hungry harpies clustered around his door stoop; some entering with eyes that express keen concupiscence; others coming out with countenances more beatified, bearing away his Penates — jeering and swearing over them — insulting the Household Gods he has so long held in adoration. Ugh! A hideous horrid sight — a spectacle of Pandemonium.<sup>330</sup>

One of the few bright spots in his life, at a time when Reid no doubt felt the world was caving in on him, was the publication in Our Young Folks, a juvenile periodical published in Boston, Massachusetts, of some rather flattering commentary in a biographical piece that began: “The name of no writer can be better known to the boys and girls of America than that of Mayne Reid, — ‘the Walter Scott of the juveniles,’ as he has sometimes been called.” The article was accompanied by an engraved portrait, “which,” reported the magazine, “is now for the very first time made public,” adding erroneously, “for he has never

allowed his likeness to be published in England, or copies of his photograph (from which this picture is engraved) to be sold there.” Apparently not knowing that the impoverished writer had recently lost his beloved mansion (or perhaps the article went to press before a correction could be made), the magazine, in which Reid’s serial “Afloat in the Forest” had recently appeared, remarked further: “Captain Mayne Reid...now lives as a quiet English gentleman in his pleasant and retired country-seat.”<sup>331</sup>

If Reid saw the magazine, and he more than likely did, we may imagine it lifted his spirits to see himself lauded in print as “one of the most popular authors of the time” and to have his work discussed in such a complimentary manner. By chance, the writer echoed Mrs. Reid’s description of the process by which the celebrated novelist went about his work.

As all must know, Mayne Reid chooses his subjects from out-door life. Travelling, hunting, fishing, the investigation of strange climates, wild animals, curious trees and plants, remarkable adventures and new sports, are the topics with which he fills his pages. His own romantic nature leads him to prefer unfamiliar lands for the scenes of his stories, and novel or astonishing combinations of incident for their action.

But this may be confidently said of Captain Reid — that, however amazing or improbable may seem the thread of adventure which constitutes the narrative of his volumes, the statements which he makes in regard to geography, or botany, or natural history are sure to be true. When he is preparing a new tale, he gathers all the information that persons or books can give him in regard to the region into which he means to send his characters, and then, having got all these facts before him, he proceeds to make a story which will include them all. Thus, through his anecdotes of animals or Indians, and his accounts of rivers or forests, may appear too strange to be true, yet, if one has the opportunity, and the time to examine the narratives of travellers and scholars, he will find authority for what Mayne Reid has told him.<sup>332</sup>

The piece concluded:

So, boys and girls, you may believe just as much as you please of strange adventures, amazing perils, and miraculous escapes with which Mayne Reid spices his stories; but you may trust him entirely, when he tells you any thing for a fact; and you must remember him kindly, as a man of another land, who yet loves your country, has fought and shed his blood for her, who always has a warm word to speak in her praise, and who would gladly have drawn his sword again for her in the last battles had not the



feebleness of his health and the dependence of his family forbidden.<sup>333</sup>

“The winter of 1866-7 was a very severe one,” wrote Charles Ollivant, “and the suffering of the poor correspondingly great.” Reid, who had originally planned to hold a poetry reading in order to raise money for the redemption of his property, now changed his mind. Whether this was due to the sale at auction of “The Ranche” or to a deep-seated sense of humanity, we cannot be sure. Whatever the case, in a display of seemingly utter selflessness, he decided to go ahead with the performance but to give any money he raised to London’s poor instead. Perhaps as he passed through the city’s streets, seeing the sorts of persons that inhabited some of Dickens’ novels (but interestingly, not his), he recalled that long-ago winter in Pittsburgh when, but for the hospitality of a compassionate Irish family, he might have fared far worse. We can only imagine. In any event, in a letter published in the January 26, 1867 edition of The Illustrated Weekly, (which had the effect of providing him with the advertising he told Ollivant he could not afford) the philanthropic author explained his mission:

Sir, — Hunger and cold are around us. Starvation, from shivering in the chill garrets, begins to stalk openly through our streets. There is no telling how long this harsh weather may continue, or, should it break, how soon it may be succeeded by a spell of like inclemency. Surely there is spirit enough in this great metropolis — and wealth more than enough — to strive successfully with this mere temporary distress. Let each contribute his mite, and a mite from each will lay the grim spectre. I offer mine in the shape of an entertainment, to be given at the Hanover-square Rooms, on the evening of Monday, the 28th inst. As there is but scant time for circulating the announcement, may I ask you in the name of humanity, to direct attention to it.<sup>334</sup>

On nearly the eve of the performance, Reid came down with an especially bad cold and had to reschedule for Monday, February 4. While recuperating, he received some further notice in The Observer and Lloyd’s News, both of which praised the charitable novelist for

his magnanimity, the latter reporting colorfully “that this ‘gift horse’ will bear the severest scrutiny of the dentist.”<sup>335</sup>

At last the big evening arrived and so did the listeners, who came to see and hear the celebrated author hold forth at the Hanover Rooms, a popular performance hall located on the east side of Hanover Square, in the very heart of London’s West End. Unfortunately, the weather “was very wet, which no doubt lessened the number of the audience,” although one of the London papers reported: “The attendance was of a highly fashionable character, and sufficiently numerous to imbue a belief that the benevolent object would be realised.” The reviewer for another journal was slightly more forthright, observing, “that the seats were by no means filled,” although the writer added charitably, it was probably due to “the rain which poured down at intervals throughout the evening.” The same critic also noticed that the Captain was not completely recovered from his illness.<sup>336</sup>

The presentation, titled “An Evening with the Poets,” featured Reid on stage reciting the works of Lord Byron (who he greatly admired), Fitz Green Halleck (with Reid delivering the very same poem he included in his 1863 Thanksgiving Day address), Sir Walter Scott, and others. The performance, a sort of poetical tour of the world, was divided into three parts, consisting of five poems each, with musical interludes provided both by an orchestra and a solo harpist.<sup>337</sup> Although this was obviously the sort of thing that appealed to the learned writer, one cannot help but wonder why he did not read from his own works. If it was poetry the audience came to hear, he had plenty of his own to declaim and it seems reasonable to imagine that anyone familiar with his work would have applauded a reading of some of the more stirring passages from his tales of daring-do in the Wild West of North America.



Figure 27. Reduced Facsimile of Capt. Mayne Reid's Paper, The Little Times. From Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures (London: Greening & Co., Ltd., 1900).

In any case, the event received munificent reviews. A critic for The Standard called Reid's effort "markedly effective," adding: "The 'Bridge of Sighs' was read with appropriate pathos; Scott's poem of 'Lochinvar' was given with fitting energy; Sheridan Knowles' 'Tell' was interspersed with some of the author's intentions; and a piece from 'Marmion' was received with applause." The Daily Telegraph's critic was equally kind, commenting: "Captain Mayne Reid, who was cordially greeted when he appeared on the platform, declaimed with considerable earnestness...occasionally discarding the book, and the help of a retentive memory, imparting to a majority of the readings the effect of a recital."<sup>338</sup>

Although the papers termed the event a "success," in the end it raised very little money, perhaps only about £15, which, one reviewer remarked, "if the evening had been fine...would doubtless have been increased." Ollivant (who probably did not attend and therefore, in all likelihood, based his opinions on second-hand information), agreed that the bad weather was largely responsible for the low turnout (which he also blamed on Reid's inability to pay for advertising) but added, "In a monetary sense, this reading could hardly be called as success." At the same time, Ollivant believed quite strongly that Reid had the potential to become one of the most sought-after orators of his day. Be that as it may, the financial failure of his poetry reading undoubtedly discouraged the would-be elocutionist and for this reason, in all likelihood, he next "turned his thoughts into a different channel — namely, newspaper publishing."<sup>339</sup>

Today, visitors to London will find that the city's newspapers — and there are plenty of them — fall into two categories in terms of dimensions. One is the full-sized paper that requires a generous amount of space to unfold, such as The Times, The Observer, The

Guardian, The Independent, or The Daily Telegraph. The other is the tabloid, such as The Evening Standard, The Daily Mail, The Daily Mirror, or The Sun, which are far easier to handle while riding aboard a crowded bus or Underground train — or any place where personal space is at a premium. In mid-Victorian England only the first type, what Charles Ollivant termed “blanket-sheets,”<sup>340</sup> was common.

Reid, recalled Ollivant, had for several years “held strong opinions regarding the London daily press,” which he thought, in terms of both newspaper size and content, were “inconvenient to handle, and tiresome to read.” In the spring of 1867, following his less-than-successful poetry reading, he decided at last to do something about it. The idea, which Ollivant claimed was original with Reid, was a newspaper a quarter the size of conventional daily journals, in which the articles would also be condensed, for quick and easy reading. The result was something he called The Little Times.<sup>341</sup>

“From the publishing offices of Edward Head,” located at 275½ The Strand, not far from Fleet Street — London’s journalistic heartland, Reid and “a small staff of assistants” produced The Little Times, which made its debut on Saturday, April 27, 1867, “the heading being a copy in miniature of its big contemporary, the Times,” but in size “measuring twelve by nine and a half inches!” Costing only a penny per issue, the manageably sized journal, which “contained eight pages of three columns each,” was printed, said Ollivant, “on good paper.” There were two editions daily — one in the afternoon and the other in the evening.<sup>342</sup>

Each issue, he remarked further, was “arranged” by subject “with appropriate titles.” There was one for “Correspondence,” another called “The Tribunal,” a third named “The Reporter,” and so on. The front and back pages, recalled Ollivant, “were usually set apart for

advertisements.” Not surprisingly, Reid authored all the editorials, for which his devoted admirer had nothing but praise. Among the myriad contemporary topics he touched upon were the possibility of war between France and Germany, the downfall of the Emperor Maximilian in Mexico, Mormonism (Reid was emphatically anti-Mormon), the search for “lost” missionary David Livingstone in Africa, and the visit to England of “the Hon. Neal Dow, of the State of Maine, U.S.,” who gave a speech at London’s Guildhall, where he blamed “the use of intoxicating liquors” for “poverty, pauperism, insanity, blindness, idiocy, and crime.” In a thoughtful and compelling counterblast Reid dismantled the American’s line of reasoning, arguing instead that the use of alcohol by the working poor was a *symptom* of their condition rather than its cause. “You must give the poor man some joy in his life,” he insisted, “and if he be denied it in the luxury obtainable by his more opulent neighbour, he will resort to that within his reach — even though the sensation may be but short-lived and ruinous in its result.” Although he never got around to it, Reid also intended to use his little newspaper to begin a serialization of his next major literary effort, The White Squaw, “being a sequel to his famous story of The ‘Scalp Hunters.’” If the paper had lasted longer, the serial would have been issued every Wednesday in a feuilleton, or separate sheet, “containing twelve columns of closely printed type, to be given away with the paper.”<sup>343</sup>

The Little Times was not only different from its namesake in size but also in political outlook. Even today, British newspapers make little or no pretense at non-partisan objectivity, which American papers at least pretend to do. Consequently, in the United Kingdom, a person’s politics can be easily ascertained simply by observing what newspaper he or she is reading. In the first issue of The Little Times, Reid teased his readers, saying that

the paper's "spirit and proclivities will soon be discovered." It would not have taken them long. Reid made no attempt to hide his republican, anti-monarchical temperament — it was right there in the pages of his new enterprise for all to see and read. One of his pet peeves, wrote Ollivant, was "the gross flunkeyism prevalent among the middle classes in regard to the doings of Royalty." (It is not hard to imagine that if this less-than-loyal subject could somehow have known that the public's obsession with the British royal family, even in republican America, would persist into the twenty-first century, he would have been appalled.) Reid also disapproved of Britons who derided their transatlantic cousins as uncouth bumpkins. One editorial, which Ollivant included in its entirety in his remembrances of Reid, reveals the extent of the Irish author's annoyance with both these traits and his readiness to hold the offending parties "up to ridicule and contempt":

The American people have lately been accused of too prevailing brusqueness by one of their own magazines, the Atlantic Monthly, which hints that the absence of courtesy is becoming a painful fact in America, and gives everyday illustrations in proof thereof. English journalists hereupon pounce spitefully upon this sly dig in the ribs administered to Uncle Sam by a Yankee, and, like Scrub in the play, "laugh consumidly [sic]." Festina lente is a good adage. Let us, in Lord Byron's phrase, 'moderate a little and pass on to somewhat else,' viz., a grave fault of our country — another extreme of bad taste, one of many mistakes, into which we English fall in this island, home of the free, and all the rest of it too often. That fault is our sickening greediness, so to speak, to catch every word which falls from the superfine lips of the Court Newsman, or literary 'Jeames' of the press, touching the most trivial everyday doings of England's blood royal. The rudeness of young America is, no doubt, to the full as snobbish as the crawling adulation of some eminently respectable social flunkeys on this side of the Atlantic. But that rudeness we fancy is there chiefly confined to the half-cultivated section of their nation of the future. Our snobbery above indicated reaches higher here. Take any daily paper up, and you are sure to see something like this, and plenty of groveling moral plush-lovers to devour it. 'This morning the Queen and the Princess Beatrice rode on ponies in the grounds.' Did they really? How noble of them to condescend to take air and exercise, like ordinary mortals! On Sunday last we find the Queen was actually good enough to patronize the Infinite by attending morning service 'in the private chapel.' Professing the most profound regard for our excellent Queen, we cannot help seeing that as long as

newspapers find themselves almost compelled to publish such twaddle, there must surely be a vast number of educated snobs who could not enjoy their [breakfast] unless, at the same time, they were put au courant with every little movement of Royalty. This sycophantic turn of mind is nothing better than an insult to the age of free thought, independence, and manliness; and being such, we protest against it as not only an impertinent inquiry into the privacy of the Sovereign, but also a sacrifice of a subject's personal dignity as a true-born Englishman.<sup>344</sup>

After a run of only twenty-two days, The Little Times ceased publication, the last issue appearing on Wednesday, May 22, 1867. The reason, recalled Ollivant, was twofold. Part of the problem was a “shortness of cash,” which the author-turned-journalist's devoted admirer believed could have been alleviated if the enterprise had just been given a little more time. The other, and perhaps primary difficulty was Reid's health, which “finally yielded to the severe strain to which it was subjected” — the pressure of putting out a daily paper becoming more than the beleaguered author could bear.<sup>345</sup> Most newspapers, even small ones, have a staff of reporters as well as one or more editors. The Little Times was pretty much a one-man show. What is surprising, perhaps, is that he kept up the pace for as long as he did.

In the more recent past, when Queen Elizabeth II and her kin went through a series of rough patches, including a disastrous fire at Windsor Castle, Her Majesty referred to that unfortunate period of time as her family's “annus horribilus,” or horrible year. We can easily imagine that Mayne Reid felt similarly about the year 1867. Not only had he lost his home in Gerrard's Cross but he also suffered the public humiliation of a less-than-successful poetry reading and a short-lived attempt to enter the world of journalism. However, by the end of spring, although he was undoubtedly exhausted and discouraged he picked up his pen and returned to what he always did best, writing a story of romance and adventure. His next project was called The Finger of Fate, which was serialized in Beeton's Boys Own Magazine



beginning in January 1868.<sup>346</sup> He also agreed, in a letter to the New York publishers Beadle and Adams dated July 27, 1867, “in consideration of the very handsome terms offered,” to compose “a series of Dime Novels for your house, the first of which, entitled ‘The Helpless Hand,’ will be forwarded to you by the steamer leaving England on the 19th of August.”<sup>347</sup>

Sometime during the summer of 1867 or perhaps earlier, Reid also began to consider returning to the United States. It is not at all difficult to imagine why. Although he had enjoyed a decade and a half of material success in England, his recent bankruptcy had been a wrenching experience and everything new he had tried since, i.e., his attempt to make a living first as an elocutionist and then next as a journalist, had met with failure. Moreover, although his body was in England, his heart and mind had always seemed to be on the other side of the Atlantic, where in memory and imagination alike he roamed free over the prairie, on the back of a swift horse — chasing buffalo, trading with the Indians, or rescuing some dark-eyed, mustachioed damsel from the clutches of a loathsome villain. And of course, as an admirer of the United States’ political institutions, it just seemed to make sense that he *should* be there, rather than living in a country whose form of government was the antithesis of everything he held dear in politics. Perhaps too he saw the decline of his fortunes as some sort of portent. In any case, by autumn, having finished The Finger of Fate (an apt title, considering all he had recently endured) he had made up his mind to go.

It may have been around this time that Reid was also moved to write a six-stanza conclusion for his poem, “To the United States,” which he had composed some six years earlier, on the eve of the Civil War. The new verses, comparing the nation to a sailing vessel and as unabashedly patriotic as the originals, reflected his joy at the outcome of the war, in

which not only had the Union been preserved but also slavery abolished.

The collision came with, Heaven knows, enough ruin; but happily, not all I had feared.

And Heaven be praised that the storm has passed over,  
 And left the good ship still afloat on the wave,  
 With the same starry flag proudly waving above her,  
 More than ever the flag of the free and the brave.

Some tackle destroyed — rigging worthless and rotten;  
 Some spars she can spare — they but hampered her way;  
 While her beaconing star to a new birth begotten,  
 Will shine with a surer and holier ray.

Beware the re-rigging! Let not the old leaven  
 Form part of her sail-cloth or cordage again:  
 For scathed upon earth, and accursed in Heaven,  
 ‘Twould prove in the tempest unfit for the strain.

Fling it off from her decks — let it drift to the leeward —  
 Anywhere — anywhere — out of her track;  
 She will never be sure of a safe passage seaward,  
 While clings to her taffrail the traitorous wreck.

You have torn from her log-book the leaf of dishonour,  
 Have swept through her scuppers foul slavery’s stain;  
 You have blazoned anew her old star-spangled banner,  
 Baptized by the blood of your martyrs all slain.

Then beware, while you weep o’er the ghastly bereaving,  
 As you think of the peril, the pain, and the cost,  
 Let the mercy you show in the midst of your grieving,  
 Be so “strained” that the lesson shall never be lost.<sup>348</sup>

Shortly before leaving Britain, Reid had the opportunity to introduce himself to Admiral David Farragut — the great Union naval hero of the Civil War, who visited England in mid-October 1867, staying at London’s Clarendon Hotel. After Reid had taken up residence on the other side of the Atlantic, he recalled this brief encounter with the venerable Admiral, which seems to have fortified his pro-American (and anti-British) sentiments:

I entered the Clarendon Hotel, in Bond st., London, expecting to be presented to a scarred veteran, somewhat hoary of hair, and rugged in aspect — in short, an old sea-wolf. I was somewhat surprised — not disagreeably — to meet a man of slight, almost fragile frame, features of delicate tracing, with all the grace and gentleness of a gentleman. He told me he was from Tennessee. “Strange,” thought I, “that such a great hero should be begotten in a State producing only landsmen.” I could think only of Newport, or New Bedford, Stonington, or Nantucket, being the school to create this heroic child of the ocean. “More proof,” I reflected, “of the intelligence of a republican people, that can adapt itself to every circumstance.”

My interview with the admiral was not a long one. Others desired to see and speak with him, and I made my adieus with the pleasant anticipation of seeing him again — all the pleasanter from the prospect of it being realized on this side of the Atlantic. But before leaving the Clarendon Hotel, an anecdote was related to me, I think worth recording: as it illustrates the phase of character almost peculiar to England. I had it not from the admiral himself, but one of his staff — the chief surgeon — whose long service as well as rank entitles him to be called the “medical admiral” of the fleet. I speak of the respected Dr. Foulks. The anecdote is this. For several days after the American naval hero had taken up his abode in the Clarendon — known to be the most aristocratic “caravanserai” in London — neither the Boniface of the hotel, nor his waiters paid any particular attention to him. He was treated like any other guest who had no more claim on the Clarendon’s hospitality than that given by the rank and title of admiral. And this would not be much in the pretentious hostelry of Bond street, unless the naval sobriquet was prefixed by one of still higher sound — a title of nobility. In the eyes of the Clarendon host a mere admiral is nothing, and much less one who does not belong to Her Majesty’s navy. What was the great Farragut to him? Only a Yankee skipper!

It chanced one day that the Duchess of Somerset, wife to the first Lord of the Admiralty, called upon this skipper — only to leave her card.

But on that card was the ducal crest of St. Maur, as also on the panels of her chariot drawn up at the door. The effect was magical upon the mind of the British Boniface. It produced an instantaneous change in his treatment of his American guest; which was as quickly communicated to his subordinates. From that hour a brace of John Thomases, the most imposing to be found on the hotel staff, stood sentry by the admiral’s door — receiving and showing in his guests with a subservience of manner known only to an Englishman. I had myself noticed their obsequiousness, as they ushered me into the admiral’s presence. For once it pleased me, thinking it a concession to true greatness. I felt like giving John Thomas a half-sovereign; which I should have sadly repented on learning — what I afterwards did — that his apparent politeness to the guests of the great American, was only a grace done to the Duchess of Somerset.<sup>349</sup>

Not long after meeting Farragut, Reid, his wife, and his brother-in-law George W. Hyde prepared to leave England, ostensibly forever. On October 25, 1867, the threesome

boarded the steamship *City of Antwerp* at Liverpool, bound for New York.<sup>350</sup> As the vessel weighed anchor and began to move out to sea, the Irish author no doubt stood on deck and reflected back to the first time he had crossed the Atlantic as expectant young man, looking optimistically to the future. We may imagine that he was filled with a similar sense of hopefulness as he gazed westward once more across the waves. Mercifully, there is no way he could have known then how brief his second American sojourn would be, or how dreadfully it would end.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### RETURN TO AMERICA

London & Paris both found together would not equal New York in metropolitan greatness. If America as a nation can hold together, the old world must go under.

— Mayne Reid, letter to Charles Ollivant, 1868<sup>1</sup>

On November 5, 1867 the “Passengers Arrived” notice that regularly appeared in the New York Times heralded the return of Mayne Reid to the city from which he had departed eighteen years, four months, and eight days earlier as a celebrated Mexican War veteran, an aspiring novelist, and a would-be volunteer for the Magyar Revolution.<sup>2</sup> Although he had very little money to show for the several years of his absence, his literary reputation remained intact and from all appearances his ability to live up to it undiminished. There is every indication he aimed to trade on them both and hopefully, to prosper once more. Regrettably, we do not know precisely how he felt at the moment he stepped from the gangplank of the *City of Antwerp* and found himself once more on American soil but judging from letters and statements he made afterwards, he must have been elated. But his stay in New York was brief. Within days, he and his wife and brother-in-law went on to another of Reid’s old haunts — Newport, Rhode Island. They arrived on November 8 and “rented a furnished cottage” called “Acquidneck House,” where they spent most of the winter of 1867-1868.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after arrival in the “fashionable seaside resort,” Ollivant tells us, Reid “was besieged by various literary bureaus to give public readings from his writings, as Charles

Dickens had done.” Although he probably could have made good money doing so, he declined; making it quite clear that he was unavailable in a letter that was published in the Newport News (and transcribed in Ollivant’s manuscript):

Acquidneck House  
November 12, 1867

To the Editor of the News.

Sir, — a paragraph in your paper of yesterday introduces my name with the handsome compliment of my being a ‘well-known literary figure and true patriot.’ While thanking you for these kind words, I must beg your permission to repudiate the added suggestion: that I can be ‘secured to give public readings.’ I have no doubt it was meant in true kindness; but I hope you will do me the honour to believe, that I have come to America for a higher purpose than to make exhibition of myself as a literary showman.

Yours Very Obediently,  
Mayne Reid<sup>4</sup>

For reasons that none of his previous biographers ever explained, Reid was scornful of Charles Dickens, who at this time had just recently toured the United States expressly for the purpose of speaking publicly and had, from all accounts, been very well received. While we know that Reid attended at least one of Dickens’ lectures in London (and was critical of it), there seems to be no evidence that the two men ever met — despite the fact that they both shared a concern for Britain’s poor and disenfranchised. (Unfortunately, just what the author of Great Expectations thought of his colorful Irish contemporary is unknown.) In any event, the root of the Irish author’s dislike of his English competitor can be found in a short note published in 1869, in which Reid commented upon a suggestion by the novelist Anthony Trollope, made at “a grand dinner, given by the blockade-running snobocracy of Liverpool,” that Dickens be made the British ambassador to the United States. Recalling Trollope’s mother Frances, whose book Domestic Manner of the Americans had caused an uproar in the United States when it was published in 1832 — due to its unfavorable commentary, Reid

emphatically denounced the very idea of “the vulgar defamer of America [Dickens]” coming “back to it as an ambassador, bringing along with him, as Secretary of Legation, the son of another slanderer of this country, as vulgar as himself.”<sup>5</sup>

If Reid’s undisguised contempt for his famous competitor combined with a false sense of pride were two reasons for his reluctance to go on the lecture circuit, a third, no doubt, was the fact that he was simply too busy writing and making deals with American publishers to think about doing anything else. Ollivant tells us that George Munro, the owner of a New York weekly called the Fireside Companion, visited Reid during his sojourn in Rhode Island, “very anxious to secure from him a tale for his journal, saying ‘I want your name Captain Reid!’” At that time, Ollivant adds, “The Finger of Fate” was being serialized in the Boy’s Own Magazine in England. Having a manuscript copy of the story with him, Reid offered Munro first publication rights for the United States, which the eager publisher agreed to buy for the generous sum of \$2,500 — with the author retaining the copyright.<sup>6</sup>

During November and December 1867 Reid completed two seasonal short stories, “A Christmas Mistake” and “Christmas on a Cachalot,” and two novelettes, “The Planter Pirate” and “The Fatal Cord,” putting the finishing touches to the last-named on January 3, 1868. Ollivant tells us the two stories were printed in the December 21 issue or “Christmas number” of the Philadelphia Press, “a well known and highly respected journal,” while the novelettes appeared first in the Boys of England, a British juvenile publication. They were later published in the United States as Beadle and Adams dime novels.<sup>7</sup>

Just before Christmas 1867, the New York Times belatedly heralded Reid’s arrival in the United States. The paper also remarked that his denial of the rumor that he had returned

to give a series of recitals was made “with an amount of explosive violence which showed that the leader of the forlorn hope at Chapultepec was in no mood to be trifled with.” As for his statement that he did not wish “to make an exhibition of himself,” the anonymous journalist opined sarcastically, “A man can make an exhibition of himself in more ways than one.”<sup>8</sup>

The reason for the New York Times’ acerbic remark was a letter Reid had written to the paper on December 3, in response to an article in the Washington Chronicle, in which the Rev. Newman Hall “had said that, notwithstanding the government, the ‘great heart’ of the English people was with the North during the great struggle.” Reid, who disagreed, allowed that only “the lower classes’ had “made such slight manifestations of sympathy as they could,” and had let fly at Hall with an excoriating diatribe that resembled his 1863 Thanksgiving Day speech. The New York Times, which called Reid’s letter as “the moral annihilation of England,” included a brief passage that made it quite clear the Irish author was thoroughly convinced that during the American Civil War, Great Britain’s middle class, as well as its government (which was dominated by the aristocracy), had hoped for nothing less than the failure of the former colonies’ experiment in democracy:

England’s professed sympathy for the South was worse than even selfishness; it was the most wanton of wickedness. It boasted for its base an element of generosity, a leaning to the weaker side. All pretence! Its motive was neither manhood nor humanity. Had the South been stronger than you it would have taken your side with *Sumters* and *Alabamas*. Its sole purpose was to manipulate you both like a main of cocks, encouraging mutual strife till both lay bleeding in the dust. Then would both have been at England’s feet, and Europe’s too, to be reconstructed according to the ideas of European despotism.<sup>9</sup>

Twentieth century Civil War historian Bruce Catton, who observed that Britain’s ruling class “sympathized strongly with the Confederacy — so strongly that with just a little



prodding they might be moved to intervene and bring about Southern independence by force of arms,” echoes Reid’s argument. “The South after all, was an aristocracy,” he writes. Furthermore, observed Catton, “Europe’s aristocracies had never been happy about the prodigious success of the Yankee democracy.” His conclusion is precisely the same as Reid’s: “If the nation now broke into halves, proving that democracy did not contain the stuff of survival, the rulers of Europe would be well pleased.”<sup>10</sup>

Not long after Reid’s comments appeared in print, the editor of The Albion — a pro-British New York weekly, recalled that “Not many weeks since we clipped a paragraph from an English paper” reporting that owing to “his bankruptcy and his unsuccessful attempt to establish the *Little Times* as a daily London paper,” the famous author had “arrived in New York with the intention of making America his home” and that he had “taken a house in Newport, R. I., where he purposes applying himself to literary work during the winter.” What is more, “we understand that he has arranged with Mr. Forney to contribute to the Philadelphia Press articles on English politics and parties.” As it turned out, remarked the editor, “We have not had to wait long for this retired gentleman’s promised effusions.”<sup>11</sup>

Referencing the Irish author’s most recent rant, he commented caustically:

But the “article” to which our attention has recently been called, is not particularly devoted to “English politics and parties,” but rather attempts to fathom the actual thoughts of Englishmen generally, and also the real intents of their hearts. This disappointed adventurer has discovered — but only quite recently it would seem — that “instead of the (English) government ‘appearing to have been opposed to the cause of the North,’ the opposition was universally known to be *real*; and not only real, but bitter to an extreme degree.” And moreover, he had just perceived that “England’s antagonism to the North sprung from no sympathy with the South.” After filling an entire column with such stuff as the foregoing extracts, he closes with the following questionable compliment to his now particular friends, the Americans: “It is in truth the same cause and the same struggle over again. On the one side the children of the Commonwealth, for God, on the other the descendants of those pseudo cavaliers, for

the devil — identical with the Copperheads of your North, and the ‘chivalry’ of your South.” This may be a very able argument, but if so, we fail to see the logic.<sup>12</sup>

Reid’s accusation that with the exception of the working class the British had sided with the South during the Civil War, combined with his denunciation of “Copperheads” (pro-Confederacy Northerners) clearly hit a raw nerve with the Albion’s editor. During the war years, the magazine had routinely criticized President Lincoln and the Union war effort. In 1861, when Captain Charles Wilkes of the *U.S.S. San Jacinto* stopped the British steam packet *Trent* on the high seas and ordered the arrest of Confederate commissioners James M. Mason and John Slidell, who were *en route* to England as representatives of the rebel government, most U.S. publications hailed the Captain as a hero. In sharp contrast, the Albion took the British point-of-view, condemning Wilkes and pronouncing him “guilty of a very serious breach of international comity.”<sup>13</sup> But instead of attacking Reid’s charges, which in any case would have been hard to refute, the agitated editor resorted to a tactic that political commentators are inclined to employ, even to this day, when confronted by an inconvenient or uncomfortable truth, namely discredit the messenger.

Now the question is frequently asked, “Who is Captain Mayne Reid?” We would answer without hesitation, “a Fenian in disguise,” for his purpose would appear to be exactly that of his co-workers, namely, to stir up strife and ill-will between two kindred nations without in the least benefiting himself. But yet Mr. Mayne Reid is old enough and has seen enough of the world to know better. He is said to have been born in Ulster County, Ireland in 1818, and is now accordingly some fifty years of age. From the age of twenty he led a roving and at times rather precarious life in the more rude and uncivilized portions of this Republic, for some years, and doubtless then became “an American citizen,” and in the Mexican war, is said to have had a hand in leading “the forlorn hope” against Chapultepec; and when the war was over actually *claimed* the medal as “the bravest of the brave” — but we are not advised whether he actually obtained it. We believe, however, that he has during the past twenty years spent most of his time in England, which would indicate that the medal was *not* his. But disappointment and soured with his ill luck — perhaps, indeed, failure as a literary aspirant — he leaves England again to join the Fenian Americans in a crusade against

fate. We hope, for his sake, that he will not bring up eventually, either on the floor of Congress, or in the Clerkenwell Prison.<sup>14</sup>

Although the Albion's attempted character assassination of Reid contained a number of errors, one of which was the assumption that he had already become a U.S. citizen (this would not actually happen for several more months), by far the most preposterous was calling him a "Fenian," i.e., an Irish Catholic nationalist. While it is certainly true that Reid shared the Fenians' republican proclivities, this was about as far as it went. Although born in Ireland, the celebrated novelist was very much a product of his Presbyterian upbringing — a man who made no apologies for the contempt in which he held the Church of Rome. His Catholic countrymen fared no better; judging by his writings, Reid viewed most Irishmen as ignorant, superstitious country bumpkins — a view he shared not only with a great many Englishmen but also perhaps a majority of the United States' native-born population. Indeed, upon close inspection, Reid's identification with his native land does not seem to have been particularly strong. After leaving home in 1839, he returned only for a few brief visits. During the last thirteen years of his life, he came not at all. Moreover, not one of his more than fifty books has an Irish setting! As for Irish independence, there seems to be no indication he ever gave the topic any attention in print.

In the same issue of the Albion, a letter critical of Reid was also printed. "Since penning our editorial entitled 'A Fenian in Disguise,'" wrote the editor, "we have received an interesting letter from Mr. Robert Crawford, of England, who, it appears, knows more of the Captain, personally than we do, and we accordingly make room...for the closing sentences." Crawford's purpose in writing, he disclosed, was to reveal, "that even *his* [Reid's] opinions sometimes undergo a change." About a year earlier, he wrote, he had attended "a public

dinner in London,” where he had served “as one of the Vice-Presidents.”<sup>15</sup>

That meeting was composed of hundreds of “fair women and brave men,” and exhibited a true representation of the beauty and chivalry of Britain. Captain Mayne Reid’s health was proposed at that meeting, “as a stranger, and literary celebrity,” and although almost all there were like myself ignorant of his works, we joyfully and kindly drank his health and wished him “God speed.” He gave a “recitation” as the expression of his thanks, instead of a speech, the quality of which I will not characterize, as I seldom blame, even when I cannot praise. But it was applauded by the audience.<sup>16</sup>

Crawford, who when he wrote his letter to the Albion was staying at the Brevoort House in New York, went on to say that among the members of the audience that night in London “were a few gentlemen (some of them of great wealth) who had, in their patriotic desire to prevent the perpetuation of slavery, done what they had never done before, speculated on the stock exchange, to depreciate the Confederate securities, and thereby deter, as far as was in their power, the investment of English capital in Confederate cotton bonds.” In turn, he added, “These bonds had been put on the English market to raise money to support the Southern cause, and a large return was promised for the money.” “Why,” he queried, “did Captain Reid, when he had then the opportunity before a sympathizing audience of expressing in a sentence his joy at the result of the dreadful war, not done so?”<sup>17</sup>

Although Crawford wondered if Reid’s failure to hail the Union’s victory was because “his political views were then different from those he holds now,” he admitted “I know not that it was so,” which was evident in any case. Reid’s poem “To the United States,” published in 1861, combined with his public toast to the Army and Navy at the American Thanksgiving Dinner in London in 1863, an occasion of which Crawford was quite clearly ignorant, both offer irrefutable evidence that the Irish author had been a Union supporter long before the war’s end, as well as an outspoken critic of Britons who sympathized with and

aided the Confederacy. To say otherwise was just as absurd, and libelous, as accusing him of being a Fenian.

Seeming to realize that this line of attack was weak, Crawford concluded by assailing Reid for the change “that his views have undergone...in reference to the propriety of an author ‘giving a reading.’” During the dinner at which Reid’s health was toasted, “it was announced that by some one that Captain Mayne Reid would in a few evenings thereafter give a reading in St. James’ Hall, London.”<sup>18</sup>

I took twenty tickets, and wrote as many letters to my friends bespeaking their patronage. The night of the reading was cold, bleak, and miserable, but notwithstanding, I left my claret and my home at some distance, and drove to St. James’ Hall, to patronise, as represented to us, meritorious literary talent. The audience was spare — perhaps because the night was cold — the reading was ——— I went home, and my friend, Dr. McLaren, of London, and myself, drank Capt. Mayne Reid’s health, and for some reason or other — whether from the coldness of the night, or the quality of the reading, I forget — but we wished the reader had been Charles Dickens, instead of Mayne Reid.<sup>19</sup>

Even here, Crawford was on shaky ground. If he had read Reid’s statement in the newspaper a little more carefully, he would have seen that the Irish author was not against giving public performances *per se*; what Reid found distasteful was an author reading his *own* work, which is what Dickens had done during his tour of the United States and what he was himself now refusing to do. And although Crawford was correct about the inclemency of the weather on the night of Reid’s London performance in February 1867, the seemingly befuddled Englishman had confused the venue, the Hanover Rooms, with St. James’ Hall.

We do not know if the recently arrived author took any notice of the Albion’s poor effort to undermine his reputation. Perhaps he did not think it worthy of a reply. In any event, he had bigger fish to fry. On January 25, 1868, following an earlier notice of Reid’s arrival in

Newport, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper announced that the “distinguished soldier and accomplished writer” — “whose numerous intensely interesting and instructive works are familiar to the American public, and have rendered him popular throughout the world,” had entered into an agreement for “an original romance, written expressly for this paper.” This was followed, a week later, by a biographical sketch (complete with an engraved full-length portrait, probably based on a photograph), which served as “a prelude to the original and intensely interesting novel, ‘The Child Wife,’ the publication of which will soon be commenced in this journal.” In the same issue, Leslie reported that \$10,000 had been “cheerfully appropriated” for “the purchase of the copyright.”<sup>20</sup> Although Charles Ollivant contradicts this report, claiming that Reid was paid only \$6,000 for “The Child Wife,” either amount was a handsome sum that must have convinced the no doubt happy author that his decision to quit England and cross the Atlantic once more had been the right thing to do.

“The Child Wife: A Tale of Two Worlds,” commenced in the February 22, 1868 issue of Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper and ran for eight-five chapters, ending on July 18. Later that same year, Ward and Lock of London published it in three volumes and in 1869 Shelton of New York released it. Clearly, the story's title is taken from the author's pet name for his spouse, calling attention to the disparity in their ages. The story begins in Newport, where Reid was living when he began writing it. Not surprisingly, it opens with some description of the town's environs, and as in nearly all the Irish author's romances, it includes two physically contrasting female characters, in this case cousins, one a dark-eyed brunette named Julia Girdwood and the other more fair, with blue eyes —Cornelia Inskip. Equally unsurprising is the thinly disguised principal male character, a young Irishman with

dark hair and a moustache, recently returned from the U.S.-Mexican War — named in this case Captain Maynard (“the hero of C —”), who in an opening episode rescues the two damsels from possible drowning in an incident highly reminiscent of the cayman scene in The Rifle Rangers. But the character with which Maynard eventually falls in love and marries is the much younger (fifteen) Blanche Vernon.<sup>21</sup>

The Child Wife, as Joan Steele points out so well in Captain Mayne Reid, is “extremely autobiographical” not only in its “nearly exact recapitulation of the Reid-Hyde romance” but also in its adventures, which make up the bulk of the work, drawing heavily upon the author’s own experiences during the period 1849 to 1853. In other words, the story is chiefly a fictionalized account of Reid’s involvement in the plots and intrigues of Frederick Hecker and Louis Kossuth, whereas the Reids’ courtship and marriage is largely incidental, a sort of backdrop to the work as a whole. The amply-illustrated Child Wife also gave Reid, as Steele notes further, the opportunity “to focus on his radical political beliefs,” particularly in chapters such as “The Conspiracy of Crowns,”<sup>22</sup> in which he recalled “The revolutionary throe, that shook the thrones of Europe in 1848,” leading “Even England, secure in a profound flunkeyism which she loves to parade under the name of ‘loyalty,’” trembling “at the cheers of the Chartists.”<sup>23</sup>

In 1868 Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper also published two short stories by Reid. The Philadelphia Press had already printed one, “Christmas on a Cachalot.” It appeared, quite unseasonably, in the August 1 issue of Leslie’s. The other, a humorous piece called “Paddy of Cork” was published earlier, in the July 11 issue. A poem, “Bear on the Banner,” inspired by “the pedestrian enterprise of Sergeant Gilbert H. Bates, who engaged in

December last, to walk from Vicksburg, Miss., to the National Capital, bearing the United States flag, and passing through the principal cities on his route,” appeared earlier still, in the March 28 issue.<sup>24</sup>

In January 1868, at about the same time he was negotiating with Frank Leslie to write The Child Wife, Reid was also making the most of the business relationship he had established the summer before with Beadle and Adams. On January 14, The Helpless Hand, which Reid had sent over in the summer of 1867, finally made its appearance as Dime Novel no. 141 and on May 19 the most popular of his early works, The Scalp Hunters was recycled as Dime Novel no. 150. Dime Novel no. 152, The Planter Pirate, followed on June 9,<sup>25</sup> published simultaneously in England by The Young Men of Britain.

That same year Reid made history of a sort when in the spring he demanded, and received, \$700 for The White Squaw, a fifty thousand word long tale of adventure that was published as Dime Novel No. 155 on July 24, 1868. According to a Beadles representative, this “was a large price for a story of its length — a greater sum, we may say, that was ever before or has since been paid for a novel of similar word quantity.” One of the firm’s editors also revealed that by that time the popular publishers apparently had so much confidence in the salability of Reid’s work that they gave him a check without even first looking over the manuscript.<sup>26</sup>

The same editor also alleged that Mayne Reid had a glass eye (“doubtless in place of one lost on the field of honour”) and that when “he and his fellow novelists adjourned from the Beadle offices to a nearby place of refreshment, the gallant Captain had sometimes the misfortune to have his eye drop from its place, into his drink.” It was remarked further that



the eye then “had to be fished out [of Reid’s glass] before the drinking could proceed.” But Reid did *not* have a glass eye. How this misconception probably got started was explained by Albert Johannsen, author of The House of Beadle and Adams, who wrote: “Reid was rather striking in his appearance and somewhat foppish in his dress, addicted to lemon yellow gloves and clothes of unusual patterns and loud checks.” The flamboyant author also “wore a monocle,” noted Johannsen, “and it may that this gave rise” to the mistaken notion that he had a “glass eye.”<sup>27</sup>

That same spring, while residing at Bellevue Court, Reid wrote to Harper and Brothers, hoping to interest the New York publishing firm in putting out a cheap edition of some of his works. In this same letter, he also complained about publisher Robert Dewitt:

Gentlemen,

I am under the impression that a 25c or 50c edition of my novels would at this time be remunerative to its publishers. By my “novels” I mean some twelve or fourteen books (by far the best of my writings) which are not included in the series of Boys Books published by Messrs. Ticknor & Fields. A paragraph which occurs in a biographical sketch lately published [in Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper] and which I herein enclose truthfully describes them.

These novels have been published by a person named Dewitt of your city, who has not only taken these without a word to me, but has also committed himself by publishing under my name several volumes I have not written. There is reason therefore that I should seek to set myself right in the eyes of my American readers by publishing a purified and re-edited edition of these romances. This would in no way interfere with any interest I have deposed to Messrs. Ticknor & Fields, who only aspire to my “juvenile” work, a set of books altogether and essentially different. I have now to ask you whether you would be disposed to undertake this cheap reprinting? The inducement I should be able to offer is First: My card to the American public proclaiming the faults of the unauthorized edition not only in misprints, but in the fact of notes here and there shoved into the body of the book, not infrequently making nonsense of the story. This was done I believe to make “bulk.”

Second, the outrage done to my name by placing it over work I have not written, after which I may yet seek legal remedy.

Third, and perhaps of most importance; I have now two novels, perhaps three, which have not yet been published in America, and which I intend to copyright here, and not in England. As I continue to write, others will appear in the same way, so that

anyone wishing to publish a complete edition of my novels must do so under my sanction.

Fourth, this Dewitt edition is of volumes of \$1.50 price therefore not yet in the hands of the great hundred [?] million.

Now gentlemen, if you think well of this my idea, please let me know, and I shall be most happy to confer with you upon it. For the reprint of those already published I should ask a very moderate remuneration — something to compensate me for the trouble I should have in re-editing, and also the somewhat disagreeable task of making manifest with [the] American people some of the points above mentioned. I should then bind myself to let you have the exclusive right to such future novels as I may produce, at a fair price to be agreed upon between us. Please answer me at your earliest convenience, as this is a question that should not be allowed to lie much longer neglected. I believe that just at this time I stand well enough before the American public to expect success in such a speculation as that proposed.<sup>28</sup>

Although we do not have the reply to this letter, we can be certain that it disappointed Reid. The only one of his titles that Harper & Brothers ever published was the American edition of the nonfiction Quadrupeds, which had been issued eight years earlier. As for Robert De Witt's unauthorized publication of his works, Joan Steele conjectured that Reid's objections to it might have been based as much on profound philosophical differences, especially in regard to slavery, as "by the loss of money from the piracies." One of the characters in a spurious work titled Rangers and Regulators, which she cites as an example, "displays an indulgent attitude toward slavery" that Reid would almost certainly have never countenanced.<sup>29</sup>

During the early months of 1868 the ever-busy writer corresponded not only with publishers but also admirers and old friends. To one of the first, he wrote on March 23: "I regret...I have no better Carte [de Visite] on hand than the one I enclose. I believe it is accounted a good likeness, but it is only a copy. There is a picture of me in Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper...along with a biographical sketch...On the fly sheet I send your son my autograph as desired."<sup>30</sup> Reid addressed some similar concerns, recalled Charles Ollivant,

in a revealing letter he wrote on February 26, 1868 to William Cullen Bryant, owner of the New York Evening Post, on the topic of international copyrights. When it was published, Reid was no doubt pleased that the esteemed old publisher remembered in some prefatory remarks that the Irish novelist had been a correspondent for the paper some twenty years earlier.

Around this same time, or perhaps a little earlier, Reid's brother-in-law George W. Hyde, Jr. was hospitalized, an occurrence of which we would be unaware if we relied solely on the recollections of Elizabeth Reid and Charles Ollivant. In both her accounts of her late husband's life and career, Mrs. Reid seems to have been deliberately protective of her family's privacy. Ollivant was equally shielding, but his reticence was probably due more to lack of knowledge than purposeful cooperation. In any event, neither of their works contain more than a few brief references to Elizabeth Reid's father and mother and none whatsoever to her stepmother. As for George W. Hyde, Jr., little is said apart from the fact that he had been one of Garibaldi's English volunteers, that he had been a part of the Boys Committee formed to encourage sales of The Headless Horseman, and that the young man accompanied his sister and her husband when they went to live in the United States in 1867. After that, there is silence. Thus, Reid's brother-in-law is something of a mysterious figure in the author's life. If Joan Steele made any effort to penetrate this veil of secrecy, she seems not to have discovered anything for there is also no reference to him in her work either. As it turns out, some of the mystery surrounding George W. Hyde, Jr. is unveiled in a telltale letter from Reid to Ollivant, dated May 21, 1868. "Poor George Hyde is no more," the author reported, adding: "He died about a month ago in the Providence Asylum, Rhode Island."<sup>31</sup>



Figure 28. Picture of Mayne Reid published in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, March 14, 1868.

The Providence Asylum, which was founded in 1847 and is still in operation to this day (largely as a drug rehabilitation center), was more properly known in 1868 as the Butler Hospital for the Insane. It was named for Cyrus Butler, a wealthy Providence resident who contributed \$40,000 in matching funds to its establishment.<sup>32</sup> How and why George W. Hyde, Jr. came to be an inmate in that place can only be conjectured. Of course, it is obvious that he must have been mentally ill but what caused his condition? And how long had he been troubled? Had Hyde been institutionalized in England as well? Did his sister and brother-in-law take him to Providence voluntarily, or did his placement in the hospital the result of a court order? Alas, the only thing of which we can be certain is that George W. Hyde, Jr. died at the age of about thirty years on April 9, 1868, that he was buried at Swan Point Cemetery, a large and historic burial ground that lies adjacent to the asylum (General Ambrose Burnside is interred there as well), and that there is a marker on his grave.<sup>33</sup> The cause of his death is also unknown. A suicide perhaps?

Whatever the cause of Hyde's tragic end, that same month the Reids left Rhode Island and returned to New York City. Whether his brother-in-law's passing precipitated the move or if it was planned anyway is unknown. In any event, the couple's new address was 33 Union Square, which appears to have been either a boarding or rooming house.<sup>34</sup> Among the couple's illustrious neighbors was C. V. S. Roosevelt, a wealthy merchant who resided in a Union Square mansion. A grown son, Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., lived nearby with his young family, which included nine-year-old Theodore Jr. — the future president, at 28 East Twentieth Street.<sup>35</sup> At some point the Reid and Theodore Senior became acquainted and it is therefore probably no coincidence that one of the characters in The Child Bride (which Reid

was still in the process of writing after moving to Manhattan), a fictional version of German revolutionary Charles Hecker, was named “Count Roseveldt.”

In later life the younger Theodore Roosevelt recalled visiting his grandfather’s house, “a big house for the New York of those days, on the corner of Fourteenth Street and Broadway, fronting Union Square,” where he and his siblings “admired the tessellated floor and the circular staircase,” but it is unlikely he ever met Reid, one of his favorite childhood authors. The reason why is easily explained. In 1868 young Theodore was frequently bed-ridden with asthma and the following year he made his “first journey to Europe,” which unfortunately he enjoyed very little. The boy did not return until 1870,<sup>36</sup> by which time Reid was himself seriously ill and near death. It is difficult to imagine that the Irish author would not have gone out his way to meet the admiring son of one of a man he almost certainly knew if there were not some extenuating circumstances that prevented it.

That spring Charles Ollivant wrote to his idol, “proposing to join him in America,” in order to assist him in some way.<sup>37</sup> On May 8, in the same letter in which he told of George Hyde Jr.’s demise, Reid informed his young friend that he “had better hold on” for the time being because he expected to sail back across the Atlantic “in about six weeks or two months from this time” in order to conduct some business with his British publishers.<sup>38</sup> An apparently mutual friend or acquaintance was also discussed in the letter, Reid remarking:

There is no doubt but that Mr. Roby would be better in this country than in England...but the difficulty in his case would be that without capital he could only enter business as a clerk and this department of labour is as much oversubscribed in America as elsewhere. If he did not succeed in getting into a situation at once, living is here very expensive; and it would then be a risky thing to be here without reserves. For all that this is the true home for a young man who could only gather about £100 [?] to live on until he could get something to do.<sup>39</sup>



As for his own prospects in the United States, Reid added that they were “excellent” and in conclusion, the confident author made it abundantly clear that he could not be more pleased with his decision to leave England, writing euphorically (and a little prophetically as well):

The civilization of this place, the politeness of the people, the grandeur of everything, keep[s] me in constant wonder. It has fully borne out my belief in the republic. London and Paris both joined together would not equal New York in metropolitan greatness. If America as a nation can hold together, the old world must go under, and in our time.<sup>40</sup>

Reid’s heartfelt admiration for America makes his next step unsurprising. On Tuesday, May 12, 1868, four days after penning the lines above, the no doubt excited author and his wife went to New York’s City Hall, where he petitioned the Court of Common Pleas to become a U.S. citizen.<sup>41</sup> Ordinarily the naturalization process at that time (and until 1906) was lengthy and the requirements very specific. First, an applicant had to be a free white male or female 21 years of age or older. Second, he or she had to have been resident in the United States for five years and a resident for one year of the state in which application was made. Finally, the candidate had to file a formal Declaration of Intentions at least two years before a Petition for Naturalization could be filed.<sup>42</sup>

At that time Reid did not qualify for U.S. citizenship under the general provisions of the law, apart from meeting the age requirement. However, during the Civil War President Lincoln had signed a bill, passed by Congress on July 17, 1862, which reduced the U.S. residency requirement for foreign-born, honorably discharged army veterans — provided they had served in wartime — to only one year. The 1862 act also did away with the need for qualified veterans to file a Declaration of Intention. But even with his war service, having arrived in the U.S. only seven months earlier, Reid would not have been eligible to apply until November of 1868. Thanks, however, to one of the Irish author’s Mexican War



comrades, former Capt. Addison Farnsworth, who was willing to perjure himself by declaring under oath that the ex-soldier had already met the residency requirement, Judge Charles P. Daley approved Reid's Petition for Naturalization the very day he applied.<sup>43</sup>

On June 6, 1868, with the equivalent of £500 in his pocket for traveling expenses, the newly created U.S. citizen and his English wife left New York aboard the steamship *City of Baltimore*, bound for Liverpool<sup>44</sup> — a trip that Elizabeth Reid, in her two published biographies of her husband, did not even mention. Upon docking, the couple made their way to London, probably by train, where, according to Charles Ollivant, the newly-arrived author “arranged for the publication of the ‘Child Wife,’” which was “his principal object in revisiting England.” But that was not Reid's only reason for returning; nor was it perhaps the most important one. On August 4, while staying at 43 Gower Street in London's West End, the agitated author penned a lengthy note to his young friend, saying he had crossed the Atlantic “with the design of selling some copyrights” but apparently it had not worked out the way he planned. Terming his journey an “imprudent step,” Reid complained of “robberies committed” on him — presumably by British book publishers — and added that he was looking forward to returning to the United States, where he hoped “soon to recover from the damage,” apparently financial, the trip to England had wrought.<sup>45</sup>

Confiding his plans “to establish a magazine in New York,” Reid added apologetically that he had hoped to bring the young Englishman with him when he returned to the United States, but explained he now had “barely sufficient to take me back with my wife” and complained, “Another winter of severe work is therefore before me.” Alternatively, he proposed that Ollivant pay his own fare and if he could also find enough

money to cover expenses for three months, he would make sure the young man had a place to stay, either with himself “or with some of my numerous friends in New York.” In view of this suggestion, one cannot help but wonder what Ollivant made of the news that “a young lady friend,” a Miss Connell, was accompanying the Reids to New York, apparently to be some sort of companion to Mrs. Reid. There is no mention in the letter of the means by which the young woman’s ticket was purchased and if the Reids paid for it, we may easily imagine that this could have been one of the reasons why Ollivant’s relationship with the author’s wife was strained. Equally intriguing, perhaps more so, is Reid’s unexplained admonition that “for certain reasons” not stated, “I wish my movements to be kept to yourself or only committed to the immediate members of your family.”<sup>46</sup>

On Saturday, August 8, 1868 Reid, along with his wife and Miss Connell, departed London, “bag and baggage,” on the 7:30 a.m. train from Euston Station to Manchester’s London Road Station, where Ollivant greeted them upon arrival, afterward taking them to meet his family in nearby Sale. If he was disappointed that he would not be continuing on with them, he kept it to himself. In any event, it was a visit the Englishman recalled with clarity many years later.

I have a vivid recollection of meeting him [at the station]...and escorting him and his wife to Sale. After dining he accompanied me down to the Croquet Club established there, where he was introduced to the members, one of whom, an enthusiastic admirer of his writings, invited him to meet a few friends at his house, on the following Monday. Mayne Reid accepted the invitation, making a speech and recited several poems, which were received with evident delight and warmly applauded.<sup>47</sup>

Ollivant also remembered that Reid and his wife departed Liverpool on August 15,<sup>48</sup> having booked passage on the steamer *City of Antwerp* — the same vessel on which they had journeyed to New York nearly a year earlier. On August 24, the couple’s return to the United

States was recorded in the “Passengers Arrived” section of The New York Times.<sup>49</sup>

A little less than a month later Reid sat down in his rooms at 33 Union Square and wrote excitedly to Charles Ollivant, encouraging him to “come out at once!” Informing his young friend that New York banker LeGrand Lockwood had “generously advanced” him \$5,000 to start his proposed magazine, the now-American author added that he hoped “to produce the first number by December 15.” Calling attention to the eminent departure from New York of the steamer *City of Baltimore*, he added advisedly, “you would be in good time to come by her on her return trip.” Reid also encouraged Ollivant to introduce himself to “Captain Leitch, her commander,” who, he added, “is a very nice gentleman,” as well as “an artist, Mr. Steedman of London,” who was expected to be traveling aboard that particular vessel. “But whatever boat brings you,” Reid instructed, “write me word beforehand, so that I may meet you at the landing.”<sup>50</sup>

The letter also contained a reference to an apparently mutual acquaintance, which provides some clue as to why Reid saw New York as the preeminent international city of the future:

I have not succeeded in getting any positive information of what prospect of success there would be here for Mr. Homer but I feel confident that he can find here fifty ways of investing to advantage, without going into any calling that would be either laborious or degrading to a gentleman of refinement such as he is. I shall take pleasure in doing everything to assist him in getting full information. If he were only to invest his money upon a property here, and sit down upon it and do nothing it will return him from 5 to 10 per cent on the constantly increasing value of American property. That has been the rule almost universal here for the last 50 years in every city in the north of the country. With his money to commence with I could myself make £100,000 in less than ten years, by buying lots and putting up cheap dwellings upon them. My old coachman, who came over in November last has already out of his wages as a painter, put up a cottage in Brooklyn — a suburb of New York, which he could now sell for \$2,000.<sup>51</sup>

Reid added that if he did not already have other plans, he would himself “turn to it [building]

at once.”<sup>52</sup>

The letter, one of the most conversational in tone that Reid ever wrote to his young friend, also contained some comments about their friend Mr. Roby — who was apparently then living in New York, some practical advice on what sort of clothes to bring, and a request to bring him a dozen pair of buff or reddish buff French gloves (men’s size 7½) at four shillings each, as well as “2 full sets of all my books.” He finished by extending his “warmest remembrances to your dear father and mother, brother and sisters [and] to Mr. Homer and his amiable family” and advised the young man that a Mr. Cordell would be sending him a “parcel to fetch to me.”<sup>53</sup>

Two days later, Reid wrote again, asking Ollivant to also bring him copies of a boy’s magazine, Young Men of Great Britain, in which his story, “The Planter Pirate,” had been serialized. “It is important that you should bring it here,” he explained, “as I fear I shall have trouble...with the American publisher of Planter Pirate [Beadle and Adams], who in consequence of Carruther’s rascality has lost his American copyright by the work being brought out first in England.” Adding that what he most needed to do was “ascertain the date of the last number — that is when the last chapters of Planter Pirate were published in England,” he concluded by asking his young friend to also bring “a set of Boys of England containing The White Squaw, if you have time to get them from London before starting.”<sup>54</sup>

On October 1, while waiting for Ollivant to arrive in New York, Reid penned a prefatory remark for inclusion in the North American edition of his most recent novel The Child Wife, in which he declared, “Having become a naturalized citizen of the United States, with the design of permanently residing therein, it is scarce necessary to say that my writing

will hereafter be protected by American copyright,” adding: “The present work is so shielded; and the only authorized edition is that bearing the imprint of my publishers, Messrs. Sheldon & Co.”<sup>55</sup>

Although almost all of Reid’s novels were Transatlantic in the sense that they were published in both the United States and Great Britain, appealing to readers on both sides of the ocean, The Child Wife is the most truly Transatlantic of them all. Not only was it published on both sides of the ocean, it is the only one of Reid’s works that is set on both sides. It is also the most transparently autobiographical. When it first appeared in bookshops toward the end of 1868, it took no time at all for anyone familiar with Reid’s life and work to realize this. In January 1869, an unidentified reviewer for The Galaxy remarked:

It is entirely admissible for an author to give his own autobiography in a novel. He can, if he so chooses, idealize his won character and adventures, gloss over the weak and bad points in his career, and invest himself with attributes which he does not possess. All this is allowable, provided the character is made reasonably probable, and, what is more important, provided the hero and his actions are made interesting. Whether Captain Mayne Reid has fulfilled these requirements, his last novel, entitled “The Child Wife,” and published by Sheldon & Company, will enable the reader to judge. The hero is evidently the author himself, his name being as near as possible to that of the author, while Captain Reid’s frequent references to the storming of C——, in the Mexican War; to his revolutionary experiences in the Hungarian revolt of 1848, and innumerable other instances of similar character, indicate the identity of author and hero. Those who want to know Captain Reid as he would like to be known will be interested in the story.<sup>56</sup>

While the Galaxy’s review of The Child Wife was not especially glowing, it seems almost fulsome compared to some other critiques that appeared in print at about the same time. One, published in the Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine, revealed that the writer, quite obviously a fan of Reid’s usual tales of adventure, was sorely disappointed.

Occasionally one meets with a book in which it seems apparent that the author has pitched his story in too low a key, and, though conscious thereafter continually that he

is not doing as well as he possibly might, he cannot recover himself and mend, because he has made a fatal error at beginning. "The Child Wife" is very much such a book as this, except that one is haunted with a vague suspicion that it is the best that the author could do after all. The tone of the book is low, and whether the characters are graduates from London crimping houses or figure as emperors and "bluebloods," the same cast of vulgarity is sicklied over all. Even the illustrious hero of the tale is not always well-mannered, and is redolent with the fumes of "brandy-smashes" and cigars almost too habitually for such a *preux chevalier* as Maynard, the revolutionary chieftain, is designed to appear.

Captain Mayne Reid has established a repute among the boys of this generation for story-writing which may well be envied. The hearty and unquestioning appetites of our boys welcome with greediness his "Scalp Hunters," "Plant Hunters," and other wild tales of wild life in the tropics, South America, and other remote parts of the world. But when he forsakes the domain of the jaguar, the lion, the llama [sic], and the wild Indian, to saunter through the palaces of Fifth Avenue and Belgravia, or gossip in the cool corridors of a Newport hotel, his adventures are exciting only because they are awkward. The highly-spiced novelist of schoolboy literature may fascinate his young audience, and his geography and zoölogy pass muster unchallenged, but in polite society he is a lamentable failure. Surely nothing can be more comical than the Captain's report of a council of the Great Powers, at which the notables call each other "Highness," "Prussia," or "Prince," as occasion requires, and a noble British diplomat (Lord Cowley?) makes atrocious puns while the party arrange for a general European war with the same nonchalance with which London burglars might plan (as the author sentimentally observes) "for cracking a crib." Nor is the Captain any more successful with American society. Even when he attempts to portray what we fondly call "our best society," he endues his characters with insufferable vulgarity, and makes their dignity only rise to a dreary turgidity. Think of a lovely young belle lecturing her cousin on the wrongs of Ireland, the attractions of life in New York, and the superiority of the male sex, all in one breath. This is high life below stairs with a vengeance.

Captain Reid is one of those authors who find it more convenient and agreeable to say "*après le bal*" than "after the ball," and consider "*chambre de coucher*" vastly more elegant than any Saxon phrase could possibly be. These French phrases are only the thin varnish which he makes use of to conceal his congenial savagery; and with the habitudes of his legitimate trade strong upon him, he must have his "Zenaida dove" and boa constrictor occasionally, even in the society of impossible aristocrats and gentlefolks. Mayne Reid without his war paint and hunting shirt reminds us of nothing so much as the homely old figure of "a bear in moccasins." Nor is he any more skilful in his plot than might be expected of a compiler of thrilling adventures by field and flood. One sees the end from the beginning, and though lords and ladies take the place of "Red Dick" and his wild congeners of the Brazilian forests, you are calm in the belief that all this premonitory fiddling is to eventuate in the red and blue fire of the closing tableau, in which all the leading virtuous characters choose partners for life and occupy striking positions, while vice receives a cleaving stroke upon its crest and dies hard. "The Child Wife" is an inconspicuous young person, appearing late in the book, and

chiefly useful to give a title to the story and take a prominent place in the aforementioned tableau.<sup>57</sup>

A third critic, writing for a religious publication, the American Quarterly Church Review, was equally disillusioned with Reid's latest book, but for entirely different reasons.

Here we are afforded a speedy illustration of an assertion in our last notice, suggesting one of the most painful duties of the critic. Anything can be better overlooked than a betrayal of trust. The confidence reposed in those who educate and mould our children is invested with peculiar sacredness. When acquired, it involves a boundless responsibility. To wantonly blast it, is a crime. Perhaps no writer has exerted over the youth of America, and of England, a greater influence than Captain Mayne Reid. His tales have possessed a charm, almost a fascination for our children. Many of them, in their power to entertain, are rivals of the famous "Swiss Family Robinson," and the inimitable "Robinson Crusoe." Parents, overlooking a certain abrupt coarseness, occasional profanity, and the absence of a pious spirit, and a true elevation, in their great desire to please their children, have permitted the works of this popular author free access to their families. They are traced on the memories of our youth. They are written on their hearts. Scarcely any man would be hailed with more joy than Captain Reid by the boys and girls of America. They would vote him a statue, and crown it with flowers. We speak thoughtfully and conscientiously when we affirm that this esteem and confidence have been abused. What shall we say to a volume describing an evanescent physical passion arising from an accidental glance at the person of a bathing woman? What shall we say to a volume which introduces a disgraced and degraded soldier — drunkard, coward, bully, gambler — who first sells his wife's honor, and then attempts her murder? What shall we say to a volume which depicts a licentious English nobleman, who grants a fraudulent title to conceal his own criminal amour? And this man has come to reside in our Republic, and to obtain the authority of its laws to corrupt its youth! We had better give letters patent to a flood, a famine, a pestilence. We invoke all Christian editors to procure the book, to examine it, and if they find these charges sustained, to drive it from society. We only fear that the poison is already in the minds of many youth, secretly and surely accomplishing its work of death.<sup>58</sup>

One cannot help but wonder if it occurred to the anonymous critic who composed the preceding piece that by urging Christian ministers to buy Reid's book, he might have helped increase the sales of a tome he found damnable.

Not long after receiving Reid's letter asking him to come to New York, Charles Ollivant said goodbye to his family in Cheshire and obediently departed Liverpool on

Wednesday, October 14, 1868 aboard the Inman steamer *City of Boston* (which, he noted somewhat ominously in his biography of Reid, “was lost with all hands on board the following February, 1869”). No doubt filled with eager anticipation, he arrived on the 28th in New York, where, he recalled years later, “I was kindly welcomed to America by Mayne Reid and his wife,”<sup>59</sup> who in all likelihood took the young Englishman to room with them at 33 Union Square, at least until he could find a place of his own.

Although his official title was “personal secretary,” it appears that Charles Ollivant’s principal duty was to assist Reid with the production of his new magazine Onward, the title of which he claimed was “entirely original” on the part of his employer, although as he also noted, “the Band of Hope Union were already then publishing in England a journal bearing the same name.”<sup>60</sup> Working out of Reid’s rooms or apartment at 33 Union Square, the aspiring publisher and his “editorial staff,” i.e., Charles Ollivant, prepared the first number of the magazine, which appeared in mid-December 1868, designated the January 1869 issue. It contained a variety of material supposedly almost entirely Reid’s own work. Measuring six by nine inches in size, its yellow and green cover featured, as Ollivant remembered in his reminiscences, “the figure of the angel Ithuriel, with star-tipped spear standing on the globe and pointing with outstretched hand to a bird soaring above, typical of the American eagle.”<sup>61</sup> On the opposite side of the thin paper front cover, within a dark green border, the fifty-year old publisher described his publication and spelled out its purpose:

MAYNE REID’S MAGAZINE,  
ONWARD.  
A NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR THE YOUTH OF AMERICA,  
Conducted by CAPT. MAYNE REID.

A first-class, high-toned magazine, addressing itself to the Young Men and



Women of America. Its design is not only to entertain and amuse, but to instruct, elevate, and conduct the youth along that path leading to the highest and noblest manhood.

Its literature is entirely original; the best its conductor can produce with his own pen, or obtain from talented contributors.

It is embellished with original illustrations printed upon tinted paper, and in an attractive manner.

In size, character and appearance, it is the cheapest magazine that has ever been issued in this country.<sup>62</sup>

The inside front cover also noted the price of a single issue (30 cents), the cost of an annual subscription (\$3.50) and called attention to the fact that Onward was printed by one of Reid's American book publishers, G. W. Carleton, whose offices were located at 497 Broadway. Guaranteeing that "a large number of copies" would be issued, the ambitious author solicited advertisers at full and part page rates ranging from \$100 to \$200 per issue. Not surprisingly, the inside back cover of the first number included an advertisement by Carleton for Reid's novel The White Gauntlet, while the back cover proclaimed the services of Lockwood & Co., Bankers, which was understandable in view of Lockwood's loan but curiously out-of-place for a magazine that was meant to appeal to young people. Attracting only a few other advertisers, nearly every issue of the short-lived periodical carried a similar announcement extolling the financial services of Reid's benefactor.

A prospectus Reid issued prior to publication of Onward is also useful for seeing more clearly what the author-turned-magazine-editor envisioned for this new production. In his biography of Reid, Charles Ollivant included a brief extract, which read:

'Onward' along the track of civilization — on towards goodness and glory — a fingerpost pointing to all that is worthy of attainment — a guide to conduct the youth of America along that path leading to the highest and noblest manhood: Such is the design of "Mayne Reid's Magazine." And it is meant for the Youth of America — they who in a few short years will hold as in the hollow of their hand the destinies not only of America, but of mankind. Supreme satisfaction to be even the humblest guide in

such a glorious march; and while acting as such, 'Onward' will endeavor to prove not only a sure guide, but a cheerful companion; one who, while dealing largely with the realities of life, will not forget that life has also its romance — essential to its healthy existence as the food that is eaten, or the air that is breathed.<sup>63</sup>

Although Reid seems to have gone out of way to collect complimentary reviews of Onward, and there *were* a great many, not all the critics were kind. Shortly after the second issue came out, an unnamed writer for the New York Times had this to say:

Capt. MAYNE REID introduces the second number of his magazine with an elaborate apology for the deficiencies of the first. Neither "cover nor cuts," he says, came up to his expectations. The "guardian angel" on the cover was "transformed to the seeming of Satan," and the eagle "Onward," was a wretched caricature of a goose. We really can't see much improvement in the cover or the illustrations of the number before us, but the editor evidently considers them all right. The character of the reading material is unchanged. Capt. REID contributes several sensational stories, written in a slap-dash, cheap novel style. The peculiar, flattened type in which the poetry and editorial notes are printed dazzles the eye, and is very apt to give the reader a headache.<sup>64</sup>

Onward lasted through February 1870, for a total of fourteen issues. Readers attracted by its publisher's reputation for telling an exciting tale of adventure were no doubt thrilled to find that it contained not just one, but *two* serialized novels. "The Lost Sister, A Tale of the Gran Chaco," began in January 1869 and continued through the December issue (but was left unfinished), while "The Yellow Chief, A Romance of the Rocky Mountains," which also commenced in the magazine's first issue, concluded in June. The latter was afterward sold to Beadles and Adams, who reprinted it in October 1869 as Dime Novel number 189. In 1882, the former also appeared in a Beadles and Adams publication, The Saturday Journal, serialized as "Gaspar the Gaucho" — the same title used by Routledge of London when it was published as a book in 1879.<sup>65</sup>

Several items in Onward recalled Reid's service in the U.S.-Mexican War, a rich vein

of material he had tapped before and would continue to mine for the rest of his life. Appearing in the magazine's debut issue was "A Dashing Dragoon: The Murat of the American Army," a heartfelt tribute to Philip Kearny's gallantry at Churubusco — where Kearny received the wound that cost him an arm. In a bit of self-promotion, the piece also recalled Reid's command of troops during the same battle. Similarly a poem, "Gone — Gone — Gone: A Dirge For One Believed Dead," was the very one, Reid explained, that an unidentified Ohio woman had written in 1848 after she read in a newspaper that he had been killed while leading the charge at Chapultepec. For those who enjoyed the Captain's discourses on natural history that typified his books, "The Maguey," a monograph about the ubiquitous Mexican plant from which the alcoholic beverage pulque was derived, was doubtless read with interest. It is uncertain, however, whether the information contained in the article resulted from Reid's frequent excursions during the American occupation of Mexico or if it was derived from a reference book. Perhaps a little of both.

Two poems were the most noteworthy of Reid's other U.S.-Mexican War-derived material. One, "The Ranger's Grave," which appeared in the February 1869 issue, was accompanied by a lengthy explanation that it was inspired by Reid's company's discovery of the mutilated body of a comrade while patrolling on the outskirts of Vera Cruz in 1847. The other, published in May, was "Adios. A Souvenir of Palm Land." Accompanied by an illustration depicting an American soldier holding a Mexican señorita in a tight embrace, both poem and picture made it abundantly clear to anyone who knew Reid personally that after more than twenty years he had not forgotten Guadalupe Rozas. We may only imagine what Mrs. Reid thought of it.

Each edition of Onward included two regular sections: “Things Worth Thinking Of,” in which the “conductor” editorialized on a wide variety of issues, and “Trifles,” which was really little different from “Things Worth Thinking Of” except that the pieces were much shorter — no more than a paragraph generally. It may be arguable whether these two sections constitute the most interesting part of the magazine but there can be no doubt they are the most revealing. Under these headings, which could be found at the back of each issue, the inquisitive novelist-turned-periodical-publisher held forth on topics as sundry and seemingly unrelated as the struggle of the Candiotte Islanders “to escape from the misrule of the Turk,” the “conflict in Paraguay,” a revolt in Spain, Reid’s meeting with Admiral Farragut the preceding summer, the proposed Central Park Zoo, unbranded Texas cattle, and the “Liberator of South America,” Simón Bolívar — to name but a few.

One subject Reid knew best from actual experience — and one that seems to have concerned him most on a personal level, was the method by which nineteenth century writers were compensated for their work. What exasperated him, he opined in the January 1869 issue of Onward, was “a paragraph” that had recently gone “the usual round of the newspapers, to the purport, that an English author had received from an English publisher, \$50,000 for writing a romance, and this before putting pen to paper!” “Knowing tolerably well the statistics of book publishing in Great Britain,” he pontificated, “we do not hesitate to say, that this statement is erroneous.” The veteran writer added that his remarks were made not from any “ill-will” toward the author mentioned in the papers but rather, “to point out a mistake, lest some of our young readers, lured by the fabulous prize of \$50,000 — twice the salary of the President of the United States — may also make a mistake, by being tempted into a field,

where they will find gold not so easily gathered.”<sup>66</sup> To prove his point, Reid explained:

The usual form of novel publishing in England is, first, in three octavo volumes, retailed at a guinea and a half; but passing from the publisher’s hands to the “trade” at scant fifteen shillings, less than half the retail price. It is considered quite a success if a novel in the 3-vol. edition reaches a sale of 500 copies, a grand success if 1,000 and a publisher’s as well as author’s triumph if 1,500 could be got rid of. It would be one of the marvelous sensations of the “trade” should the disposal reach 3,000. 5,000 copies of a 3-vol. novel could not be disposed of in England unless under eccentric circumstances. There is no channel or demand; for it must be remembered, that not a single copy is sold to the public. They are all taken by some half-dozen large libraries of the novel-reading kind, and perhaps a hundred little ones, that are contented with a copy each. It is quite certain that no London publisher would speculate on the sale of an unwritten novel beyond 2,000 copies — if indeed that; except it were by Dickens, whose works form an “eccentric” departure from the rule.

We have then 2,000 copies, fifteen shillings each, realizing £1,500 “gross” to the publisher, or \$10,000 in greenbacks. To bring it to “net,” deduct \$3,000, at the very least, for cost of production, advertising, &c., and the publisher gets \$7,000. Such a profit we know to be rare, and is only to be made out of novels by some five or six English writers of great reputation. The novels of authors, perhaps quite as good, but not “in fashion” — for this has all to do with the sale of a 3-vol. edition — will net from \$500 to \$1,000 — never more.

Let us return to that from which the \$7,000 is made. How much the publisher gives the author out of this, is a question between themselves; certainly not more than the moiety, say \$3,500. But the author still holds his copyright (if he has been shrewd enough to take care of his interests, which is not always the case); and he may reprint and publish in the “cheap form” as it is termed. This is always in one volume at a retail price of five shillings, three-and-sixpence, or two shillings — for there are all these prices on the reprint, according to the style of getting up.

10,000 copies of a five-shilling reprint in England would be deemed an enormous sale; and it is doubtful whether any novel — unless one by the aforementioned author — would realize it. And the profit to publisher and author would not exceed one shilling per copy — in all £500, or \$3,500 in our much-abused greenbacks. The after-sales, for a period of many years, would not more than double this last number, for there are no after-sales on the 3-vol. edition. It is “dead” in three or sixth [sic] months after publication — the large libraries turning over their surplus stock to the smaller ones, and old book-stands; where a copy can be bought for less than the cost of production.

We have thus £2,000 or \$14,000 to be divided between publisher and author. Double it, if you will, and you get only \$28,000, and you must more than quadruple it to give the author anything like \$50,000.<sup>67</sup>

“Unless,” he added knowingly, some publisher “willing to throw away \$40,000...without

seeing a chance of getting it back” had “sprung up mushroom-like within a very late period,” there was little doubt the papers were mistaken. “The truth is,” he remarked bitterly, “that authors in England are recompensed in the most paltry manner,” revealing it was:

...not the fault of British publishers, but simply that the demand for books on the part of the British public is not equal to the supply. There is but a limited number of the English people can read; and most of those who can either do not care for books, or have not the wherewith to purchase them. A beef-steak is more necessary to John Bull than a book — as it is also more to his liking.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, in a paragraph that helps explain why he decided to quit England and start over in the United States, Reid wrote pessimistically:

And this condition is daily becoming worse, both for author and publisher. For ten years the book-trade of Great Britain has been declining, and so rapidly, that if it proceed in the same ratio for another decade, literature in England will be virtually extinct.<sup>69</sup>

By comparison, the author proclaimed in a later edition, the literary trade in the United States was thriving. “In the room in which I am writing,” Reid remarked in February 1869, “there is ample evidence of it.” “A pile of books of such vast dimensions that it would be no exaggeration to call it a cart-load,” he announced to his readers, covered a nearby table. All of them, he added with no little pride, “were the produce of the American Press.” And if that was not proof enough “that America is now producing a larger amount of book merchandise than any other country,” he had “only to walk out onto the street and stroll along that grandest thoroughfare in the world — the Broadway of New York.”

I there see — and it is a sight, that some twelve months ago, gave me a most agreeable surprise — men who deal in literature, taking rank among those of other profitable callings. I do not speak of the great book producers — one of whom has no equal in the world; but the mere distributors of literature, wholesale as [well as] retail *book merchants* in short — exposing their wares for sale, in vast roomy shops resembling *salons de luxe*, with a disposal and decoration positively superb.

And to be waited on by young shopmen, whose demeanor speaks not only

intelligence but gentleness, while their dress seems to befit them for the most scrupulously kept drawing room. I repeat, that this gave me a pleasant surprise. How different, thought I, from a bookshop in either Paris or London; where literature is hidden away in holes, betraying its poverty in the shabbiness of its distributors, and not unfrequently in their incivility.

If this book business be not a proof of the superiority of American civilization, I know not what is.<sup>70</sup>

Reid was equally full of praise for American periodicals. Their quality, he wrote enthusiastically, was “of the best,” adding: “We know of no such thirty-five cents worth of literature as that given by the Harpers; and the *Galaxy*, *Putnam’s*, *Lippincott’s*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*, all appear most excellent of their kind.” What struck him, however, was not so much their quality, “but their *quantity*.”<sup>71</sup>

We venture to say, there is not one of our readers who has the slightest conception of the greatness of this number. He may get an idea of it, however, by taking down a standard atlas, and making note of how many towns there are in this country, containing a population of from ten to twenty thousand each. For it appears to us, that there is not one of such size without its magazine, or other monthly periodical, representing the time-honored shape of *Maga*. Colleges, and even schools have them; and no society, club, corporation, creed, sect, or calling seems to be without them. On our editorial table lie not scores, but over a hundred; and we know that these are but the minor moiety of all in existence...It is really surprising to see this mass of magazine literature — pleasant to reflect upon the prosperous source from which spring such a prolific stream and by which alone it can be sustained.<sup>72</sup>

Onward also served as a platform from which Reid frequently aired his strongly held views on politics, particularly the British variety. That he intended to do so was made plain from the start. In mid-December 1868, when the magazine was first being launched, the aspiring editor did all he could to draw attention to his new enterprise by sending sample copies to most, if not all, the newspapers in the United States. Inside each one he pasted a “circular addressed to the editor.” It read:

I think you will see, by glancing over its pages, that ‘Onward’ is not meant to be a mere collection of idle romances; but rather intended as a teacher. The light and

cheerful reading is but designed to float the more serious and important matter; so as to bring it in contact not only with the youthful mind of America, but that more matured. While publicly known but as a writer of, it may be, useless stories, I have been for twenty years privately engaged in the study of European political systems and painfully watching their effects on mankind — in every instance, morally and materially, a sure process of degradation. I have long since arrived at the conviction that there is but one agent of civilisation capable of doing its work thoroughly and sure — the Republic. I hold it to be the chief, if not the sole cause of the rapid growth and present grandeur of your (permit me also to say my) nation; that has now reached a point of material happiness and mental refinement higher than has ever been attained in the history of the human race. And all this is due to the ‘Republic!’

Chiefly to lay this thought before the mind of America have I crossed the Atlantic to establish a Magazine. For I know that on this side lies the handle of that lever, by which a Republican form of government — and along with it Liberty — can alone be established throughout the world. This would indeed be the Millennium: for under such a political system labor is no toil, and life a luxury — no certainly the Creator intended it. What remains of my life will be such, if I but succeed in imbuing with these doctrines the mind of the American Youth; confirming them not only in holding on to the good they have got, but giving them strength to extend it to the whole human race.<sup>73</sup>

The inclusion of this particular item caused Reid some temporary difficulty when the United States Post Office in New York insisted that he pay an additional forty-eight cents per magazine, or a total of \$2,500, owing to an ambiguously worded regulation suggesting the circular should be treated as regular first class mail. In response to his complaint, local postal authorities directed him to write to their superiors in Washington, D.C., asking for clarification. Reid was no doubt relieved when he got a reply that stated, “insomuch as the aforesaid circular relates solely to said publication, the postmaster at New York may allow the present number to be mailed at printed rate of postage, without additional charge.”<sup>74</sup>

On the whole, Reid’s anti-British political diatribes echoed the themes he called forth in his 1863 Thanksgiving Day speech in London. Reflecting the earnestness with which he vigorously embraced his new American citizenship, he blasted the English aristocracy at every turn, condemning the “monarch-worship” and “flunkeyism” of the middle and working



classes, which to his way of thinking formed the greatest barriers to true democracy in Britain. In the magazine's very first issue, he called attention to the Reform Act passed by Parliament in 1867, which extended the franchise "to male householders and lodgers in rooms with at least £10 a year" (but fell far short of universal manhood suffrage). Recalling the General Election of 1868 in which the Liberals under Gladstone triumphed at the polls, the exasperated author wrote caustically:<sup>75</sup>

The late reform bill of England proves, as we anticipated it would, a thing entirely worthless to the English people. The parliament will be just as before: a mere assemblage of the aristocracy of England, who, on all matters relating to the privileges of their own order will be in sufficient accord to hinder these privileges from being curtailed, or in any way intrenched upon. If they pass any acts beneficial to the people, you may be sure there will be nothing in said acts prejudicial to their own interests. The whole system of British parliamentary election is a farce and sham — none ever so cunningly devised for cheating a people out of its rights. But this is a large question, which we intend giving a fuller account elsewhere.<sup>76</sup>

In the second issue of Onward Reid kept his promise in a three-page article titled, "Sham Representation: As Illustrated in the Parliament of Great Britain." No doubt recognizing that his American readership might possess little or no knowledge of the subject, he began in an almost schoolmasterly way by remarking that in America there was "a prevailing belief" that there was little difference between the Parliament of Great Britain and the Congress of the United States. Not so, he lectured, adding scornfully: "Between the two there is almost as little similarity, as between [the colors] black and white."<sup>77</sup> "In truth," he declared, "the two systems" were "antithetic, in cause as in consequence." The central difference, he went on to explain, was that Congress was "an assemblage representing the American people" whereas Parliament represented "only the English aristocracy." This was made possible, Reid added, because the average Englishman was:

Accustomed all his life to believe in something above him — something he thinks or fancies has a sort of divine right, not only to rule but dragoon and govern him, he cannot realize the idea of having an equal say in the management of his political affairs; and he is quite content to think, he has been endowed with the form of representation, without caring much about its efficiency.<sup>78</sup>

Speculating that if the Englishman were “acquainted with the political net-work that enswathes him,” he might “make a struggle to destroy it,” he added:

As it is, he is helpless as a fly in the web of a spider; since that spun around him is ten times more intricate and cunning. In the whole history of despotism, never has there been gin so deftly contrived, or snare so warily set, as that system of government by which the British people are cheated out of their toil by the British aristocracy.”<sup>79</sup>

Continuing his diatribe, Reid identified two of what he saw as the most fundamental flaws of the British system of government at that time. One, he wrote, was the fact that in approximately three-fourths of Britain’s constituencies, the candidate most likely to be elected was generally someone “appointed” by the borough “squire” — who “By a tie, not so very different from the old law of ‘villeinage’...controls the whole community.” Thus the “form” of elected representation was observed, Reid explained, but “not one iota of its reality.” Another shortcoming of the system, he pointed out, was the way that parliamentary representation was apportioned. There were some constituencies with fewer than two hundred “freemen,” the perturbed writer explained, who elected representatives to Parliament that were co-equal to members representing London boroughs containing some “two hundred thousand inhabitants.” It was “just as if the little town of Newport, or the island of Nantucket was permitted as many members in Congress as the great city of New York.”<sup>80</sup> In conclusion, the agitated author wrote resignedly:

The thoughts of an Englishman about what he calls “reform” can scarce be comprehended by the American mind. They are shaped on the same model, and pretty much in proportion, as his ideas of freedom — these telling him: “he is lucky that he’s

not locked up.” Beyond this his aspirations do not soar very high. And if they do, they will soon be brought to earth again, with wings sharply clipped, either by the street policeman or the *Times* newspaper.

The efforts of the English people to obtain a charter of freedom, under the name of a “reform bill,” would be indeed ludicrous, but for the pain one feels in contemplating them. To laugh at them would be like laughing at the struggles of a child endeavoring to catch stars, or embrace the moon. Cousin John does not aspire so high. He is satisfied with the slightest scintillation. A bill of pretended reform, granted once in every twenty-five years, is sufficient to content him, so long as it is called a “Reform bill.” It makes not much difference whether it comes from his professed friends, the Liberals, or is granted by his almost professed enemies, the Tories — such as the one lately allowed him. He supposes it to be a step forward, and therefore a triumph of his class — the people.

Poor people! Sadly stupid, and still more sorrowfully misguided! Contented with the cheapest slops ever thrown out to swine — a crumb from the ill-odored table of a renegade Israelite — a bone flung out to keep the British bull-dog from growling, meatless without, and marrowless within — such is the new Reform Act of England!<sup>81</sup>

Reid followed this commentary in the very same issue with “The Despoiling of Peoples,” a caustic piece in which he warned American “dreamers” who advocated the notion of “one man rule” in order to protect them from “official spoliation” that they were either “traitors” or living in a fantasy world. Besides, he wrote sarcastically:

Know then: that as bad as it is, you have got the best government in the world — incomparably the best. If there be spoliation among you — and from report I suppose there must be — you have at least the comfort of knowing that you can all have a hand in it, according to your turn in office! Surely this is better than to know, that you are plundered by a section or a class; whose privilege to do so springs from no merit, and aims at being extended to eternity?

Moreover, he added:

I repeat emphatically, and without fear of my statement being disproved, that the pilfering from the American people, by those who hold office among them, is not a tithe or what is take per capita from the people of any other country, It is true the stealing differs in kind. In America, it is *against* the law; in the countries of kings, *it is the law itself!*<sup>82</sup>

In the same issue a short item called “Peace!” continued the theme of despoilment with an imaginary representative Englishman, Frenchman, German, Spaniard, Italian, Turk,

and Greek each complaining of the conditions in his country that required him to give up his liberties or his hard-earned money to support a monarchy, an aristocracy, or both in the name of the status quo. This was followed in turn by “War,” a six-part poem in which Reid called for the ordinary peoples of the world to rise up against their oppressors.<sup>83</sup>

Several other pieces in Onward repeated Reid’s liberal sentiments. In one issue the fiery author took a newspaper editor to task for suggesting there was “a like law for rich and poor” in England, hinted that the British secret service was actively preventing the rise of republicanism in Europe, and admitted his shame at having an ancestor who helped conquer the Irish. The newly naturalized citizen also defended the United States at every opportunity, even in trivial matters. In one instance Reid countered the claim of a commentator for England’s Saturday Review, who claimed that the U.S. was a “gloomy” country, by writing:

...if there be any country in the world not chargeable with gloom, that country is this United States of America, most of all this great city of New York; where at every turn of the street we see cheerful faces, and pretty ones, too, in which we read the history of light-heartedness and happiness — physical, intellectual, passional — for even love seems to have less of the coarse alloy that elsewhere degrades and vulgarizes it.

And if there be any country specially characterized by a dull, flat, uniform, and sodden gloom, it is the land in which scribbles in spite the Saturday Reviewer; where there is neither joy nor gladness outside the circle of its aristocracy. How could there be, among the millions born and trained up to touch hats to them?<sup>84</sup>

Reid was equally prepared to set his now-fellow Americans straight on what he saw as their mistaken or misguided views of British society and politics, even though his comments were sometimes mischaracterized as “sour grapes,” on account of his business failures in England. As he had done the year before, when he took the Reverend Hall to task for claiming “the ‘great heart’ of the English people was with the North during the great struggle” Reid continued to hammer home in the pages of Onward his strongly-held belief

that the British people, as well as their government, had sided with the South as far as they could without actually recognizing the Confederacy, in hopes of destroying the Union and thus weakening the United States as a potential rival in the world or as a successful model of republicanism. Although this was most frequently done in some passing comment buried in the depths of “Things Worth Thinking Of” or “Trifles,” nowhere did the author make his views more abundantly clear than in an article titled “John Bull During the Rebellion: Why His Sympathies Were With the South,” which appeared in Onward’s June 1869 issue.

In a manner similar to his earlier piece on the Reform Bill, Reid began by addressing American ignorance. “There seems yet to linger on this side of the Atlantic,” he wrote knowingly, “a vast amount of misconception, about the behavior of the British people during the days of the rebellion.” He was surprised, he declared, indeed astonished, that such should be the case, “for it is difficult to imagine how any question could be clearer,” adding: “If England did not during that dark time prove, both by word and deed, a heart-felt hostility to this republic and its people, there can be no proof either by words or deeds.” “And yet,” he continued, “I am asked every day how Englishmen felt about the American rebellion, and on which side lay their sympathies.” Asked, he wrote moreover, “from a belief, on the part of my interrogators, that I understand the subject.”<sup>85</sup>

And I do understand it, *ab initio usque ad finem*. It is not much knowledge to boast of. Any man living in England at that time — as I was — must have shut both ears and eyes to avoid comprehending it. Sympathy with the South was, at every turn, forced upon one’s attention. One met it in the railway carriage, at the club house, on ‘change, in the hotel or tavern, and at the private dinner table. It was all-pervading, outspoken, and arrogant. To oppose it was to place one’s self in the *taboo* of a scorned minority.<sup>86</sup>

Recalling his 1868 letter to the Evening Post, in which he challenged Reverend Hall’s statements to the contrary, Reid predicted that he would be similarly contracted. The reason,

he wrote, was simple: England, while unrepentant, had realized its “blunder” in supporting the South. Now, he proclaimed, “She...hastens to cover herself with excuses; and for this purpose we have peacemakers of the Newman Hall type coming to America, and telling the American people how ‘the great heart of England was with the North during the war, and only a small number of her aristocracy against it.’” But then as now, the outspoken and unapologetic author declared, “I thought it wrong for the American people to be bamboozled — believing it better for them to know the naked truth.”<sup>87</sup>

Reid continued by stating quite firmly that his position was the very opposite of Hall’s, namely, “The great heart of England was *against* the North during its war, and only a small number of her aristocracy *with* it.” He admitted however, just as he had done in his letter to the Evening Post, “the heart of England’s poor workingman was not antagonistic to the North.” But the workingmen did not in his opinion constitute the “‘great heart of England’ any more than Sambo was the great heart of the South in times anterior to the rebellion.” No, he proclaimed, it was not these who made up the “great heart of England,” but rather the people who were separated from the working class “only...by the possession of a few pounds” — “Banker and stock-broker, shopkeeper and shipowner, farmer and manufacturer, lawyer, doctor, and divine, estate agent and tapster, in short, all comprising the middle class of England — both its ‘upper’ and ‘lower’ strata, for there are two deposits of it.” It was these, he declared, who “were dead against the North, almost to a man.”<sup>88</sup>

But Reid’s purpose, he announced, was not to “prove England’s sympathy with the South, or her hostility to the North.” These facts, he stated, were well known and anyone who “asserts the contrary speaks from a foundation of either bald ignorance, or barefaced

impudence,” adding: “What is not so clearly understood is the *motive*; and it is of this I would offer an explanation.”<sup>89</sup> Most of the aristocracy, he held, were hostile to the North

because:

Lord Tom Noddy would be even more stolid than you take him to be, were he not to foresee in the final firm establishment of the Republic the fall of his grand, and long-enjoyed, sovereignty over the people.

Every step toward the aggrandizement of peoples, is a peal added to the death-knell of princes. They are doomed now; and if this nation will but cling fraternally together, in less than half a century the world will see the end of them. Lord Tom is not so obtuse as to be ignorant of this; though it is better known to the higher intellects of his order. They understand it well; and equally well do they comprehend, that by the breaking up of this republic — even to the splitting it in twain — they would secure a fresh lease on their aristocratic life for another ninety-nine years — perhaps a fee simple to perpetuity. They don’t want ever to hear that death-knell; and no wonder they don’t.<sup>90</sup>

And as for the enmity of the middle classes, he explained: “It was all in the hope to gain grace, by gratifying Lord Tom Noddy and his order; and to this end did England’s middle classes almost universally demean themselves — Lord Tom keeping them well tickled with that conjuring-rod, so useful to despotic rulers — a vile national vanity.”<sup>91</sup>

Likening North and South to two cats, Reid concluded that ultimately England did “all she could” to make them “tear one another, until there should be nothing left but their tails.” But in the end, he proclaimed, “one of these cats has proved itself a great lion — a tiger if you like — and let the backer of its antagonist beware!”<sup>92</sup>

Continuing this jingoist tone, Reid went on in the July issue of Onward, to explore the possibility of a third war between the United States and Great Britain and what its outcome might be. His conclusion? That it would “end in England’s complete national humiliation; in reducing her to a second, perhaps third rate, power among the nations of the world.” All the United States had to do, he wrote, was destroy Great Britain’s merchant fleet, in order to

starve the country into submission.<sup>93</sup> Not surprisingly, Reid's political invective caught the attention of readers in both the United States and Great Britain. In Philadelphia, a newspaper publisher labeled him, erroneously, as a "brash Cockney" while an English critic called him a "Puritan." Others branded him an enemy of the South.<sup>94</sup>

Occasionally, Reid used the pages of Onward to defend individuals he admired, whose reputations had been called into question by critics. One of these was Edgar Allan Poe, who had been the subject of an unfavorable article written by Dr. Rufus Griswold. Reid's counterblast, "A Dead Man Defended," which appeared in the April 1869 issue of Onward, is in all likelihood the best known and most quoted of any of his works. Another celebrated figure that Reid defended was President Ulysses S. Grant, who during his very first months in office was already being admonished by critics for lacking brilliance and for appointing his friends to high office. Although the scandals that came to haunt the Grant administration would eventually prove the critics right on at least the second of these scores, in 1869 Reid thought nothing of it, writing in a not-very-convincing manner:

Supposing Ulysses Grant be fond of his friends, and that two, or three, or a dozen, or a hundred, or even a thousand of them are each believed by him to be fit for some office within his right of donation, what would you have him do? Refuse it them because they are his friends, and bestow it on someone who, if not an enemy, is at least a stranger? It would not be disinterestedness, but in truth a far greater selfishness than the nepotism of which is now accused. The one shows only an instinctive affection — natural, if not noble — the other would be but the duplicity of cunning — a desire to serve self, by serving the self-interested partisan.<sup>95</sup>

In the October 1869 issue of Onward, Reid also leapt to the defense of Lord Byron, one of his two favorite poets (the other was Fitz-Greene Halleck), who had recently been the subject of an exposé in the Atlantic Monthly by none other than Harriet Beecher Stowe of Uncle Tom's Cabin fame. During her second visit to England, in 1856, Stowe revealed that



the long-widowed Lady Byron had contacted her, “indicating that she wished to have some private, confidential conversation upon important subjects, inviting her for that purpose to spend a day with her at her country seat near London.” At that time, explained Stowe, Lady Byron’s doctors had told her she was dying. What distressed her, the poet’s widow revealed to the celebrated American authoress when she accepted the invitation, was the forthcoming publication of a book “intended to bring his writings into circulation among the masses” with “the pathos arising from his domestic misfortunes” being “one great means relied on for giving it currency.” Having deserted her husband after less than two years of marriage, she wanted the world to know at last that her reason for doing so was Byron’s secret incestuous love affair with his sister, or half-sister, Augusta Leigh, which he had confessed to his wife — a union that produced “an unfortunate child of sin.”<sup>96</sup>

Calling Stowe “an ogress,” Reid questioned the veracity of the report. But even if true, he wrote, it did not necessarily mean that Byron was a bad man, but rather that he was “not much better, and certainly not any worse, than the generality of mankind,” adding:

We have read everything Byron has written, with almost everything that has been written about him; and notwithstanding the supposed mystery of his character, we never studied a disposition more easily understood. It is, indeed, so like what we ourselves felt and fancied — what we still feel and fancy — what every human being, not of base organization, must also feel and fancy — that to condemn George Gordon Byron, seems like condemning oneself. If Byron was a bad man, how many of us are good? Lax his character — lascivious if you will — his lasciviousness had, at least, the merit of being manly. How different from the sneaking vulgar vagaries of a Dickens, the heartless *amourettes* of a Bulwer, and the disgusting obscenities of a Palmerston, or Brougham! Compared with either of this precious quartette, the page that record Byron’s life seems almost spotless.<sup>97</sup>

Not all the topics that occupied Reid’s mind were as personal (to him at least) as book publishing, as controversial as politics, or as scandalous as Lord Byron’s personal life.

Writing about New York City streetcars, he proclaimed that there was “no plan for traversing the streets of a crowded city, yet born in the brain of man, or *to be born*, superior, or even equal, to...the railroad car harnessed to horses.” However, as a regular customer of the Third Avenue Railroad Company, he had some suggestions for their improvement, which he made in an early Onward article, which was also published in the New York Tribune. It demonstrates that although he failed to foresee the electric streetcar replacing the horse-drawn vehicles he loved so much, he was in some respects a man ahead of his time. The trouble, as Reid saw it, was that each car was then “subject to the capricious will of every one walking upon the footway, who sees fit to bring it to a stop by hailing its conductor, or simply holding up his hand.” The exasperated author complained that this practice not only caused “unnecessary delay” but also wear and tear on the “poor horses, whose terrible contortions at each fresh starting” was a “painful” sight. To remedy this situation, he proposed the city adopt an ordinance mandating cars “pull up (if required) at every second street from their last stopping place — but not between.” In the December issue of Onward, he revisited the question, laying it out in more detail and appealing to his readers’ sense of reason.<sup>98</sup>

The assumption of a right to do this [to stop a streetcar at will] is, in truth, but a burlesque of the republican-democratic idea; and when closely scrutinized, proves to be based on the very opposite principle. For it is the one man on the sidewalk, with no particular stress upon him, telling forty others inside the car — all as good as he, and all sharply set with a desire to go ahead — telling them they must stop! And for what purpose? Simply to save himself the necessity of going on to the next corner, and there getting in; no disagreeable necessity, for it is just as easy to saunter thirty paces while the car is coming up, as to pass the time standing by the side of the cinder barrel, and quite as pleasant one would fancy.

The notion that, by doing this, individual rights are invaded, can only be entertained by those unaccustomed to the exercise of ordinary ratiocination — ignorant, in fact, of all the elementary principles of republicanism, and the mutual

obligations of *meum et tuum*. It is not the doctrine of an enlightened democracy, but the blind dogmatic instinct of a mistaken mob.<sup>99</sup>

While streetcars would eventually come to be operated in the manner Reid suggested, there seems to be no evidence that any changes were made during his brief residency in New York.

In Onward, Reid found space as well to address two areas of American life that found him to be firmly in step with mainstream attitudes. One was the so-called “Indian question.” The other was the Mormon practice of polygamy. In writing about the former, Reid admitted that since the earliest days of settlement — “from the murder of the kingly Metacomet down to the massacre by Chivington” — America’s native inhabitants had been dealt with badly. Be that as it may, he added, “it would be a mistake to say the American people should bear all the stigma attached to these crimes,” for “although many dark tragedies have occurred in their dealings with the Indian, no one attempts to justify them.”<sup>100</sup>

Although modern day historians uphold his case for the lack of true democracy in nineteenth century Britain, when it came to Indians Reid’s words simply reflected the prevailing attitude of nineteenth century whites — Britons and Americans alike — toward the native peoples of the lands they conquered. As late as 1869, and perhaps especially then — when the Transcontinental Railroad was nearing completion and the Great Plains were being opened to settlement — many Americans were quite willing not only to accept but to encourage the displacement or killing of a people they termed “savages” in the name of “progress.” With only a few notable exceptions, such as the Sand Creek Massacre to which Reid made mention, they routinely turned a blind eye to atrocities committed against the Indians. Some thought Indians were literally the spawn of the devil, their almost complete lack of interest in the white man’s religion, much less his mode of living, serving as “proof.”

For Reid to deny that Americans justified the ill treatment of native peoples, in the face of ample evidence, is astounding. Only the year before, Gen. Philip Sheridan had uttered the infamous words, “The only good Indians I ever saw were dead.” Reid himself defended not only the taking of Indian lands but also, or so it certainly seems — although he does not refer to it directly — the United States’ acquisition of Mexican territory following the war in which he had served, stating quite plainly:

...the savage has in reality no right to the soil upon which he is found — that is, no right of exclusive possession, such as is usually meant by the phrase. In many cases he is himself but a recent usurper, though this is not what I mean. If he could show possession since the subsidence of the Flood, it would not much alter the case. He has forfeited it, by neglecting that proper usufruct of the soil — required from those who hold possession of any extensive territory of the Earth’s surface — and thus created an outside right to dispossess him. Nor is this right of dispossession alone to be limited to the savage. Nations, however highly civilized, upon whom chance has bestowed too large a territorial limit — that is, too large for them to turn to account, either through want or energy or inclining — such nations may be stripped of the superfluity without infringing one principle of human justice. Nay, it is justice that they should be so stripped.<sup>101</sup>

If this is insufficient evidence of Reid’s belief in the concept of Manifest Destiny, his concluding remarks leave no doubt of it.

Applying it [the doctrine of dispossession] now to the Prairie Indian, it fits his case closely. He labors under a hallucination, that he is lord of all that meadow-land, with the mountains adjoining it — their “parks” and their passes. And that he has a right to direct the course of the iron-horse, or stop him altogether. It is this absurd assumption that is leading to the present difficulty, or at all events, it is one of the chief causes. If not absolutely dispossessed of his lands, he must be of this idea; and it is only a question of how it is to be done. Some say should be coaxed, others go for giving him the cold steel without any explanation. We say coax him if it can be done; but we have our doubts whether he can be made to understand the principle of the question, or even the law of all civilized lands. To tell that that park and palace must alike get out of the way of the snorting engine, would, we fear, be scarce comprehensible to him.

And if it be not, there is but one way to get over the difficulty: make him comprehend it. If this be the course adopted, let us hope it will be carried through with all the humanity possible to such a strife; and that after it is over, no stain may rest on the shield of any American soldier who takes part in it.<sup>102</sup>

Reid's attitude toward the followers of Brigham Young was equally in keeping with conventional opinion. In an article titled "The Mormon Monsters: What Should Be Done With Them?" Reid called Utah Territory a "foul nest of profanity and uncleanness." Likening Salt Lake City to "Sodom and Gomorrah," he joined the chorus of Americans calling for not only for an end to the practice of polygamy but also "the destruction — even annihilation"<sup>103</sup> of Brigham Young and his followers.

General Grant has a good work before him, and certainly the time seems to have come for its accomplishment. The task need not be difficult. Let Sheridan be sent to Salt Lake City, with a sufficient force to break up the stinking seraglio; and if the city containing it can not be otherwise cleansed, let it be razed to the ground, and let the torch humble it, as when an angry God purged the "Cities of the Plain."<sup>104</sup>

Although he had returned to England by the time it happened, we may imagine that Reid was pleased to hear the news of Brigham Young's 1871 arrest for the crime of polygamy, and of the United States government's further efforts to effectively put an end to the practice so abhorred by conventional Christians.

In her book about Reid (and to a lesser extent in her dissertation), Joan Steele was more or less on target when, in explaining why the magazine eventually failed, she identified Onward as "a pastiche of Reid's own writing, past and present, plus that of contributors whose articles either originally reflected Reid's own biases or were edited by Reid so that they eventually did," although she offers no proof to uphold this last part of the statement. It is equally true, as she also points out, he frequently recycled material, a poem from The Wild Huntress and his entire treatise on Croquet, being two of the more obvious. A short story, "Brother Against Brother," which had already appeared in an American newspaper, is yet another example. Steele was not quite correct, however, when she wrote that the industrious

author “wrote everything” in the magazine’s “first three issues.”<sup>105</sup> Mrs. Reid later recollected that “two or three poems and articles of prose” were used as filler and Reid himself freely admitted, when it was quickly pointed out by a critic, that a short poem in Onward’s debut issue, which the presumably innocent editor had supposed to be an anonymous work, was in fact composed by “a celebrated American poet, George Prentice of Louisville.”<sup>106</sup> Beginning with the third issue, however, Reid began regularly publishing acknowledged contributions from other writers.

Steele contends, again with nothing to point to as evidence, that Reid “dissipated tremendous amounts of energy in editing the contributions to his magazine.” She also noted that he “never acknowledged the identity of his contributors in the magazine’s index.” While the former was certainly true and the latter also, it was not entirely accurate to state further that Reid said he would only acknowledge authors “if their material had been well received.”<sup>107</sup> By leaving it at that, it suggests ungraciousness on Reid’s part, which is unfounded in fact. While it is certainly true that he made such a statement in the April 1869 issue, he qualified it by stating that his purpose was not simply to withhold credit where credit was due but rather, to protect the reputation of aspiring writers, in order to prevent them from being identified as only “scribblers of the commonplace” if their work was not well-received.<sup>108</sup> In point of fact, in nearly every issue of Onward in which other writers’ work appeared, most contributors were acknowledged quite plainly, and often enthusiastically, in a section called “Vis-a-Vis,” which immediately followed the index. We may surmise that the reason for this course of action was Reid’s regret regarding the quality (or lack thereof) of some of his own early work.



Figure 30. Cover of the January 1870 issue of Onward. From the author's personal collection.

Some who Reid credited were heard from only once while others became regulars, such as the artists, Arthur Lumley and Robert Lusk, whose sketches frequently graced the magazine's pages. Of the regular writers, one of the foremost was the military historian and published author John Watts de Peyster, a New York City native and former Union general,<sup>109</sup> who wrote a series of articles, not surprisingly, about Civil War battles. The first of these, concerning Gettysburg, began in the May 1869 issue, concluding in July. This was followed, in September, by an examination of the Battle of Fredericksburg, and finally by a lengthy "critical review" of Chancellorsville, which commenced in October and was continued each month up through and including the magazine's final issue of February 1870.

Another Onward regular was Hezekiah Butterworth, of Warren, Rhode Island, one of "the nineteenth century's [most] prolific authors for children," who in 1871 became assistant editor of the Youth's Companion and was afterward celebrated for his "Zigzag Journey" books, in addition to a number of histories and biographies of famous people.<sup>110</sup> For Onward, the then-young Butterworth wrote a seven-part poem, "The Fountain of Youth: A Dream of Ponce De Leon" (June 1869), a scientific article, "The Transit of Venus: A sight to be seen only once in a lifetime" (August 1869), another poem, "Pokanoket: Musing Upon Montop" (September 1869), and "The Crusaders at Prayer" (January 1870). Some other regular contributors were W. H. Macy of Boston, J. C. Clarke — whose specialty was translations of foreign songs, and the poet J. Soulé Smith.

Two of the more noteworthy Onward regulars were Edward Denny and Frederick Whittaker. According to Joan Steele, Denny, "an accomplished Naval officer,"<sup>111</sup> not only became an assistant to Reid but also a business partner, "by paying him \$500," which Steele



notes further, was “itself raised on loan by using the copyright and stereotype plates of Reid’s rulebook *Croquet*.” Among Denny’s identifiable literary contributions to Onward were “My Irish Shooting Lodge” (July 1869), “On Board a Blockade Runner” (August 1870), “Three Days at Cherbourg” (October 1869), “Greek Pirates” (December 1869), and “The Stricken Crew” (January 1870). Whittaker, an English-born Civil War veteran some twenty years Reid’s junior, began writing for Onward on a recurrent basis beginning with an un-credited poem, “Starlighted Midnight,” which appeared in the July 1869 issue. This was followed by a few more poems as well as some stories and articles: “Dying Alone: The Last Letter Written in Blood” (September 1869), “Shot by a Sweetheart” (October 1869), “Loo and I: A Lover’s Quarrel” (December 1869), and “American Falconry” (January and February 1870). After the magazine’s failure, Whittaker, who spent the remainder of his life residing in Mount Vernon, New York, went on to enjoy some degree of fame as a dime novelist for Beadles and Adams and a contributor to periodicals such as Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, the Fireside Companion, and Galaxy. Occasionally, he wrote under the pen name “Lance Poyntz.” In 1876 Whittaker wrote a popular biography of General George Armstrong Custer and three years later co-authored a book (The Cadet Button) with Reid, who by then was living in England and near the end of his life. Whittaker, who spent the remaining years of his own life as assistant editor of the Army and Navy Journal, died six years after Reid, in a bizarre accident in which he tripped over his cane and fell down some stairs, which caused the pistol he carried in his coat pocket to discharge, shooting him in the head.<sup>112</sup>

In all likelihood, the only Onward contributor whose name would be recognized today by any modern American was the celebrated frontier artist George Catlin, who almost

certainly unknown to Reid, had years before written a letter to a English journalist that was critical of the Captain's little-known non-fiction work Odd People. That Reid was surely unaware of Catlin's unflattering remarks (see Chapter Seven) is evidenced by a generous four-page article in Onward, entitled "Catlin: A name too little known and too slightly treated," which appeared in the May 1869 issue. Reid, who claimed to have met the eminent explorer in England in 1851 ("followed by a brief and limited intercourse"), used Onward not only to sing Catlin's praises but also to announce that one of the artist's relatives had sent an original manuscript, detailing "an expedition made by him in 1852 to the Tumucumaché, or 'Crystal Mountains' of Guiana"<sup>113</sup> — and, as promised, "El Dorado: A search for gold among the Crystal Mountains of Guiana," appeared in the very next issue, concluding in July. Ironically, and almost unquestionably by sheer coincidence, the Tumucumaché Mountains of Guyana were one of the places mentioned by Catlin in his 1860 critique of Reid's work.

One of the more intriguing of Onward's one-time-only contributors, in view of the lingering question about whether he was a real person or a Reid alter-ego, was none other than Charles Beach, "an old traveller well known to us," wrote the Onward "conductor" in the February 1870 issue, who described the mysterious writer's short story, "The Mad Merchant: An Adventure that befel [sic] in British India," as "a strangely interesting episode of his life." Adding weight to the thinking that Beach was in fact an actual human being and not simply a Reid pseudonym is Mrs. Reid's recollection that she and her husband "encountered the 'cannibal'...in New York in 1870." "His parents," she explained, "had paid his way out, and had prevailed upon him to return to his paternal home." However, she

added, "Beach said he had been trying to 'live respectable,' but found a civilised life very irksome, and as the Maine Liquor Law prevailed in his native State he had come to New York on a 'spree.'" At their meeting, she remarked, indicating her disapproval, he was also "guiltless of shirt collar, saying he found laundry in New York too expensive a luxury." She commented further that respectable, civilized life apparently "did not agree with poor Charlie, for shortly afterwards they heard of his death."<sup>114</sup> Mrs. Reid seems also not to have approved of one of the magazine's final pieces, a lengthy poem, started by her husband, but never finished. Entitled "The Purple Swallow: or, Two Loves in a Life," it was suggestive of a long ago but unforgotten love affair.

Sometime in early 1869 the Reids moved from 33 Union Square to Lafayette Avenue in Brooklyn, where they remained through the summer. At that time, the present New York borough was a separate city that could only be reached by taking ferry across the East River. "During this time," his wife later wrote, "his literary labours were of the most arduous character in connection with his magazine venture." But this was not the only work to which he gave his attention. "In the month of May," she added, "he made an engagement with Robert Bonner, proprietor of the New York Ledger, to write for that weekly a new tale, the price of which was fixed at \$3,000, for the right of publication in America only." The resulting work, which took the prolific author only three months to complete, was "The Free Lances; a Romance of the Mexican Valley." Re-titling it "Cris Rock; or, A Lover in Chains," for some unknown reason Bonner sat on the piece for ten years before publishing it. As Mrs. Reid pointed out, when it was published in book form in England, it came out under its original title. A later American edition used the title Bonner gave it.<sup>115</sup>

During the summer that Reid spent living in Brooklyn (or perhaps a little earlier), he rewrote his Croquet treatise, afterward publishing it in installments in the June through September issues of Onward. “He also,” recalled Charles Ollivant, “made an agreement with a toy manufacturer in New York for making the right kind of implements to play this then fashionable outdoor sport.”<sup>116</sup> The outcome of these efforts, if any, is unknown. It was probably also around this time that Reid did something characteristic of his life, namely to seek redress of some grievance in the court of public opinion. Just as he had done in the Kossuth affair, in the case of Lord Essex’s plagiarism, in regard to his disillusionment with Garibaldi, and his differences with the Rev. Newman Hall over Great Britain’s stance during the American Civil War, he penned a scathing, accusatory letter, which he subsequently sent to the editor of a newspaper. Although the name of the paper is uncertain (it may have been Bryant’s New York Evening Post), we know, thanks to Charles Ollivant, the substance of this particular injury. In this instance, it was to complain about American book publishers, who, according to the exasperated author, were every bit as unscrupulous as their British counterparts. “I have,” he declared, “written a great many books — nearly forty in all — and, whether good or bad, have profited publishers both in England and America to a very large amount, some hundreds of thousands of dollars.” Even so, he complained, “I, the writer of these books, have not even made a living by them; and but for other sources of income, might have had but a miserable maintenance during the past twenty years of my life.” While it was “true” that “some of this has been due to my own imprudence in too carelessly parting with my copyrights...much of it is also owing to the trickery and chicanery of publishers.”<sup>117</sup>

Reid continued: “At an advanced period of my life — with much, though perhaps not

its best part, gone — I came to America.” He took this step, he explained, in the belief that he was “respected by a large majority of the American people, and beloved by its youth.” Consequently, the now-the-wiser author added: “I had hoped to enter upon a new and more propitious era” and “intended it to be a useful one.” When he arrived, he remarked further, “I found my work on this side in the hands of two publishing houses, one of them authorized by me — the authorization having been procured for a paltry sum.” When these publishers learned “that I had some intention of producing myself an edition of these works,” they both “made haste to offer my a ‘royalty’ upon the editions already in their hands.” But after realizing that he was “unable to produce them myself,” some “injudicious friends” advised him “to accept terms,” which he did. With Fields, Osgood, & Company Reid “entered into a contract” on November 1, 1868 and with G. W. Carleton he “did the same” in January 1869. “In the case of both houses the royalties — according to price and time” were “at ranging rates.” This meant, he explained further, that the rates “in two years would average about fifteen cents per copy on each book sold.” At first, it seemed a good deal. Being “between thirty and forty books, it looked like a little income against old age, and possible prostration of powers” and indeed, he commented, “I thought I had at length reached the true Plymouth Rock and Land of Promise.” Unfortunately, he grumbled, it now appeared “that on this Plymouth Rock my ship is to be wrecked; while the land behind it is to prove literally a Land of Promise and nothing more.”<sup>118</sup>

Detailing his complaint, Reid added: “At the time of signing the contract with Fields, Osgood & Co., in November last, they gave me a statement of what copies of my work they had on hand, and paid the royalties on them at once, in advance,” But in July, the publisher

sent him a letter telling him “that they have not yet had occasion to go to press again.” Altogether, he explained further, Fields, Osgood & Co. “have...sixteen of my books — known as ‘boys’ books,” which “are usually sold in sets for school presents, &c., and for this reason run pretty square off the counter.” One of one of the most popular was “set down in their statement of November as counting only forty-five copies on hand.” Based on the information the publisher provided him, it appeared “that in a period of over eight months, during which my name has been more than usually conspicuous before the American public, my books belonging to Fields, Osgood, & Co., show a sale of less than forty-two sets.” Yet “one firm in this city tells me it has sold one hundred sets of them itself since December.” Accusingly, he commented: “What does this discrepancy mean? I think I need not enlarge upon it.”<sup>119</sup>

“As for Carleton,” the disgruntled writer added, “he has rendered me no account whatever.” What made it worse, he protested, “I have bound myself to give him other and new books as a return for the granting of the royalty on the old.” He was appalled to learn that as a result of this agreement, “I am to labor all the remainder of my life, with no hopes of being rewarded.”<sup>120</sup>

But there was more. While he was in England, “Fields, Osgood & Co., acting as my friendly agents here” was paid “about £400 (nearly \$3,000) from a publisher named De Witt, as payment on De Witt’s part for early proof—sheets of some of my novels of the other series, now in the hands of Carleton.” But out of this payment, which the Boston-based Fields had acknowledged, “only forty pounds reached me.” Consequently, “I came to the United States cursing De Witt as the greatest pirate in existence,” refusing “even to see the

man after my arrival.” However, after his anger subsided somewhat, he met with De Witt, who showed him “his account books,” which “have given me a very different opinion of him, as also of Messrs. Fields, Ticknor, Osgood, and that ilk.” When Reid confronted “the Boston firm,” with this information, “an...excitement was produced,” and in short order a Fields representative “came over to see me about it, quick as a telegraphic despatch.” Although the man promised to have the company’s books examined, the now suspicious author skeptically noted that “Ticknor, Sr., the deceased, was the man who attended to all such transactions; and I saw that if any flaw should be found that could not be covered up, poor old dead Ticknor would have to stand sponsor for it in his coffin.”<sup>121</sup> In conclusion, Reid wrote:

In due time a statement was bolstered up and sent me in which there was an attempt to show that De Witt’s money had been forwarded to me in England. The bolstering was done in this wise: All the various sums sent me for the early sheets of my boys’ novels (the series published by themselves, and of which they could no doubt show receipts by bill of exchange and endorsed checks) have been set down to the account of payments for De Witt. And yet, with all this cooking of accounts, they have not been able to square the yards], there being still an acknowledged deficiency of nearly £100.

I had various letters from them while in England, telling me that De Witt would not pay anything, but threatened them if they sold any of my early sheets to any other house (which I had repeatedly urged them to do) that he would bring out a cheap reprint of their series of boys’ books. These letters were, unfortunately, lost in the ruin and disruption of my estate in England.

Since receiving Fields, Osgood, & Co.’s statement I have not said a word to them about it, but have kept to myself ever the consciousness of being wronged. I at once determined to bring the affair before a tribunal either of the law or public opinion, and have only been writing till I should be strong enough to do this. Alas! I feel that I am but growing weaker; and it is this feeling that prompts me to approach you as a seeker of your counsel.<sup>122</sup>

The unknown editor to whom Reid addressed this lengthy missive not only published it, he also printed a sympathetic and equally scathing response:

According to Captain Mayne Reid’s statement he has learned by bitter experience that as an author he is expected to do all the work and to surrender pretty nearly all the

profits to the publisher. Perhaps Captain Mayne Reid ought not to have reckoned upon extraordinary liberality at the hands of puritanical publishers in New England. We have lately seen that with the godly twang, the pharisaism and the political claptrap of a certain exclusive clique of Yankee authors and publishers, with their jealousy of new writers and their depreciation of all outside the ring of their mutual admiration societies, their tuft-hunting abroad and their Bohemianism at home, they are not over-scrupulous as to the material which they use in order to make money and a sensation. The publication of the revolting Bryon scandal shows to what length they can go with such ends in view. There is no disputing about tastes; and if they prefer their lackadaisical Longfellow to Byron and his ‘thoughts that breathe and words that burn,’ we can only pity them — and as for their dealings with Captain Mayne Reid, we trust that if they cannot be generous they will at least try to be just.<sup>123</sup>

On September 19, 1869, the New York Times and Messenger also came to Reid’s defense, recalling other writers whose publishers had realized “fabulous sums” while they remained impoverished. “As for Captain Mayne Reid,” the editor wrote:

...we knew him in years gone by, long before he distinguished himself at Chapultepec. We helped him to laugh when the public “perditioned” his first play in a neighboring city, and when his romances were by no means exclusively confined to paper and ink. Captain Mayne Reid is a man of talent; and, what is more, a man of literary industry. He ought to be rich.<sup>124</sup>

Whether Reid’s letter and its sympathetic receipt by the New York press had any positive effect on his fortunes is unknown. In any event, by the time the Times and Messenger commentary appeared, Reid had departed Brooklyn and returned to Manhattan, where he took up residence at 216 East Eighty-Fourth Street, only a few blocks from the newly laid-out Central Park that urban designer Frederick Law Olmsted was still in the process of creating, on what had once been a desolate piece of urban wasteland. In all likelihood the recently naturalized American author and his wife visited the site, perhaps several times, although there is no mention of it by either Mrs. Reid or Charles Ollivant. While living in this relatively new section of the city, Reid applied for a Mexican War disability pension, based on his Chapultepec wound, utilizing the services of the law firm of



Nettleton, Gilbert & Camp, who doubled as pension and bounty agents. Former New York volunteer officers Addison Farnsworth and J. H. Hobart Ward supported his claim, which was put forward in the New York Court of Common Pleas on September 22. A copy of “Extracts from dispatches of the Mexican War” attesting to Reid’s wounding in action, appears to have accompanied it. However, although the Adjutant General’s Office in Washington confirmed Reid’s testimony on October 5, 1869, more than a decade would pass before the pension was finally granted, and only after he reapplied.<sup>125</sup> The reason for this lengthy delay is unknown. It appears that the former soldier simply failed to follow up on his claim. He was certainly very busy at this time, trying to keep his magazine going. He also wrote “another story for Street and Smith, proprietors of the *New York Weekly*, the now well known ‘Lone Ranche,’ for which he was paid \$2,000 for serial publication in America.” Additionally, he penned “a boys’ tale for *Frank Leslie’s Boys’ and Girls’ Weekly*,” the title of which was “The Red Gorilla,” later changed to “The Castaways” when it was published as a book in London by T. Nelson. The \$3,000 that Reid received for the story from Leslie was used to keep Onward going in the face of poor sales.<sup>126</sup>

The cost of the magazine’s production was another ongoing concern. At first, Reid’s American book publisher, Carleton, printed Onward, but as Charles Ollivant observed, “the expenses incidental to this mode of publication were very heavy.” It was not long, he added, before “the sum generously placed at his [Reid’s] disposal” by his banker was considerably “diminished.” Reluctantly perhaps, the fledgling magazine “conductor” terminated “his connection with Mr. Carleton” following publication of the May issue. Afterward, Reid opened his own editorial office at 119 Nassau Street in lower Manhattan (in today’s

“Financial District”), giving the job of printing the magazine to the firm of Stone and Gardner “in whose establishment the work was economically and ably executed, to Mayne Reid’s entire satisfaction.”<sup>127</sup>

During the summer of 1869, in one of the more peculiar episodes of Reid’s New York sojourn, “the eminent phrenologists” Fowler and Wells asked the author “to allow them to examine his head.” Although the reason for the request has been lost to history, on July 29 he complied, visiting their establishment in the Bowery, where Nelson Sizer, “a practical phrenologist,” was assigned the task. In his report, which Charles Ollivant included in its entirety in his manuscript, Sizer seems to have gauged Reid well, although how much he derived from examining the bumps on his head and how much he knew beforehand or obtained through questioning his subject can only be conjectured. In any event, Sizer held that Reid’s life was “intense” as a result of his feeling “keenly” and thinking “clearly,” and that he was “susceptible to impressions.” In his judgment, Reid had inherited “his mother’s religious sympathies, her artistic taste, and her impetuosity of imagination and feeling.” adding in what seems a description of the way Reid worked when he was writing a book set in some locale he had not actually visited, that he “acquires knowledge rapidly, gathers facts wherever they may be found, treasures them and uses them, combines them, and organizes them into his daily life.” That the author was “open-hearted” and oftentimes “spoke with a frankness that is sometimes offensive” was certainly true. Sizer was also right on target when he commented that Reid was particularly “sensitive in regard to his reputation, and is easily elevated or depressed by praise or censure,” that he was “erratic in his mental action,” that he valued friends, home, and country, and that he possessed “a will that does not waver nor

bend.” His advice to the highly-strung writer was that he “should sleep abundantly, live temperately” and “avoid people who are as excitable as himself.”<sup>128</sup>

While living in New York, Reid chanced to meet his old friend Donn Piatt, whom he had not seen since 1849. Piatt later recalled visiting the author, now grown “grey, stout, and rosy,” and “his handsome little wife” in their “rooms at Union Square.” The Ohioan informed Reid “that the old homestead upon the Mac-o-Chee had fallen into decay, and of the little family circle he so fondly remembered I alone remained.” This news so saddened Reid, said Piatt, “that I proposed a bottle of wine to alleviate our sorrow, and he led the way to a subterranean excavation in Broadway, where we had not only the bottle, but dinner and several bottles.”<sup>129</sup>

Despite Reid’s literary reputation and his “Herculean efforts,”<sup>130</sup> Onward eventually failed, concluding with the February 1870 number. Charles Ollivant blamed it on a lack of advertising, which caused Reid to carry the financial burden entirely on his own. Joan Steele observed that its subtitle notwithstanding, the magazine was simply “not directed at a specific audience.” In other words, it tried to be too many things to too many people. Consequently, she wrote, it attracted neither advertisers nor “popular support.” The “range of *Onward’s* contents,” Steele commented further, “indicates the problem of direction to an audience.” Although “the ‘Young Manhood of America’ might be eager for backwoods adventure tales like ‘The Yellow Chief,’” de Peyster’s battle reviews, or “articles on natural history” and perhaps even Reid’s Croquet treatise, it was unlikely, she remarked, that they would care much for “attacks on the English parliamentary system” or “lengthy narrative poetry” such as “The Purple Swallow.”<sup>131</sup>

Unfortunately, what was abundantly clear to Steele in the early 1970s was seemingly incomprehensible to Mayne Reid a little more than a hundred years earlier. Although the erstwhile editor was certainly well aware of the magazine's poor sales, he seemed genuinely baffled by the cause. In Onward's final issue he printed a short piece entitled "A Magazine Mystery," in which a puzzled publisher called attention to public's lack of interest in his latest enterprise and wondered:

We thought we had reached an experience of life, that should enable us to comprehend most of its ordinary mysteries. Yet there is one now on our mind, apparently of the most commonplace order, that baffles our keenest inquiry, and keeps us within the dark *nimbus* of conjecture. It is the mystery of the magazine ONWARD.

Fourteen months ago we gave the first issue of this magazine to the American people, for whom it was designed. And designed — we can say it in all sincerity — to do them a service. To avoid control, or the chance of our design being thwarted, we started it on our own account — having selected a publisher of reputed enterprise as its agent. We commenced it with, as we supposed, sufficient capital to carry it to what is commonly called "paying point." Shall we be pardoned for saying, that we may have presumed a little on our *name*, when we can truthfully add, that we had far higher faith in our *acts* and *intentions*?<sup>132</sup>

Prefacing several pages of extracts taken from newspapers all over the nation, in which critics praised Onward, a perplexed and no doubt disappointed Reid listed what he saw as the magazine's virtues, asking quizzically:

In material, quantity, and mechanical execution, has it not been considered a money-worth? In these respects it is at least one-sixth cheaper than any of its contemporaries.

Has it spread before the public an inferior table of contents? Look below for the answer.

Has it been circumscribed in its views, sectional in its religious teachings, partizan in its politics, or local in its polemics? A perusal of it, from its first issue to the present hour — its painful last one — will give the negative to this quartette of questions. True, now and then, there may have been the appearance of sectionality or partisanship in its pages; and sectional or partizan newspapers have at times passed severe strictures upon it. It is a pleasure to know, that in nearly every case, when its intent had become better apprehended, and its motive more clearly understood, these criticisms have been apologized for, and their severity withdrawn.

Lastly, has it failed of public support for want of support of the Press? Again, we say, look below; read a verdict almost universal.<sup>133</sup>

Although he had now twice failed as a publisher — once in England and again in the United States — Reid's reputation as an author of adventure tales, fortunately for him, remained largely intact. And notwithstanding his earlier refusals to appear on stage, he accepted an invitation dated March 22, 1870, from “one hundred and twenty-two of the first citizens of New York,” including publisher-historian William Cullen Bryant, proposing that he lecture on the subject of Lord Byron. Although he was no doubt flattered, his agreement was probably motivated more by the need for money. It appears, however, that he anticipated the critics who were bound to point out his earlier reluctance to lecture, writing: “I have not, and never had, an aversion to come before the public as a speaker — only as a reader of my own writings.” Hoping that this explanation would clear up any “misapprehension,” he added: “Upon any subject of political importance, or social interest, I shall always be happy to give my views viva voce; and proud to do this when summoned by a requisition so distinguished as that with which you have honored me.”<sup>134</sup>

When Reid gave his poetry readings three years earlier in London, inclement weather was held to have adversely affected attendance. Unfortunately, his experience in New York was similar. The weather on the evening of April 18, 1870, wrote Ollivant, was “very impropitious [sic], the rain coming down in torrents.” Nevertheless, he added, “it did not prevent a select, if not very large, gathering” from coming to Steinway Hall to hear the celebrated author “discourse upon Bryon.”<sup>135</sup>

“Fashionably attired in light brown pants, closely-buttoned frock coat, and canary kids [gloves],” a no doubt flattered Reid listened as “the venerable James W. Gerard”

introduced him, calling attention to his “military services, the extraordinary fertility of his mind, and the rippling fluency of his pen.” Obviously aware of the author’s complaints about his publishers, Gerard also “pointed out the poor reward which by courtesy is styled compensation for literary services” and said that although a man could with “extraordinary ease...can achieve fortune by servitude to politics,” Reid “had wisely neglected to do so.”<sup>136</sup>

No doubt lending some weight to the evening, “the silvered poet” William Cullen Bryant “and the famous naturalist Professor B. Waterhouse Hawkins had places of honor on the stage.” What they and the small audience heard was a presentation that “was given quite extemporaneously.” Without notes and using only a rough draft as a guide, Reid’s “eloquent exposition,” in which he had nothing but praise for Bryon, was followed by selections from the English bard’s poetry. Altogether, the performance, in which the author-turned-lecturer included a counterblast to the “New England Transcendentalists,” lasted about ninety minutes.<sup>137</sup>

Shortly after his lecture at Steinway Hall, which received high praise from a critic writing for the New York Herald, Reid and his wife (and presumably also Ollivant) moved from East 84th Street to 27 West 24th Street — a rooming or apartment house of some kind, which was kept by the very same Ann Van Ness — “an original character,” wrote his devoted personal secretary — who had been the couple’s landlady during their sojourn at Union Square. This neighborhood was located slightly north of what is today known as the Chelsea section of Manhattan, between Madison Square Park on the east and the Hudson River on the west. Not long afterward, Reid experienced what was without a doubt one of the most harrowing episodes of his life.<sup>138</sup>

Unhappily, the former soldier's escopette wound had never properly healed and it troubled him from time-to-time throughout his life. Over the preceding five years however, the region of the injury had been "gradually swelling," brought on, thought Charles Ollivant, by Reid's cigar smoking and "a too free indulgence in his favorite beverage — whiskey." Ultimately, he conjectured, those habits "combined with the worries, anxieties, and laborious brain-work to which he had been subjected" since his bankruptcy, struck "the weakest part" of Reid's body, namely "the wounded leg." Finally, in the spring of 1870, the by-then-badly-infected wound suddenly burst open and began to discharge pus.<sup>139</sup>

Fortuitously, one of the residents of Mrs. Van Ness' rooming house "was a young doctor, William Argyle Watson by name," who, wrote Ollivant, "placed his services entirely at Mayne Reid's disposal, without regard to pecuniary reimbursement, devoting all his spare time and energies in his behalf with a singleness and purity of purpose." But although Watson did everything in his power "to alleviate and cure the distinguished patient," hopes for "his ultimate recovery were despaired of." When an eminent physician named Van Buren was called in to examine the former soldier, he "unhesitatingly pronounced the case a hopeless one." Reid, Van Buren guessed, had at best a few weeks left to live. In the meantime, "the wound — which was kept constantly poulticed and bandaged" kept "running freely." As Reid "daily grew weaker," he lost his appetite. With "milk forming his sole aliment and support," a jug was "kept constantly at his beside." Apparently, only Elizabeth Reid, Charles Ollivant, and "an occasional friend" took turns looking after the demanding patient, a job that Ollivant later described as "onerous."<sup>140</sup>

Many years after the event the ailing author's devoted friend vividly recalled one

particular night when Reid “had been very restless and required constant attention.” That evening, Ollivant had slept the best he could “on the hearth rug in an adjoining room — or rather attempted to sleep, real repose being quite out of the question, since I was repeatedly called to attend to the patient’s wants.” Waking at dawn, the youth went to check on Reid and “found him awake, his throat parched with thirst, an empty jug by his bedside.” Although the sun was just then coming up, Reid insisted that his young friend “take the jug and get it filled from the first milk cart to be encountered.” Complying with Reid’s request, the sleep-deprived personal secretary rushed “out into the grey dawn...and spent some half hour searching from one street to another” until he found a milk cart and managed to obtain “a quart of the nourishing beverage.”<sup>141</sup>

In late June, owing to the fact that he was “developing dangerous symptoms, and the facilities for nursing in hired rooms being limited,” Reid himself insisted on being taken to St. Luke’s Hospital. “The day of his departure” — June 30, 1870, Ollivant later wrote, “was indelibly fixed” in his memory.

At the hour ten a carriage was at the door in waiting to bear the invalid to the hospital. With great difficulty he was dressed. His bedroom was on the third story, and it was a sad sight to watch him descend the stairs. He had lost flesh considerably since his illness, his frock coat hanging loosely about his shoulders. On his head he wore a black velvet smoking cap, which brought out in strong contrast the palid [sic] whiteness of his countenance. Mrs. Reid and I assisted him to the head of the staircase, he insisted upon descending by his own unaided efforts. And in this wise: sitting down on the top stair with face looking forward, he worked himself slowly down with his hands, his legs being quite helpless. As I beheld him thus painfully sliding from one landing to another the conviction was painfully impressed upon me that this would be the last stage in his eventful career — that he would never leave the hospital to which he was being conveyed alive.<sup>142</sup>

At St. Luke’s, Dr. Watson had arranged for Reid to be placed in a “single bedstead in the large public ward” but a few days later, thanks to generosity of Benjamin Field, “one of



New York's most highly respected citizens," the ailing author was transferred to "a private room fitted with every comfort and convenience." Field, recalled Charles Ollivant, not only assured the hospital he would take financial responsibility for Reid's treatment, he immediately deposited fifty dollars as a "first instalment [sic]," at the same time giving "special instructions to the manager of the hospital, Dr. Muhlenbury, that Mayne Reid should be treated as a first-class patient" and that no expense "should be spared to effect a cure." Field also hired a private attendant, a Protestant Irishman named James Hogg. When the man discovered that Reid was "of the same nationality and religion as himself," remembered Ollivant, "he entered upon his duties as nurse with commendable ardour and assiduity, proving himself a faithful and devoted servant throughout Mayne Reid's illness."<sup>143</sup>

Although he seemed to be at death's door, Reid was not too ill on July 5 to dictate "a rather remarkable epistle" to the editor of the New York Sun, complaining about the noise from Independence Day fireworks set off "by the occupants...or their children" of "a row of dwelling houses in front of the hospital." In this letter, which the paper published (along with a sympathetic editorial written by publisher Charles A. Dana), the ailing author said that having been in the army, he was accustomed "to the roar of artillery." What concerned him, he wrote, were his fellow patients, especially those in danger of dying. Some of the hospitals nurses had told him "that they have known several cases where death has not only been hastened, but actually caused by the nervous startings and torture inflicted by these Fourth of July celebrations." Reid added that when the founder of the hospital had personally appealed to the neighbors to refrain, he was told by the residents: "We have a right to do as we please upon our own premises!" Responding angrily to the "utter falsity of this assumed view of

civic rights,” Reid concluded by saying:

I would remark to the man who, even under the sanction of long custom, and the pretence of country’s love, permits his children through mere wanton sport, to murder annually one or more of his fellow citizens — I say that such a man is not likely to make out of these children citizens who will be distinguished either for their patriotism or humanity.<sup>144</sup>

Reid’s letter, not surprisingly, caught the attention of other New Yorkers, one of who, an editorialist for the New York Times, had this to say upon the subject:

After Christmas there is generally an epidemic of crime. The same unfortunate phenomenon is repeated whenever a general holiday occurs. The Fourth of July is no exception to the rule. We expect noise, confusion, and many accidents on that day. People who play with gunpowder must expect to get burned. Of course there is a limit to this diversion, and the most ardent patriotism ought to hesitate before selecting the neighborhood of a hospital for its fusillade of joy. Capt. MAYNE REID, in a letter to a morning contemporary, feelingly sets forth the sufferings of the patients in St. Luke’s Hospital from this cause on the last Fourth of July. It is easy to conceive, as he alleges, that death has not only been accelerated, but actually caused, by the nervous excitement and torture resulting from such a disturbance. It is harder to understand how any persons, with the ordinary instincts of humanity, could have so slighted, as the residents of the vicinity are said to have slighted, the sufferings of sick and dying men. If individual charity is insufficient to regulate this matter, it should be attended to by the municipal authorities, and an ordinance enacted forbidding the discharge of any fire-arm or fire-work within a limited distance of any hospital. A still more effectual protection would be to have the hospitals themselves properly isolated, though in a crowded city that is not always feasible.<sup>145</sup>

Briefly, amputation of Reid’s left leg was contemplated but when it was discovered he had blood poisoning throughout “the whole system,” the idea was quickly abandoned as “ill advised.” Meanwhile, the old wound “continued to discharge” but to a lesser extent than before, raising hopes that Reid might be on his way to recovery. But then he had a setback, which was caused by the incompetence of a “junior doctor” who looked after him one day in the absence of “his regular medical attendant.”<sup>146</sup>

For some unknown reason the man “injudiciously administered...a powerful laxative

pill.” The result, unfortunately, was “a violent attack of diarrhea, which defied all the skill of the doctors to arrest.” This sudden assault on the ailing author’s system, combined with the oppressive summer heat in an era with no air conditioning, caused Reid to weaken again so rapidly that three days later “his case was pronounced hopeless.” Taking Ollivant aside, a doctor told him he needed to prepare for the worst, which could come at any moment, and most importantly, that he needed to make “arrangements...for immediate interment” owing to the hot weather in which a corpse could “only be kept on ice for a few hours.” Accordingly, the dutiful personal secretary telegraphed banker Le Grand Lockwood to tell him the news. The next day, Lockwood sent a representative to St. Luke’s “to get everything in readiness for Mayne Reid’s funeral.” Ollivant still remembered, many years later, that he was sent to Reid’s apartment on 24th Street to get “a black dress suit belonging to the dying author — it being the custom in America to adopt this mode of interment in place of the shroud [which was customary in Great Britain].” “At the same time,” he also remembered, he wrote a brief obituary in pencil on the back of an envelope “ready for sending to the press.” In the late 1880s, when he was writing his memoir of Reid, he still had it “in my possession.”<sup>147</sup>

Three days passed during which time Reid was “semi-comatose, lingering between life and death.” Standing vigil at his bedside with Mrs. Reid, Ollivant noticed, “the back of his hands showed those disruptive sores which too surely indicate the near approach of that grim specter — Death!” As for his mind, wrote the sorrowful secretary, it rambled “from on subject to another — though he appeared to recognise the watchers by his bedside.” For some reason he began to hiccough — and couldn’t stop. “Every visit,” Ollivant later wrote, “was

one of dread, in full expectation of learning the painful news of his demise.”<sup>148</sup>

Then suddenly and unexpectedly, on the morning of the fourth day since he had taken a turn for the worse, “a decided improvement set in.” The hiccoughing stopped “and his reason seemed fully restored.” What had happened? Ollivant wondered. His cure, Reid told him, had come in the form of a glass of “pure brandy.” The night before, after repeated swallows of brandy diluted with water had failed to bring his hiccoughing to an end, Reid managed to pour himself a shot of straight brandy from the bottle that was kept beside his bed. “Instantly,” he later told a journalist, “it went like fire through my veins — and with another draught my life was saved.”<sup>149</sup>

Reid’s recovery, Ollivant remembered, was nothing short of “marvelous.” On the very day he began to pull back from the brink of death, he “made a hearty meal of a beef steak!” Everyone, he recalled, doctors and friends alike, were pleasantly astonished, although the medical men were more guarded in their “hopes of his ultimate recovery, without further relapses.”<sup>150</sup>

In August, as he continued to make progress toward complete recovery, Reid was visited by Laura Ream, a correspondent for the Cincinnati Commercial. Fortunately Ollivant, who had left the hospital shortly before Ream arrived and did not know she was coming, managed afterward to obtain a copy of the resultant interview and included a transcript of it in the manuscript of his biography of Reid. Upon arrival at St. Luke’s, wrote Ream, the “gate shut behind me with a heavy clang” and she admitted to feeling “no little trepidation at my boldness.” When she inquired after Reid, she was shown to his room. “He was lying,” she remarked, “upon a bedstead similar the ones in the [public] ward, which was placed in the

center of the apartment.” Turning to look at his unexpected guest, “he presented the view of a middle aged sturdy looking English squire.” The head of the fifty-three year old author, she noticed, was “compact and covered by a profusion of dark brown hair which in contrast with the pallid complexion stood out as if it had no part and parcel with the corpse-like whiteness of the scalp.”<sup>151</sup> Continuing her description, she added:

The brow was smooth and fair, rounded out to gigantic proportions by ideality, causality, and reverence. The nose, nervous and scornful, would have been remarkable but for the large and beautiful eyes, that are restless habitually, but when fixed upon an object have a lancing effect, and withal an expression of great good heart, that is seconded by one of the most winning smiles I ever beheld. Hands of uncommon grace and beauty somehow complete the charm of his lips and eyes.<sup>152</sup>

One of the first questions Ream asked was Reid’s opinion of America. “Enthusiastically,” he told her, “This is the greatest nation upon the face of the globe,” adding: “There are some throes through which she is passing in her transition state, as it were, but there is no measure to her future greatness.” As for New York, he exclaimed, it “is the greatest city in the world.” Other world cities, the recently naturalized author remarked, had “millionaires and palaces that can be counted on your fingers.” New York, by contrast, “was a city of millionaires, and Fifth Avenue is lined with palaces” that surpassed those of any place else on earth. Hoping perhaps to flatter his interviewer, he added charmingly that although there were “a few cultivated women” to be found outside the United States, “America is a nation of cultivated, beautiful women.” “From Mexico to Maine,” he enthused, “pure, graceful, gentle, learned and lovely women surprise you at every step,” adding: “The little school teacher with a hundred primary scholars under control, has the presence and knowledge of a Queen.”<sup>153</sup>

When Reid confided to Ream that once his health was restored, he intended to go on

the lecture circuit, she seemed to think it was a grand idea, remarking:

My pen is cold and feeble to convey the spirit of Captain Mayne Reid's conversation. He certainly possesses all the grace of gesticulation, animated voice and mesmeric powers, to insure success as a lecturer. It will be a welcome relief to listen after the many speakers whose reputation as writers has impressed them upon the public.<sup>154</sup>

As they conversed, wrote Ream, "the air" came "fresh through the open window, laden with the murmur of leaves and twitter of swallows." Suddenly, a new sound intruded — "a light even step was heard approaching" — and into the room came Mrs. Reid. Ream's description of this meeting, which was later crossed out with a large "X" by Charles Ollivant in his manuscript (evidence obviously, of his falling out with Mrs. Reid), provides us with a revealing word picture of the woman whom the author had chosen for his wife:

...a lady came forward, pausing on the threshold. Oh, but she was fair! With her golden hair caught up under an azure fanchon of satin, and falling in soft ripples over her forehead. There was an expression of firmness in her calm blue eyes which gave character to the face of infantile shape and loveliness. From her face my eye wandered to her figure, struck with admiration at her graceful pose — an accomplishment few women possess. They dances and sometimes walk well, but they rarely know how to stand still. Her gown, I observed, was white, with an overdress or wrap of blue, admirably suited to her peculiar style of beauty.

'My wife,' said the invalid, and as he explained that I called because I had read his books she smiled and extended her hand. The smile was like sunshine, and the clasp of her soft cool hand was a positive luxury. The clear and musical voice was in keeping with her beautiful self, and I loitered for a moment to gather a full impression of the scene. It was her evening visit to her husband, and how he was 'getting on' betrayed her English birth. She was English. How long married I do not know, but she looked young, and seemed to share in her husband's devotion to this country.<sup>155</sup>

In September, just as it looked as if he was on the verge of a complete recovery, Reid suffered a relapse, complete with diarrhea and hiccoughing, that once again had his wife and friends believing the end was near. This time, Mrs. Reid was given a bedroom in the hospital and Ollivant "a small bed in the open ward," where he tried in vain to sleep. Again, the ailing



Figure 31. Mayne Reid's miraculous recovery. From the Dallas Morning News, May 1, 1932.

author alternated between consciousness and a semi-comatose state. During one of his more lucid moments, Ollivant later recalled, Reid admonished Hogg, his male nurse, for frightening Mrs. Reid by informing her that her husband was dying, telling the no-doubt regretful man that he had no intention of doing such a thing.<sup>156</sup> Mrs. Reid recalled later that her husband's sudden improvement commenced early on the morning of August 11, at about eight o'clock.

The doctors and two of the lady nurses were around his bed, when he suddenly raised himself up, exclaiming in a loud voice: "Turn out those she-Beezlebubs," pointing to the two ladies, "out of the room at once, preaching at a fellow, and telling him he's going to die. I'm not going to die. Bring me a beef-steak."<sup>157</sup>

Once again, Reid astonishingly pulled back from "the brink of grave." Perhaps even more remarkably, by September 10, he was well enough to go home to his rooms on 24th Street, where he was able to walk short distances unaided. Both Ollivant and Dr. Watson attributed his recovery to three things: Beef juice, brandy, and Reid's "indomitable will and courage."<sup>158</sup>

But although his body was growing stronger, recalled Ollivant, his mind began to suffer from attacks "of melancholia." One moment, he wrote, Reid's "spirit would reach a high pitch of merriment," the next, "without any apparent cause," he would fall into the deepest depths of despair. Ollivant believed it was due to "the strong injections of morphia, and draughts of chloral, to which he had been subjected at the hospital."<sup>159</sup>

"It was painful to witness," the devoted secretary later wrote. Reid began "to take singular fancies into his head which no reasoning or argument could dispel." Mrs. Reid found it particularly "trying" when he refused to allow her to leave his presence for fear that "something dreadful would happened to him" if she was not there. Another "fancy" he took



into his head was a compulsion to worry about his weight. It was almost farcical wrote Ollivant, who was one day standing by when Reid stepped on a scale at the nearby Fifth Avenue Hotel and discovered that he had suddenly gained three pounds in only twenty-four hours! When Ollivant “laughingly expressed...doubts of its accuracy,” his old friend became “greatly annoyed.” Unfortunately, Reid’s annoyance turned to “downright irritation,” remembered Ollivant, when the author chanced to reach into his pocket and discover a three-pound parcel of nails that he had purchased earlier at a hardware store! When Ollivant’s amusement turned into peals of laughter, Reid got so angry that he refused to speak to his young helper for several hours.<sup>160</sup>

The recovering author also took to compulsively “nibbling” between meals, his favorite snack being cookies (or biscuits as they are termed in Great Britain), followed by a “nip” of whiskey. Eventually the doctor who was keeping an eye on his progress, Alfred Lambert, told him to stop it and to eat only at three fixed times of the day because the digestive organs, like any other part of the body, needed rest. If he continued to eat almost constantly throughout the day, said Lambert, it would almost certainly lead to dyspepsia.<sup>161</sup>

Although Reid took the doctor’s advice, recalled Ollivant, his melancholia — what would today probably be termed “clinical depression” — failed to disappear. When several more weeks went by with no improvement, Dr. Lambert told him that a change of scenery might be just the thing for it, and suggested a trip to Europe. “At first,” said Ollivant, Reid “positively refused to entertain this proposition.” Despite “his misfortunes and broken health, he loved his adopted land dearly” and would not think of it. However, after concerned friends convinced him it might be a good idea, he relented. But, wrote Ollivant, there was a problem

as to “ways and means.” During his lengthy illness, Reid had not been able to write and earn any money and although Benjamin Field’s generosity had spared him from going into debt to pay for his hospitalization, he simply had no money to return with Mrs. Reid to England, “to which country they decided to go.”<sup>162</sup>

Mrs. Reid, whose version of events was slightly different from Ollivant’s, wrote that the couple’s decision to leave the United States came about as the result of “a consultation” with some “doctors, who gave it as their opinion that the only chance for Mayne Reid’s restoration was to return to his native land; and the sea voyage might have a beneficial effect on him.” They also, she added, told her “privately that if her husband remained any longer in the States, he would end his days in a lunatic asylum.” In the end, she wrote, with some “tact and persuasion,” she managed “to get Mayne Reid’s consent to go home to Ireland.” Not surprisingly, Mrs. Reid remarked, “He shrank from returning to England, or his home, in his then altered circumstances.”<sup>163</sup>

As he had done in England four years earlier, when Reid faced bankruptcy, Ollivant once more came to the rescue. On October 10 the young man drafted an explanation of the destitute author’s situation and then called upon Reid’s friends and admirers for the purpose of soliciting funds. Although Mrs. Reid claimed this was Dr. Watson’s suggestion, Ollivant said it was his idea alone. In any event, in a matter of days he raised \$670, which was used to pay for the first class steamship tickets that the bankers J. & J. Stuart arranged for the Reids to purchase at half price. Years later, both Mrs. Reid and Charles Ollivant remembered the author’s benefactors and the amounts they donated: Le Grand Lockwood, \$150; Cortlandt de P. Field & Co., \$100; John W. Hamersley, \$100; Dudley Field, \$50; Major-General Joseph

Hooker, \$50; James W. Gerard, \$50; New York Ledger publisher Robert Bonner, \$50; Onward contributor J. Watts de Peyster, \$25; James W. Beekman, \$25; publisher and historian William Cullen Bryant, \$25; Judge Charles P. Daly, \$25; L. B. Stone, \$10; and Theodore Roosevelt, \$10.<sup>164</sup>

When he was writing his biography of Reid, Ollivant identified Theodore Roosevelt, in the list above, as the “owner of two fine cattle ranches in the Badlands of Dakota,”<sup>165</sup> not realizing, obviously, that the then-ranch owner was the future president, whereas the man who helped his friend was almost certainly Theodore Roosevelt *Senior*, who bore the same name. At the time of the Reid’s financial distress in 1870, the celebrated “TR” was only eleven years old. Although Mayne Reid was one of his favorite authors, it is highly unlikely that it was he who made the \$10 contribution.

On October 22, 1870, as two of the only four passengers aboard the steamer *S.S. Siberia*, Mayne Reid and his wife, along with Mrs. Reid’s Mexican poodle “Tottie,” departed New York, never to return. Although Laura Ream thought that Elizabeth Reid shared her husband’s devotion to the United States, Charles Ollivant, who was in a much better position to know, claims this was not the case at all. Years later, in response to a comment she jotted on the back of a page of his manuscript, on which was copied out a poem about the United States written by Reid, Charles Ollivant remarked above it: “Mrs. R always hated America — even as her husband loved it — hence her objection to everything illustrative of that noble country.”<sup>166</sup> This information suggests that it was she, rather than Reid’s doctors, who initially suggested that her ailing husband return to the British Isles. Perhaps the physicians merely concurred, having nothing better to offer.

In any event, we may easily imagine that in the late-1880s, when he recalled the day of the Reid's departure in the pages of his manuscript, the feelings that he had at that time came back to Ollivant as he wrote:

I well remember parting from him on the deck of the steamer, it being mutually agreed that my position as private secretary should cease from this date. My intention was to push my fortunes as best I could in one of the far Western Territories of Uncle Sam's vast domain. ["For I loved America as much as Mayne Reid did," he wrote in another version.] For all that, not without reluctance and pain did I bid Mayne Reid farewell, for I knew the uncertainties of life and that we might never meet again.

It was in truth a painful parting, and as I stood on the wharf and watched the steamer receding in the distance, I felt it to be a cruel fate which thus separated us. I slowly wended my way back to my lodgings with thoughts surging through my mind, which were far from pleasant: thus to be left in New York a stranger among strangers, to carve my fortune as best I could unaided and alone.<sup>167</sup>

## CHAPTER NINE

### FINAL YEARS IN ENGLAND

I am sorry to say that I am still abed, and suffering severe pain, which tortures me continuously. Still I am a little stronger, and if favoured by circumstances, may yet survive this terrible trial.

— Mayne Reid, letter to Charles Ollivant, 1874<sup>1</sup>

Owing to a delay at Boston, the Cunard steamer *Siberia* was late arriving in New York Harbor after making its transatlantic crossing. When impatient travelers hoping to embark upon it sailed on another ship instead, the Reids and one other person became the only passengers for its return journey. This turned out to be fortuitous. “From the kindness which my husband and self received,” remembered Elizabeth Reid, “we might have been supposed to have chartered the whole ship.” Although it was a violation of the line’s policy, her little dog “Tottie” was allowed to share their cabin on the main deck. Additionally, owing to the fact that Reid “suffered from strange delusions, and was not responsible for his actions,” Captain Harrison took the precaution of having the ship’s physician, Doctor Spence, sleep in a cabin opposite the Reids; the first officer also.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these small favors, it was an unpleasant journey. Encountering stormy seas, the *Siberia*’s crossing took twelve days, which was longer than usual. And because of his weakened physical condition and erratic state of mind, Reid must have suffered much more than he might have under ordinary circumstances. To make matters worse, when the vessel arrived at Queenstown, where the couple had intended to land, choppy waters forced them to

continue on to Liverpool. Conditions were little better at the mouth of the Mersey. Instead of crossing from the steamer to a tender on a gangplank of some sort, the first officer had to take Mrs. Reid up in his arms and leap with her into the tender. “A sailor,” wrote Elizabeth Reid, “performed the same office for my husband and the other passenger” as well as for Tottie.<sup>3</sup> Miraculously, there were no serious mishaps.

After spending one night ashore in England, the Reids re-crossed the Irish Sea on another steamer bound for Belfast. Elizabeth Reid later claimed that the transatlantic voyage “had done Mayne Reid some little good,” but it is hard to imagine how that could be. He could not walk without assistance and was mentally unstable. In any event, the ailing author was “once more...on the shores of his native land — his home.” But it was a bitter homecoming. “No welcome awaited the man bankrupt in health and pocket,” his wife recalled, “such as had been accorded to the hero fresh from the wounds of war!”<sup>4</sup> Writing several years later, Charles Ollivant noticed the irony of Reid’s returning almost exactly three years to the day he arrived in America to make a new start.<sup>5</sup>

Initially, Reid and his wife stayed at Mourne View, the old family homestead at Ballyrone, which had been left to his brother Samuel Edgar Reid after their father died in July 1868 — at the very time the newly-naturalized author had been in London on business, having sailed from New York a month earlier. (There seems to be no record of whether Reid learned of his father’s death at the time it occurred or after his return to the United States in August 1868.) After a few weeks the couple went on to visit one of Reid’s sisters and her husband, the Reverend T. Cromie, who lived, according to Charles Ollivant, near Newry. (Mrs. Reid said the Cromies lived at Armagh.). All the while, remembered Ollivant, Reid

“suffered from deep melancholy, added to a constant dread of losing his mind.” Unwilling to be “left alone for a moment,” his wife had “to be constantly by his side.” Moreover, “she was the only one who had any control over him at this time.”<sup>6</sup>

Doubtlessly distressed by what he observed, the author’s well-meaning brother-in-law advised the couple to seek out Smedley’s Water Cure Establishment, at Matlock, Derbyshire, in hopes of finding a cure for Reid’s severe melancholia. Desperate, and perhaps because they were wearing out their welcome and realized it, the couple almost immediately set sail for England. And so, “once more,” remembered Mrs. Reid, “we embarked on a stormy sea,” with her husband watching the coast of Ireland slowly receding from view, never again to return,<sup>7</sup> even though he had nearly thirteen years of life left to him at that time.

Owing to its “medicinal waters,” which were first discovered in 1698, Matlock had long been “frequented by the neighboring gentry as an agreeable retreat during the summer months for health and amusement.”<sup>8</sup> When the Reids arrived in December 1870, Smedley’s “Hydropathic Establishment,” as it was termed, had been in business for nearly two decades. According to an advertisement in a local guidebook, the resort was “situated in one of the most salubrious localities” and commanded “some of the most beautiful scenery in Derbyshire.” It had the added benefit of being within walking distance of Matlock Bridge Station, “where Conveyances from the Establishment meet every train.”<sup>9</sup>

In all likelihood the Reids traveled to Matlock on the Midland Railway, which provided the only train service to Matlock Bridge Station. Upon arrival, they also probably availed themselves of the transportation provided by Smedley’s. However, when they checked into the “Hydro,” as Mrs. Reid termed it (she also called it Smedley’s Asylum) they

immediately began to have misgivings. It was a terrible place, thought Mrs. Reid, remarking, “‘Abandon all hope ye who enter here,’ seemed to be written on its portal.” The couple’s accommodations, she remembered some twenty years after the event, were particularly dreadful.

The room allotted to us contained two hard-looking, uninviting couches, on which we were supposed to seek repose. Two wooden chairs, and a sofa covered in black, a deal dressing-table, wash-stand, and chest of drawers composed the furniture, while the fireplace was utterly black, a kind of stove, with no fire visible. There was no bell in the room, such a thing being considered superfluous.

Watching the look of dismay on my husband’s face as his gaze rested on the funereal-looking sofa, I endeavoured to appear cheerful.

Passing out of the dining-hall after dinner into the adjoining room, we saw some of our fellow companions reclining on couches, each with a pillow over the region of the stomach. This was supposed to be an aid to digestion. The walls and doors were adorned with various texts, and in large letters was written: “The word ‘crisis’ is not allowed to be spoken of during meals.”

Mayne Reid turned a questioning and despairing look upon some of his fellow-sufferers.

“It’s the inquisition, where we are tortured on the rack, and our flesh mortified!” murmured a voice in his ear.<sup>10</sup>

Not only was the institution unpleasant and uninviting, its administrators were not so flexible as the Cunard Line captain. No dogs were allowed and no exceptions, apparently, were made. Thus “Tottie” had to be boarded out, a necessity that caused Elizabeth Reid a great deal of anxiety. Reid himself disliked Smedley’s for other reasons. “The fixed hours for meals, coupled with restrictions in diet — and the periodical calls to prayer — galled his free spirit,” wrote Charles Ollivant. After two days, they had had enough. Responding to Elizabeth’s no doubt constant worry about her dog, her husband told her, “Come along dear, we will fetch Tottie back, I won’t submit to being bullied in this manner!”<sup>11</sup>

“So we trudged through the snow,” recalled Mrs. Reid, to the house where the dog had been taken. There, she remembered, “the joy expressed by Tottie at seeing my face again



was quite human-like.” After being told by the woman who had been taking care of the Chihuahua that it had refused to eat or drink anything in their absence, they “carried back the little creature in triumph.” The next day they checked out of Smedley’s and went “higher up the hill” to Matlock House, “a much more cheerful and civilized ‘Hydro,’” where they spent the next nine weeks “receiving every kindness from its proprietors.”<sup>12</sup>

Sometime in early 1871, when the Reids began to run low on money and there seemed to be no change in the Captain’s condition (in his delusional state, he did not think he could even write his own name), Mrs. Reid took her husband by train to London to consult Dr. Russell Reynolds, “a specialist for brain distresses,” who had been recommended to her. It was a harrowing trip. Throughout the journey she had to “hold on to his coat-tails...for he would insist upon opening the carriage door and sitting on the step, as he declared he must jump out.” All the while, Tottie “was barking her disapproval of her master’s behavior.”<sup>13</sup>

After Doctor Russell had examined the ailing author, he told him he should “try and work his brain a little every day, and not to give way to fancies.” Russell also prescribed “plenty of good nourishment to feed the brain.” Although it was the sort of simple advice that any sensible person could have suggested, it appears that they both took it seriously and what is more, it seems to have had the desired effect. “Very shortly,” remembered Elizabeth Reid, “that brain, which had been so sadly clouded, awoke to energy, and Mayne Reid resumed the pen with somewhat of his old fire.”<sup>14</sup>

During their first few days or weeks in London, the Reid were guests at the Langham Hotel, a grand Victorian edifice that still stands today at Portland Place, W1, not far from the Harley Street district where many of the capital’s doctors then had their offices. On March

27, obviously before his mental health began to improve, Reid wrote to Charles Ollivant, who was still in New York, on Langham Hotel stationary:

We are wondering at not having heard from you for a long time and especially at hearing nothing in regard to the novel in the hands of Mr. Brown. We have not heard from Mr. B. though Mrs. Reid's letter to him was dated Feb. 4. Do write at once and tell me what is being done.

I am better in physical health, but alas! my brain is still terribly clouded and my heart sadly [word illegible] with such melancholy. I know not what I shall do for a living, as I may never more be able to write. But I think I could give a reading, and if I could find the Byron lecture might deliver it at Nottingham and some other places (perhaps Manchester) and gain something by it. But we have looked through all our papers and could not find it, and conclude it must be among the things left in America. Look for it dear Charles and sent it on at once, if found, as I do not feel able to go on without it. I met many Manchester people at Matlock and gave them a high character of yourself. Tell Doctor Watson I have not forgotten his request about his namesake Sir Thomas Watson. I bought for twenty-two shillings, a fine engraving of Sir Thomas and got him to write his autograph upon it. It is packed up and at the Langham Hotel to be sent to Dr. Watson by some one going over.

We are only here for a few days. I shall probably go back to Matlock water [soon?] but a letter to Langham Hotel will always reach me.

Mrs. Reid desires kind remembrances to you. Remember me to [Frederick] Whittaker if you see him, also to Dr. Joseph Watson and to all who inquire after me.<sup>15</sup>

The identity of the "Mr. Brown" mentioned in Reid's letter is not clear, nor do we know the title of the novel to which Reid referred in his letter. It is equally uncertain whether Reid returned to Matlock. What *is* certain, however, is that there was no repeat of the Bryon lecture in London. Whether this was because Ollivant was unable to locate Reid's draft or the author simply gave up the idea is unknown. We also know, as his wife indicated, that he took Dr. Russell's advice and began to write again.

Sometime near the end of March the Reids found either rooms or a house to rent on Inverness Street, NW1 — located between Gloucester Crescent and Camden High Street, a few blocks northeast of Regent's Park. Here, as spring approached, and with it more pleasant weather, Reid began to return to some semblance of normality. Being within walking

distance of the park (on the far side of which lay the Reids' first home together), we may imagine that the couple took advantage of its proximity for fresh air and exercise. In any event, it was here in this part of London that Reid began to write again — putting his hand to a number of short articles for Cassell's Illustrated Travels, the most noteworthy being “A Zig-Zag Journey Through Mexico” and “A Flying Visit to Florida” (where, interestingly, he had never been). He also raised some no-doubt-needed money by selling the publication rights to The Lone Ranche to book publishers Chapman and Hall, for which he received one hundred and ten guineas, or a little more than £115.<sup>16</sup>

In May the Reids moved to 58 Seymour Street, W1, near Portman Square and only a short walk from the Langham Hotel. Here, the recuperating author began a new serial, “The Death Shot,” a romantic adventure set in Louisiana and Texas. The first installment appeared in the December 23, 1871 issue of The Penny Illustrated Paper, which was published by William Ingram, owner also of The Illustrated London News. For this work Reid was paid thirty shillings per column. Wisely, he retained the copyright, allowing Ingram only a limited right to publication in his periodical.<sup>17</sup>

Although his illness had reduced him to dependence on the generosity of friends in order to return to the other side of the Atlantic, Reid may have had some income in late 1870 or early 1871 from some of his earlier work in the United States. On September 15, 1870, even before he and his wife set sail aboard the *Siberia*, the ailing author's American book publisher, Sheldon & Company, introduced volume one of The Castaways; or Adventures in the Wilds of Borneo. Volume two, The Tall Patagonian, was in bookstores exactly one week before they departed.<sup>18</sup> However, in what amount and precisely when he received

remuneration for this work is unknown. In December 1870 an advertisement for the book was printed in The Living Age<sup>19</sup> and in January 1871 a reviewer for Harper's New Monthly Magazine, called attention to it, remarking that “under the guise of a rather highly wrought story of quite improbable adventure, somewhat of the Robinson Crusoe order,” the author “manages to give his readers a good deal of useful information about life and nature in the Malay Archipelago.”<sup>20</sup> A critic for The Galaxy was a little more enthusiastic, writing:

In “The Castaways” (Sheldon & Co.) Captain Mayne Reid has spread a feast to the liking of his boy readers. The adventures of these “Castaways” are placed upon the wild shores of Borneo. The wonders of tropical lands, gorillas, big snakes, sharks, strange fruits, he describes so graphically that every boy will wish his lines had been cast away in such pleasant places. From the days of “poor Robinson Crusoe” no juvenile literature has been more popular than tales like this, and Captain Reid has made an addition to it that will delight the children.<sup>21</sup>

Joan Steele has pointed out that during this period, when Reid was recovering from his melancholia in London, he penned a number of letters to Henry Blackburn, an author of travel books and editor of the periodical London Society. In one he thanked Blackburn for sending him a £4 check in payment for a short article, “The Maniac Skater.” His gratitude, however, was not just for the money, but also, as he revealed to Blackburn, because the acceptance of the article had given him “hope that I may still be able to earn bread without begging it.” Furthermore, it infused him with the hope that the “despair” with which he had been afflicted for the past year, “may yet pass away.” Steele also noted that the article in question was not actually Reid’s work, but rather a revision of “The Mad Skater,” originally credited to Homer Greene of Poughkeepsie, New York, which had appeared in the June 1869 issue of Onward. “Even the illustration” was similar, remarked Steele, “although,” she added, “the English version, a Dalziel engraving by F. A. Fraser, is of a higher quality.”<sup>22</sup> Sadly,

this incident lends weight to the charge that Reid was sometimes a plagiarist.

Steele comments further that Reid wrote to Blackburn again on November 30, 1871, advising him that two more articles were nearly ready, suggesting some titles, but telling the editor that he was free to call them whatever he wished. One, "Captured by Confeds," a tale of the American Civil War, was published anonymously, in the May 1872 issue of London Society. The other, "Ghost, or Grizzly," set in the Rocky Mountains, appeared in the June 1872 issue, also un-credited. Finally, another recycled Onward piece, "Brother Against Brother," which Steele believed was almost certainly Reid's own work, was printed in the November 1872 issue of London Society. "There may be other reprints buried in the pages of assorted English journals of the period," she conjectured, "so that one can readily agree with Graham Pollard's description of the Reid bibliography as a 'tortuous' one."<sup>23</sup> "Brother Against Brother" also appeared in the November 24, 1872 edition of the New York Times.<sup>24</sup>

Steele remarked further that in pursuit of "his interest in non-fiction," the recovering author wrote a letter on October 17, 1871, to "Frederic Chapman of Chapman and Hall in a further attempt to promote his travel stories." More interestingly, the letter, which Steele quoted in its entirety, makes clear that despite his two previous publishing failures Reid still held fast to the idea of editing a periodical. Only this time, what he had in mind was a magazine that focused on travel adventures that would "be interesting not only in a popular sense, but scientifically instructive." The letter also reveals that Reid was well aware of what critics on both sides of the Atlantic agreed was his principal talent, adding: "It is because the adventures told in some of my romances have this quality [of being "scientifically instructive"] that people speak of them with respect." Pricing it at threepence "on the

Railway Stalls,” such a publication, “which would from week to week instruct...in a sparkling and lucid style would assuredly be read.” If he was any judge of “the spirit of the age,” Reid commented, his proposed periodical would almost certainly outsell “the Spectator, Examiner, Saturday Review, and Athenaeum combined.”<sup>25</sup>

To entice Chapman further, and no doubt because he was painfully aware of the need for advertising to support such a venture, Reid proposed that the magazine also contain “the best weekly epitome of foreign news,” his “command of several languages,” he remarked, enabling him to glean such information from “valuable periodicals from all parts of the world.” This news, along with information about the “the prices of living in countries being colonized, the routes to reach these new homes, the impediments to be taken thither,” would appeal to people of all classes. More importantly, it would encourage “advertising patronage of Steam Companies, outfitters, etc.” that would be seen by those who read “the Traveller and Voyager” — the title, apparently, of the publication he had in mind. In conclusion, wrote Reid: “If you will establish such a periodical and make me the manager I will neither be hard to please nor hard to pay. I know from experience you will treat me well.”<sup>26</sup>

Although, as Steele points out, ‘no such work as Reid proposed was issued by Chapman and Hall,’ travel stories seem to have been his stock in trade at the time. Not only were there the aforementioned items in Cassell’s Illustrated Travels, he also had a short piece, “A Tour of Texas,” published in Field. Steele notes further that “A Zig-Zag Journey Through Mexico” was included in a travel anthology called Wonderful Adventures.<sup>27</sup>

Even though Reid had physically departed from the United States, he continued to maintain ties to his adopted land. On August 17, 1871, using Langham Hotel stationary, Reid

penned a letter of reference for former Onward contributor Edward Denny. Addressed to an unknown recipient, he confirmed that Denny had been “nearly two years engaged by me in a literary enterprise calling for capability of a high order, as also industry and integrity.” Furthermore, wrote the former magazine publisher, “In all things during the whole period of our intercourse, Mr. Denny gave me complete satisfaction, and I shall be happy to give...any further assurance as to his character and capacity for business.”<sup>28</sup>

A few months later, following his return to work, Reid wrote an important and optimistic letter to New York periodical publishers Beadle and Adams, while staying at or visiting the Langham Hotel in London. It read:

Gentlemen,

After a long and protracted malady of both mind and body I am, thank heaven, once more able to work again and will now I trust be able to carry out my contract with you.

I return to my work with something of my old-time spirit and vigour. My long illness, while it rendered me helpless as a child, has left me unscathed mentally; and with my now rapidly-growing physical strength, I take up my pen with a zest which I never expected again would control me. I write this new serial [“The Death Shot”] with singular interest in the subject; I feel once more the wild free life of the plains and prairies; and, if I have pleased my friends in my former works, in this I shall, I think, answer all expectations which you may excite concerning it.

Thanking you for much kindness while I was in the United States,

I remain,

Sincerely and faithfully yours,  
MAYNE REID<sup>29</sup>

“The Death Shot,” to which Reid referred in his letter, was re-titled “Tracked to Death; or, the Last Shot” and serialized in Beadle’s twenty-cents Saturday Journal beginning on January 20 and continuing through August 17, 1872. The tale was reprised in 1877, when it appeared under the original title as a serial in the Beadle-owned Starr’s New York Library, which also sold for twenty cents. Some other Reid stories serialized by Beadle and Adams

during the 1870s include: “The Specter Barque,” which ran from June 28 to November 15, 1873 in the Saturday Journal (for which it was “written expressly”); “The Headless Horseman,” which ran from February 14 to September 12, 1874, also in the Saturday Journal; and “The Specter Rider, A Tale of the Mexican Table-Land,” which began serialization in the April 19, 1879 issue of Young New Yorker, finishing on April 26.<sup>30</sup>

On New Year’s Eve 1871 Reid sent a short note to Charles Ollivant, who by this time had returned to England and was living once more at Sale, Cheshire, to wish him a “Happy and prosperous new year.” Expressing regret for an irregular correspondence, he wanted his friend to know that he “could not let the old year pass off” without telling him of his “still unaltered affection” for him. “Sadly,” Reid remarked, he was “still suffering,” but added that in spite of his weakness, he was “compelled...to “go into the old harness” and write. Already, he was working on an unnamed “new tale” for the Penny Illustrated Paper that “promises success.” Should “it attain this,” he added hopefully, “it will do much to enable me to earn my bread in the coming years.” His confidence was bolstered, he remarked further, by the fact that the periodical was owned by London Illustrated News publisher William Ingram. “So you can see I am in good hands.” In the United States, he informed his young friend, Beadle and Adams were not only planning to publish “The Death Shot” but also to pay him “very well for it.” Former Onward contributor Frederick Whittaker, he added, was acting as his New York agent. His hope was that these recent developments would somehow make up for “the terrible experience we had of it” there.<sup>31</sup>

In the spring of 1872 the Reids moved to 33 Wigmore Street, Cavendish Square, W1, where The Death Shot was eventually completed.<sup>32</sup> In July of that year the couple took a long



holiday, spending a number of weeks traveling through South Wales. On September 4, 1872, after returning to London, the still-depressed author sent a long overdue letter to Charles Ollivant, thanking him for sending some newspapers, inviting him to visit, praising the Welsh (“they are a people far superior to the Saxon” he wrote), and expressing doubts that he would ever fully recover from the ordeal he underwent during the summer of 1870.<sup>33</sup>

I am still suffering after all of my rambles through Wales in search of health. The grouse hunting and salmon fishing, with much hospitality received from Welsh squires has failed to remove my sadness; which is from a physical cause, from the damage done to my inner man by those butchers of St. Luke’s Hospital, New York.<sup>34</sup>

In a letter dated September 27, Reid also revealed that he was readying The Death Shot “for press” and was about to “commence a novel of the Maximillian Empire in Mexico, to be called ‘No Quarter!’” He observed further that a newspaper story Ollivant had sent him, alleging that he had come close to dueling in Mexico with an officer named Marshall, was “not fact, but has foundation.” A duel was “in prospect,” the former soldier confessed, “but MacKinstry [sic], not Marshall, apologized to me by his second, not caring to be shot at.” Reid remarked in closing that “[Robert] Lusk the artist with his old mother has just arrived here from New York,” adding that he had “got him some work already.”<sup>35</sup>

On October 22, Reid confided in another letter to Ollivant that his physical health was still impaired. “Yesterday on my way to the city,” he wrote, “I came near falling over in the street.” Unable to continue his journey, the ailing author took a cab home but felt so weak he was “scarce able to hail the cab.” To make matters worse, he added, in spite of “the success of the Death Shot,” Ingram had no interest in publishing another serial from him. “The thought of being in want presses too sorely on my nervous system — both on the heart and the brain.” What he needed, the anxious author declared, was “success in obtaining a

competency,” i.e., a steady income of some kind. If that could somehow be arranged, Reid continued, “I could take rest, amuse myself, and get well.”<sup>36</sup>

Expressing the hope that it might provide him with such a “competency,” Reid revealed his plans to publish a periodical, to be called Flood and Field. That very day, he told Ollivant, “a young man who travels for [the] London Illustrated News leaves here...for a journey to Brighton and South Coast towns” to distribute 500 circulars, advertising the proposed venture, to news agents in that region. His representative was also charged, added the hopeful author, with the duty of reporting, “from day to day how they are received by the trade.” If the South Coast newsagents, “who in a manner represent the public,” seem “hungry for such a periodical,” he concluded, “then I shall hasten to bring it out.”<sup>37</sup>

Reid’s expectation, he explained to his young friend, was “that the Death Shot has made me a strong Clientele among the intelligent penny public.” If so, he added excitedly, “I believe with them I may stand a chance of success.” Indeed, he remarked further, all the London newsagents to whom he had spoken had assured him of it. “With a circulation of 10000 I would not lose,” he predicted, “and with 20000 I should get a fair price for my labour.” More importantly, he hoped to “establish something permanent — something to give me a little income to be left in case of my being called away.” “This might do it,” he concluded: “I can think of nothing else.”<sup>38</sup>

An integral part of his plan involved Beadle and Adams of New York. The previous year, he reminded Ollivant, the firm had paid him \$150 for “The Death Shot.” He revealed further that Beadle was willing to “give fifteen hundred dollars (£300) for a work of 150,000 words,” provided the firm kept the American copyright. This seemed to mesh perfectly with

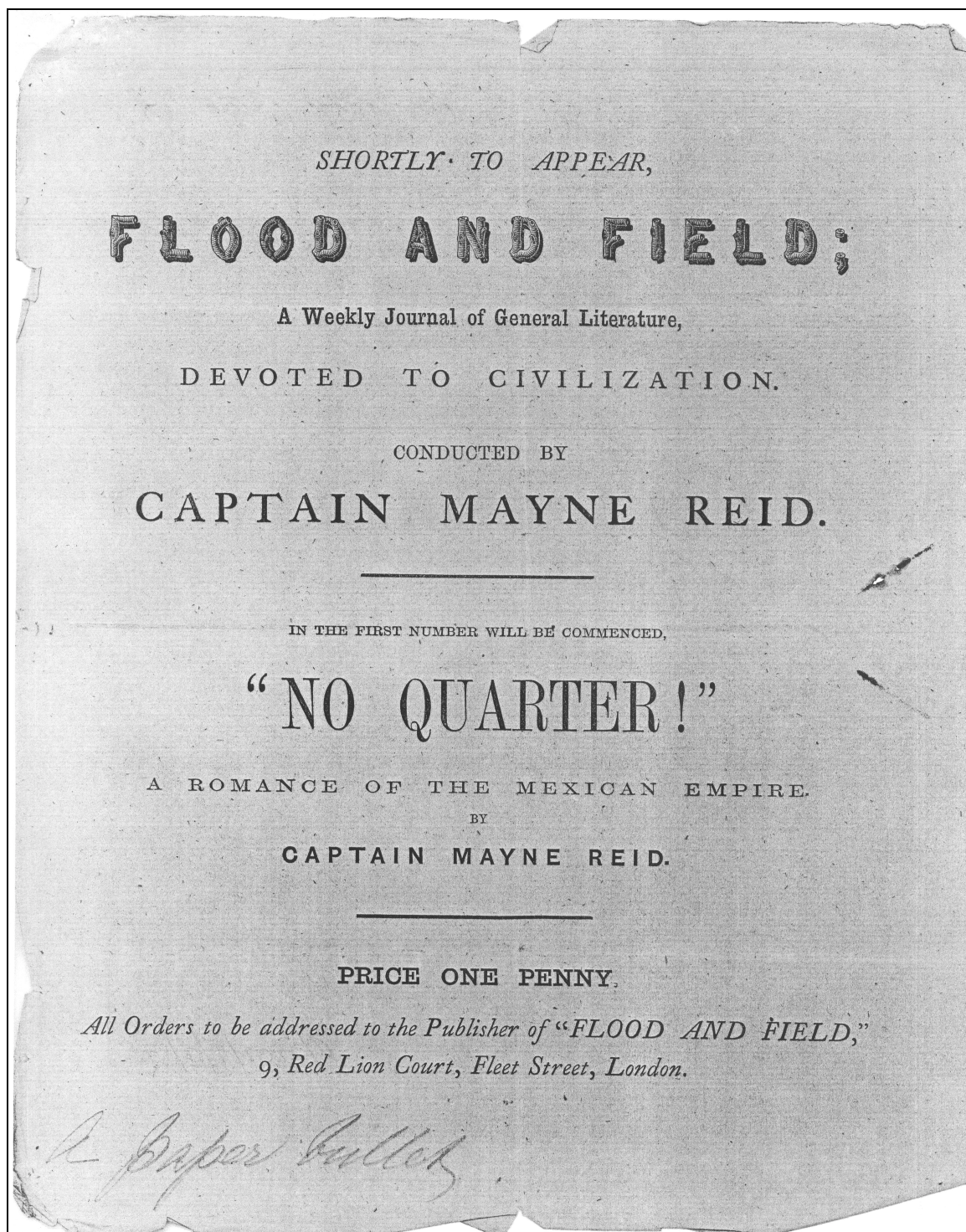


Figure 32. Flood and Field prospectus. Courtesy Public Records Office of Northern Ireland.

his ideas for Flood and Field. What he proposed was to write stories for his new magazine and publish them in serial form, retaining the British copyright. He would then sell the completed tales, along with the American copyright, to Beadle and Adams. “So that after all dear Charles,” Reid concluded, “the sad expedition to America may have yet some good result; by letting me know how to bargain over there.”<sup>39</sup>

Although Reid’s unfortunate experience with Onward had clearly not soured him on the idea of publishing a magazine, it *did* make him aware that one of the reasons for its failure had been the high cost of production. “It was the first start with Carleton and his printers that broke ‘Onward,’ down” he reminded Ollivant, who had almost certainly heard this complaint many times before. “I was in debt and difficulty from the very first day.”<sup>40</sup> Naturally, he wanted to avoid making the same mistake.

I think I could manage Flood & Field without [word illegible]. Even to write the story and do all the editing myself. The chief trouble will be in the publishing. If I put it in the hands of a publisher, it will be the old tale over again. He would profit from the start while I might get nothing.<sup>41</sup>

Consequently, he explained to his young friend, he intended to publish it himself and “to begin cautiously and without waste of money.”<sup>42</sup> However, while the remainder of the letter was guardedly optimistic as the chances of success for such a publication, Flood and Field never appeared. The reason, as Charles Ollivant later recalled, was quite simple. There were “other projects, promising better paying results with less risk.” Reid’s young admirer noted that the story “No Quarter” was eventually written, but with its setting dramatically changed — from Maximillian’s Mexico to Cromwell’s England!<sup>43</sup>

In November, in a rather lengthy communication, Reid told Ollivant that he was hoping to buy back the copyrights to some of his earlier works. “Not my boys’ books,” he

clarified, “but only the novels.”<sup>44</sup> Charles H. Clarke, he remarked, held ten of these while George Routledge had two. In his unpublished biography of Reid, Ollivant remarked that Clarke owned the copyright on twenty-four of Reid’s books, a number that must have included the boys’ books in which the nearly impoverished author said he had no interest. Ollivant also remembered that over the next several months, from December 1872 through June 1874, Reid was assisted by “kind friends” to repurchase “all these copyrights,”<sup>45</sup> although he was imprecise about whether he meant only the novels that Reid hoped to buy, or the boys’ books as well. In either event, one of the “kindest” of the author’s friends, and perhaps his only “friend” in this endeavor, “a la Lockwood” wrote Reid, was “Mr. Morgan” of Morgan, Peabody and Company of New York and London. Unfortunately, it is unclear whether the “Mr. Morgan” to whom Reid referred in his letter<sup>46</sup> was Junius Spencer Morgan, partner of George Peabody, or Morgan’s now more famous (or infamous, depending upon one’s point-of-view) son John Pierpont (a.k.a., J.P.) Morgan, who was at that time an agent and attorney for the firm’s London branch, through which Reid was in contact with his benefactor in the United States.

At first Reid was not completely sure his efforts would pay off. In his letter to his young friend he expressed a great deal of worry, declaring, “I tremble for the result” if his plans did “not come off.” Almost “any disappointment,” he wrote further, increased his “melancholia.” It was a “sad plight,” he shuddered, “that preys upon my vitals.”<sup>47</sup>

Uncertainly as to the two publishers’ willingness to sell was the anxious author’s primary fear. He was also at the mercy of Morgan’s solicitor (lawyer) in England, whose charge was to judge the worthiness of the transaction. As it turned out, Clarke was willing to

sell, asking £500 for the copyrights and eleven printing plates. As negotiated, Reid was also to receive 1,000 copies of each of the eight books (8,000 copies altogether), for which he would pay a further £500. These volumes would then “be transferred to Mr. Morgan.” “The only fear now,” he confided to Ollivant, “is of Clarke’s title deeds to the books,” which were “not clear” owing to the fact that the publisher had declared bankruptcy during Reid’s New York sojourn. This in turn had led to the transference of the copyrights to another party. But apparently, now that Clarke’s financial difficulties were behind him, he was entitled to have them back. Although Reid felt “certain” there would be no problem in that regard, his principal “difficulty,” he wrote apprehensively, was getting “Mr. Morgan’s solicitor [to] see this; and Mr. Morgan’s payment of the money will depend upon his counselling.”<sup>48</sup>

To Reid’s way of thinking, which he expressed to Morgan’s man in London, the New York financier was taking no risk at all. Just a few of the titles, “my first book, *Child Wife*, *Lone Ranche*, *Death Shot*, and *Finger of Fate*,” which he was giving the banker “to make...security” were “worth of themselves £500 while the 8,000 copies purchased will all be sold in six months for the other £500.” As for the eleven plates, “they are good value as old metal for a considerable sum.” If everything went well, the deeds would arrive “in the morning post,” after which the payment of £500 to Clarke and the return of ownership of the copyrights to Reid would take place. “Tomorrow,” he wrote, “will decide all.”<sup>49</sup>

In the same letter, which was written for the most part in an upbeat conversational style, Reid revealed too that he had not yet given up on the idea of publishing Flood and Field, suggesting that perhaps his “faithful friend” might like to join him in this venture. But Ollivant, Reid noted, had recently proposed to make a journey to Africa. “I don’t like the

idea of you going to Africa,” the worried author remarked, “But on the other hand I should not like to bring you to London unless pretty sure of success.” The last thing he wanted was “another terrible failure as in America — either for you or myself.”<sup>50</sup>

On December 19 Reid was able to report that “on Saturday last” his deal with Clarke had been concluded, although, he remarked, the matter might have been settled much sooner if not for Morgan’s lawyer, who he termed “a combination of knave and fool.” According to Reid, the spiteful solicitor had delayed the process unnecessarily because the anxious writer had “complained of his stupidity to Mr. Morgan.” The result, Reid confided somewhat melodramatically to Charles Ollivant, “was a long agony that came near killing me.” In the end, he wrote, the negotiations, in which Clarke received £700, were brought to a conclusion due to pressure put on Morgan’s lawyer by the banker’s unnamed “charge de affaires,” who saw how deeply the fretful novelist “was suffering from the suspense.”<sup>51</sup>

In a slightly later note Reid invited his “faithful friend” to visit him and his wife in London after Christmas and on Boxing Day (December 26) he wrote again, to say they were looking forward to his visit, telling him “your bedroom is ready.” He also gave directions, telling Ollivant: “Wigmore Street is close to Cavendish Square and [the] Langham Hotel.”<sup>52</sup> On the 28th he sent a postcard, saying, “We expect you on Tuesday [December 31]” and reminding his young friend to send a card “to say what time you will arrive in London, and whether we may expect you in time for dinner.”<sup>53</sup>

For some unknown reason Ollivant was unable to come to London at that particular time. Despite Reid’s misgivings, perhaps he went to Africa after all, although there is no mention of such a journey in his biography of Reid or in any surviving letters. In all

likelihood, he simply could not spare the time. In any event, Reid continued to keep in touch with his young admirer, his frequent letters providing evidence that his mental, if not his physical, health was greatly improved. In his first correspondence to Ollivant of 1873, he revealed that because he thought it was “weak” in places, he had decided to add “three or four new chapters” to The Death Shot before it went to press in book form. “I dare not,” he wrote, “let it go forth in 3 vols with any slip shod writing.” He remarked too that he was still casting about for a publisher for his proposed magazine.<sup>54</sup>

In a subsequent letter Reid told his former secretary that he had recently heard from Frederick Whittaker in New York, regarding negotiations with the firm of Adams & Proctor. He also wrote that in consequence he expected to have some trouble with Carleton. Reid was worried because he could no longer remember the details of his agreement with the New Yorker. “I think,” he wrote uncertainly, “I merely consented in a written contract to acknowledge him as publisher of such novels as he then had on hand, without saying I would give him the copyright of any others I might afterward write.” This contract, he reminded Ollivant — and asking him also if he could recall its terms — was agreed to “on his paying me \$300 before leaving.” Writing as if he were thinking out loud, Reid added: “It must have been this, since he had no right to The Child Wife nor Lone Ranche nor Finger of Fate.” In conclusion, he implored his young friend to write to him right away and give him his “remembrance of the matter.”<sup>55</sup>

Reid also provided Ollivant with an update on The Death Shot. “I have been laboring every night,” he wrote, adding: “Dear Charles, it was fearfully imperfect and would never have done to go forth without the revision I am giving it.” The revisions were so extensive;



he remarked further, "I am about rewriting it."<sup>56</sup>

On January 28, 1873 the recovering author took a break from his work and traveled to Boston, in Lincolnshire, to address a political meeting. It was the sort of thing he had done before his illness — a spontaneous act that could be seen as evidence he was back to normal, if not for remarks like, "Oh Charles, if only I had my health restored!" In any event, at Boston's Corn Exchange, he spoke mostly off the cuff in front of a large crowd, in support of his friend, London Illustrated News publisher William Ingram, a Liberal who was campaigning for re-election to his seat in Parliament. Apparently the speech was well received. When Reid was finished, "a man of influence," clearly impressed with the author's oratorical powers, "rushed forward, and grasping the speaker by the hand, exclaimed: "Captain Reid, you are not a man, you are a god!" Moreover, as Elizabeth Reid remarked later, that when the election was held, Ingram won. On January 31, almost immediately after returning to London, Reid wrote excitedly to Charles Ollivant, to tell him all about his first public appearance on stage since his Lord Bryon presentation in New York nearly three years earlier and, of course, his first venture into politics in an even longer time. His discourse, he thought, had "quite electrified the Bostonians." If he had "money to back me up," he boasted he could "make England ring with the echoes of truth, for it is truth that does it all." His experience in Boston had made him "a patriot," he confessed elatedly, adding: "The heart of the English people is right yet." All that was needed, he remarked further, were "true men to make it but responsive to 'right.'"<sup>57</sup>

In his unpublished memoir of Reid, Charles Ollivant included the transcript of an article that appeared in the London Beehive on February 8, 1873 (Reid sent him the

clipping). It called attention to the reanimated author's speech and wondered if one representative from Boston was enough.

The Liberal Party of Boston have achieved a triumphant success in the late municipal elections, and there can be no doubt about their having a similar triumph at the next general Parliamentary election. Mr. Ingram is quite certain to be returned on the Liberal interest. But why should they be contented with only one member when they have strength to elect two, as they now assuredly have? We hear that it is because they are divided about the man. If so, they would do well to give up their internal strife and unite in asking Captain Mayne Reid to represent them in the House of Commons. A gentleman of his high character and accomplishments would be an acquisition to any constituency in the kingdom.<sup>58</sup>

While Reid was no doubt flattered to read this encouraging piece, there is no evidence he took it seriously enough to consider running for public office, although it is hard to imagine he did not at least give it some thought before ultimately rejecting the idea. In the end, probably because his health was still impaired, he stuck to what he knew best, namely writing, and on February 17, 1873 he announced that he was very near completing The Death Shot. "You will hardly recognize it in its new 'shape,'" he confided to his young friend in a letter, most of which told of business matters between Reid and his publishers on both sides of the Atlantic. For some unknown reason (perhaps Ollivant suggested he make it public), the four-page missive concludes with the remark: "Charles, about the American citizenship, not a word to anyone. Let that idea be."<sup>59</sup>

On Saturday, February 22 Reid wrote another letter to his uncritical young friend, expressing his frustrations and revealing thoughts about his work that he probably did not share with anyone else, except perhaps his wife. "I could write for such things as Boys of Britain [a magazine for youths] &c. but I'd rather dig ditches," he declared, "for that is really the ditch where I got swamped before." In an earlier communication, he had told Ollivant

that Beadle wanted a sequel to the Scalp Hunters and now, he confided, “I have made up my mind” to write it, but he was having “difficulty,” he added, in thinking of a plot. “And I mustn’t begin till I’ve got one.” However, he added:

...while I was prospecting a plot for Brown’s boys novel I hit upon one of the best I ever had for a real novel different from anything I have ever written — partly a sea tale of the Pacific Ocean. Now if I was sure Beadles would take this I could do it con amore right off, as it is in my mind; whereas, I shall have some hard work to get warmed up to the old Scalping business.<sup>60</sup>

On Tuesday, in yet another letter, Reid repeated himself, declaring excitedly: “I feel I can make a grand book of the new sea story, whereas I can not warm up to the Scalping without great difficulty and might make a failure of it.” Having gone ahead and “scratched off the 2 first chapters of the new tale,” which he deemed “the finest plot I ever commenced upon,” he was evidently delighted to report further that Brown was willing to pay £260 for it, with Reid to retain the copyright. But there was more: After completing two more chapters, which he intended doing that very evening, he planned to send all four to Ollivant at the end of the week, asking him to rewrite them “in a clear hand,” in “the old lean back style” that he did “admirably.” When that was done, he desired Ollivant to forward this work to Frederick Whittaker, who was still acting as Reid’s agent in New York. “My object in all this,” the animated author explained to his young friend, “is that when Beadle reads these initial chapters I think they will [fix?] him as they are full of vigor in style and mystery.”<sup>61</sup>

The tone of Reid’s next note, written on Thursday, February 27, was decidedly different. He admitted to being “in low spirits.” Brown, he now thought, “will not be able to do anything” after all; which meant that he was pinning all his hopes on Beadle and Adams in New York to accept the story he deemed to be “the best novel I ever designed,” which he

had tentatively titled The Flag of Distress. He was also a little behind in his writing, expecting to have only three chapters “ready for Saturday’s post” instead of four. The name of the book was troubling him as well. It seemed “too straggling.”<sup>62</sup>

Clearly downcast, Reid complained further that there was really “no alternative but [to] sit down and do the book” and “to live meanwhile on hope and what I can get out of my Death Shot and the cheap books.” But in trying to find a printer for “these last,” he added, “I lose time every day.” So *much* so time, he groused further, that it “very much interferes with my chances of regular work.” What he needed was “someone to help me for a while.”<sup>63</sup>

Therefore Charles, do you think you can come to me for a month. I could give you £10 and pay all your expenses, and you would live along with us and help me in my new plot as well as otherwise. Your brother Alfred seemed to think you could be spared for a while. You know best; but dear Charles if your father would permit you to come to me for a month it would be a great boon and perhaps save me from much misery, as you could cheer me I know, and look after my interests, which are now too complex for me to grasp without danger to my health. I feel that this next book, if I only had the encouragement to write it, would place my name far higher than either ‘Scalp Hunters’ or ‘Headless Horseman.’

Now Charles if you can come I want you at once tomorrow if you could start — or soon as possible. Every hour is now important to me. And if you can come telegraph back to say so.<sup>64</sup>

Unable to “turn a deaf ear” to his former employer’s “urgent appeal,” Reid’s faithful friend sent a telegram promising to arrive on March 3. Later, Ollivant recalled how that day “found me speeding toward the metropolis, on a visit to my favourite author and dear friend” who he had not seen for more than two years — not “since our parting in New York.”<sup>65</sup>

It was a fine day in early spring, and leaving Manchester at noon I arrived at Euston Station at 5:30 p.m. From thence I walked to 33 Wigmore Street, Cavendish Square, which I reached about six o’clock. Being then nearly dark, the gas was lighted, and entering the author’s sitting room, I found him seated at his writing table. He greeted me with one of his most genial smiles and a warm grasp of the hand, our compulsory separation having cemented rather than weakened the friendship existing between us. I was glad to find him looking well, and much stouter than when I beheld him last.<sup>66</sup>



Figure 33. Mayne Reid caricatured in Vanity Fair, March 8, 1873.

Throughout Ollivant's stay, which took up "the whole of the month of March," he helped Reid "in his literary and other work to the best of [his] ability" and did what he "could to dispel the fits of melancholy to which he [Reid] was at times liable." In the middle of the month, the young man helped his hosts move to "pleasanter apartments" at 30A Wimpole Street, W1, where the Reids would reside for most of the next two years.<sup>67</sup> Located midway between Cavendish Square on the south and Devonshire Street on the north, this new residence was not very far from the couple's previous address. That same month, a nearly full-length color picture of Reid, drawn by an unknown artist, was published in Vanity Fair, as part of the magazine's "Men of the Day" series, which ran weekly from 1868 to 1914. The picture, more caricature than portrait, depicts the meticulously dressed author holding a small cigar in his right hand, as if offering it to someone. His left arm dangles at his side, a black silk top hat in his hand. He does not appear to be wearing gloves but his trademark monocle covers his left eye. Although his clothes— a brown frock coat and light brown trousers — are neat in appearance, from collar up he seems somewhat disheveled. His wispy black hair, thinning on top and worn somewhat long at the back and sides, appears uncombed and his cheeks are flushed — either from the cool English climate or from imbibing too much whiskey, or perhaps both. His eyes are nearly closed, as if he is tired or sleepy.<sup>68</sup>

March 1873 also saw the publication of The Death Shot, in three volumes, by Chapman and Hall, although Reid paid for the "printing and binding [of] it himself." This long-awaited book, remembered Ollivant, "was favourably received by the press." As proof, he included three transcribed reviews in his unpublished biography of Reid. One was taken from the Illustrated London News, which reported that The Death Shot was: "A downright,

rattling, melodramatic novel, with a spice of devil and bushranger in it.” A critic for another paper, The Court Circular, wrote: “The present work is a thrilling romance, with a charming love-story interwoven with the rougher scenes, and an abundance of stirring dramatic action.”<sup>69</sup> Tom Hood, writing for Fun, was no doubt the most enthusiastic, declaring:

A novel from the wonder-working pen of Captain Mayne Reid has been a rare treat of late years. We are therefore delighted to welcome in orthodox three-volume form the stirring story of the ‘Death Shot’ published some months ago in an illustrated paper. It is many years since as a youngster we first breathed the atmosphere of the prairie in the exhilarating company of the Captain, but even now (when our hairdresser admits he cannot tell us whether we shall be bald before we are grey or grey before we are bald — but that we should know in a few months) we have not got half-way through the first volume before we are again mounted in imagination on our fleet mustang and following our ancient commander in quest of adventure. Let us hope that Captain Mayne Reid will not disembowel in a hurry the very large brigade of readers who always muster around his flag when he unfurls it. His present story lacks none of the old energy and picturesque attractiveness that have made his name a household word.<sup>70</sup>

While all this commentary could be taken as evidence that Reid had once more done a superb job of writing, it should be remembered that he and William Ingram, the publisher of the Illustrated London News, were friends and political soul mates. By the same token Tom Hood was also a friend, or at the very least, a drinking companion. One little-known aspect of Reid’s life is that sometime during this period (the early 1870s) he became a member of a hard drinking group of writers — “mostly hacks and newspapermen” — who regularly gathered at London’s Ludgate Hill railway station bar to drink and to engage in spirited conversation. “Tom Hood, son of the celebrated author and himself editor of the weekly *Fun*,” was the “ringleader.” The group also included the then-young American journalist Ambrose Bierce — who greatly admired Reid and who later disappeared in Mexico during the Revolution, James Mortimer, the American editor of Figaro — a humor

magazine, George A. Sala, “a newspaperman and former foreign correspondent who had published a biography of Hogarth,” William Black — “a novelist late knighted,” as well as “Clement Scott; Harry Leigh; Tom Robertson; and occasionally W.S. Gilbert, who supplied the words to Arthur Sullivan’s music.”<sup>71</sup>

Ludgate Hill station, which no longer exists, was located within sight of Fleet Street, the traditional home of London’s newspapers. The building was situated along the east side of New Bridge Road, between Ludgate Hill (which leads to St. Paul’s Cathedral) and Queen Victoria Street, about a block north of Blackfriars Bridge. In the 1870s the station served the Southeast and London Railway.

“The favorite sport among the Fleet Street regulars,” reveals Bierce biographer Richard O’Connor, “was putting each other down.” We may imagine that Reid, with his foppish dress — particularly his affinity for lemon-yellow gloves and his monocle, came in for his fair share of ribbing. We may imagine as well that like his young admirer Bierce, he “was usually able to give as good as he got.”<sup>72</sup>

Although he was almost certainly not a part of this small group, it would be interesting to know if America’s most celebrated author, i.e., Samuel Clemens — a.k.a. “Mark Twain,” ever crossed paths with Captain Mayne Reid. Certainly, it is possible. In 1872 Clemens made his first visit to London, where he visited the grave of Charles Dickens in Westminster Abbey and met Henry Morton Stanley — the famous explorer who found the “missing” Dr. David Livingstone in Africa the previous year. Clemens also gave a speech at the Savage Club — a gentlemen’s society consisting largely of actors, lawyers, and writers. The following year he became a member of the club. Whether Reid was one as well is



unknown. In any event, Clemens and Reid had at least two things in common, apart from their popularity with juvenile readers. One is that they had a mutual friend in Ambrose Bierce. The other is that their English publisher was George Routledge & Sons.<sup>73</sup>

In April 1873, after Ollivant had returned home to Cheshire, Reid wrote a short, note to tell his young friend that there was “No sale yet on the *Flag of Distress*” and that he was still “anxiously” looking for a letter from Whittaker, to learn whether or not Beadle and Adams was interested in the new tale. He also mentioned that he and Mrs. Reid were “very comfortable” in their “new lodgings” and that they liked them “better and better each day.”<sup>74</sup>

But he was worried about a recent turn of events:

David Pratt [is] dead. You remember it was he who lent Clarke the money to buy the copyrights of my books after his bankruptcy. I have fancy that Clarke did not pay back all the money and that the books are mortgaged to Pratt. Have been very uneasy absent the matter. But have just learnt that the debt was reduced to £120 and that Clarke’s brother’s name is on the bills, besides there being ample other security to Pratt as a life policy for £500 and other books (Haywood’s &c.). In this case I need not fear much, but now that Pratt is dead, this thing will soon be brought to a settlement. Pratt was supposed rich. He has died [with] some £40,000 of bills due with the names of straw men upon them. Charles Brown for £12000. But of course no one will trouble Brown. It ends all the matter of a newspaper by Brown.<sup>75</sup>

On April 19, Reid complained again that he could “get no publication to take the *Flag of Distress*, which is indeed discouraging.” “But,” he wrote, “I work on,” adding: “The tale gets better and better.” He also grumbled that a recent review of *The Death Shot* in the *Daily News* was “a paltry notice.” Worse, he added, was the fact that the *Saturday Review*, the *Examiner*, and the *Spectator* had completely ignored the book. The result, he remarked further, was poor sales.<sup>76</sup>

On June 8 Reid wrote angrily, “The *Saturday Review* has pitched into the ‘*Death Shot*’ in the usual savage manner, and in direct contradiction in its dictum to that of *Public*

Opinion of same day (June 7), as also most other papers that have reviewed it.” But, he added, “It may do no harm, perhaps good, as his criticisms are evidently incorrect.” The Death Shot, the irritated author noted, was evidently popular. “I have to tell you that the book is reading better at the libraries than any one I have issued for a long time.” Furthermore, “Mudrie and Smith [two London booksellers]” had told him “they have had employment for all their copies, respectively 125 and 100,” which was “more than they took of ‘Lone Ranche’ or ‘Finger of Fate.’” Even so, he complained, it was not making him rich. “It won’t with all yield me over £100 if it gets up to that — unless they are forced to come back for a fresh supply.”<sup>77</sup> In the same letter Reid also revealed some rather interesting news:

You will be surprised to hear that Mrs. Reid and myself came very near deciding to go off to the Rocky Mountains, and on some exploring expeditions through Colorado and to the Gulf of California. Some large landed capitalists, who own 150 x 50 miles of New Mexico, want me badly to go out and write a book about that country. They would have come down with fair pay, but it was not enough to tempt me in the face of present prospects here, which if I get the P. I .P. [Penny Illustrated Paper] would be good. The strangest part of all is that Mrs. R consented to go if I had deemed it profitable or expedient.<sup>78</sup>

But, he concluded, “I think it is now given up,” adding that the two men who had made the offer were “an Englishman of Salisbury, named Blackmore, and an Hon. Charles Porter of Colorado, engaged here in exploiting the Southern Pacific Road to the Gulf of California.”<sup>79</sup>

I chanced to see both this day, and put your Manchester Guardian letter on ‘Emigration to Colorado’ into their hands, which pleased Mr. Blackmore very much. He is a man very much like Carson Brevoort, New York, of great influence, and has given a museum and library to Salisbury.<sup>80</sup>

Having regained the British copyrights to several of his early works, Reid set out in the spring of 1873 to republish them for a new generation of readers, primarily because he

needed the additional income their sales might generate. Unfortunately for the cash-strapped author, the process did not go smoothly. Many of his letters to Ollivant for June and July 1873 are full of complaints about the difficulties he encountered. Entrusting the work to a former colonial officer, Colonel Muter, and his colleague Mr. Croke had proved to be a mistake. “Their printer Dineen,” ranted Reid, had “made a pretty mess of the work of printing my books,” only three of which — The Wild Huntress, The Maroon, and The White Chief — had been completed by the end of June. Another problem, he revealed, was that the books were the wrong size for the covers manufactured by another firm, despite the fact that he had left another book as a sample of the size he needed with Dineen.<sup>81</sup>

Muter, raged Reid, was typical “of a returned British officer, nine tenths of whom are thorough blackguards.” After retrieving the plates from Dineen and entrusting the remainder of the work to a different printer, Whittingham & Wilkins, Reid met with his solicitors in order to “proceed against Croke and Muter for the 90 reams of paper thus destroyed as also for the binder’s bill for work so far, and also for loss by not getting the books done in due time.” Due to Muter and Croke’s negligence, the exasperated author fulminated, “I have lost considerably on Scalps, Rangers, White Chief and Maroon, and also Headless Horseman [which] have all been out of print for some time.”<sup>82</sup>

Initially, Reid sought compensation for “loss of £126 paper — Binding expenses thrown away £10 — Damage done plates now in the hands of Whittingham & Wilkins...£50...Finally £100 for loss of sales of books.”<sup>83</sup> Informing Ollivant that the case might not go to trial until November, he also put his young friend on notice that he might be called to London to testify because it was he who had made some of the initial arrangements

with Dineen during the month his faithful friend spent in London earlier in the year.<sup>84</sup> Only two weeks later, however, Reid wrote again to tell a no doubt astonished Ollivant that “Col. Muter has caved in,” offering an out-of-court settlement of £75 — “£50 in cash and £25 in a three months bill.” He had agreed to the settlement, the seemingly satisfied author explained, for several reasons. One was that upon reflection, he did not believe “the damage for delay would...have been clear to a jury.” Consequently, he conjectured the most he might be able to hope for would be the loss of paper “&c.”<sup>85</sup>

Reid’s letters at this time also include several references to the firm of Beadle and Adams in the United States, who had most recently published The Death Shot as a serial in Saturday Journal and without whom the nearly insolvent writer might have had no income whatsoever. “The Spectre Barque” (a.k.a. “The Flag of Distress”), a new story he was sending to Beadle in installments, was taking longer than expected to complete, he complained, because of the distractions of his impending case against Muter and Croke. But apparently he made enough progress to allow Beadle and Adams to begin serialization of the new adventure, which had a South Seas setting, in the June 28 issue of Saturday Journal.<sup>86</sup>

In support of Reid’s already-deeply-held conviction that publishers on both sides of the Atlantic were scoundrels who conspired to shortchange authors like him at every opportunity, and in spite of the fact that if not for Beadle and Adams he might be destitute, he complained that the firm had “turned out bad” by paying him in currency, “instead of gold,” which amounted to “less than £170.” But he was not altogether ungrateful, responding to Ollivant’s urging that he “put the screw on him [Beadle] for more money,” by writing that he was “glad to get what he gives as no other publisher in America seems to care for me.” As

for English publishers, they were no different he grumbled, reporting that Ingram's Penny Illustrated Paper had offered him less than £100 to serialize The Lone Ranche.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, being short of money and therefore not having much bargaining leverage, he apparently accepted it. The Lone Ranche, under the title "Adela; or, Saved by an Angel," was serialized in the Penny Illustrated Paper beginning in late 1873, continuing into 1874.

Reid's statement that Beadle was the only American publisher who had any interest in his work at this time is confirmed by one of the firm's employees, an editor named Victor, who later spoke candidly following the Irish author's death:

He would have sunk into obscurity if we hadn't sustained him. He has written certainly fifty stories and sketches for us. He was working for us exclusively [in the United States] for eight or nine years. We made a double number of his "Scalp Hunters," one of his most popular stories, reprinting it at his request. He retained, of course, the English rights in his works. We never paid him less than \$600 for a story; that was the standard price, though we may have paid him more at times. I remember [when Reid was living in New York] he brought his "White Squaw" down here one morning and said he must have \$700 for it, and we gave him a check without reading the manuscript...Reid was always in monetary troubles, but he was a prolific writer, and when he got hard up he would dash off sketch after sketch, and come down here with his pockets stuffed. Here is a lot of his manuscripts now that have never been printed on this side.<sup>88</sup>

In late July or early August 1873, after putting his books in the hands of a competent printer, Reid and his wife managed somehow to find both the time and money to take a two-month holiday, visiting Malvern, Leamington Spa, and Matlock in the western part of England. In respect to the author's health, the trip had mixed results. On October 1, after returning to London, Reid wrote to Ollivant:

We've just got back here today after doing Malvern and Leamington. Mrs. Reid had a severe illness at Matlock, recovered at Malvern and she is now in her usual health or nearly. It is true we found friends everywhere, and all houses open to us. Still I am depressed, and not less from knowing I can't get a place for the Spectre Barque. But now I must try in earnest, & see what can be done. I'm growing as fat as the claimant,

and strong as a bull, but sorrowful as a gib cat...I understand Whittaker has spoke to Scribner about a new novel. I await his reply...They're getting my books out slowly, but as I supposed Chapman don't seem to put much promise on them. However, now that I'm back I'll try to get on a head of steam. I think they will still sell, as I find myself much beloved everywhere I go. After all, Charles, there are good John Bulls, as well as bad ones. They only want fair treatment to make them amiable enough. They do honour merit notwithstanding their love of lords, and you would be pleased to see your old friend — the poor Captain — exalted by them above generals, admirals, and colonels, everywhere he makes his appearance — ever despite his well-known republican principles. Swearing at America is a thing of the past; and at Malvern, in good society, I heard many high-class Englishmen defend America — even without knowing my proclivities.<sup>89</sup>

A week after writing to Ollivant, Reid mailed an inscribed copy of The Headless Horseman to William Bliss, formerly adjutant to Gen. Winfield Scott during the war with Mexico, “in hopes it may while away an idle hour during the drear winter.” Terming Bliss an “esteemed friend,” Reid closed an accompanying letter by asking to be remembered to Mrs. Bliss.<sup>90</sup> Evidence that the two men regularly corresponded can be found in a second letter dated March 20, 1875, in which Reid advised his former comrade-in-arms that he had recently moved, that his health was improving, and inviting Bliss, should he ever “be in London,” to visit him.<sup>91</sup>

Toward the end of 1873 Helen Cromie, the author's niece, came over from Ireland to stay through the winter, providing Elizabeth Reid with some no doubt welcome companionship while her husband returned to his old love, namely the theater, by beginning a dramatic version of The Wild Huntress. “How I am to get it on the stage is still to be discovered,” he wrote Ollivant on December 20, “but Mr. Hollingshead, manager of the Gaiety (his own theatre is not suitable for it) has promised to do for me what he can elsewhere; and Mr. Lawson, proprietor of the Daily Telegraph was even promised to aid me.” But he had a problem that only the young man could solve: “No one can copy my script

but yourself.” Calling upon his faithful friend to help him in this new endeavor, Reid assured Ollivant that it would “not take you long as it is only a little over one hundred of my usual manuscript,” adding in a manner indicating he was almost certain he would not be turned down: “I shall forward it to you by post in acts, each as I get it ready, and as the first is finished, I shall send it on as soon as I hear from you to that effect.” Excitedly, he predicted “it will be as fine a melodrama as was ever put upon the stage, inviting his young friend to participate in the project by letting him know if “you think of anything in the way of suggestion.”<sup>92</sup> Of course Ollivant did it.<sup>93</sup>

Helen Cromie later recalled her visit to London, expressing a particular fondness for her aunt, who “was very kind to the young niece from Ireland, initiating her into a world of delicious femininity, fripperies & frou frou, a perfumed gaiety” that included “The leisurely pursuit of pleasantness” and “The social life of the time.” Years later she described in vivid detail the woman she affectionately called “Mamsie Zöe” or just “Mamsie”<sup>94</sup>

Beautiful, beyond question, of a quality not to be gainsaid, an appear of form & colouring quite irresistible, of medium height, slender, rounded, elegant, golden. Beauty parlour ideals completely outdistanced by nature. Gleaming hair divided in the centre rippling to a heavy knot low on the nape of the white neck, pale gold, goldie gold, honey gold to amber in the shadows. Magnolia, wild rose. The pink interior of shells, all the ingredients that go to make an exquisite complexion, warmly pale coral pink lips, a short well shaped nose. The small head held with a slightly backward pose accentuating the droop of white eyelids heavy over large dark blue eyes, a pleasant low-toned voice, yet containing a quality impelling instant obedience in maid or manservant, yielding, sweet, feminine — invincible, invariably & apparently without effort, getting her Own Way in Everything.

In January 1874 Reid wrote to thank Charles Ollivant for copying his manuscript of the dramatic version of The Wild Huntress and to inform him that he had began re-working The Finger of Fate in a similar manner. He was also pleased with the English public’s

reception to “The Lone Ranche,” which was then being serialized in William Ingram’s Penny Illustrated Paper, re-titled “Adela; or Saved by an Angel.” Reid received the sum of £100 for the publication rights and from all appearances Ingram had got a bargain. “Without a single shilling spent in advertising, it has run up from 60,000 to 70,000 [copies in circulation] — and still going up 500 weekly.” The satisfied writer concluded by remarking that as a result of this success he was “still looking forward to” a “publishing speculation of my own” and was in fact meeting someone that very day to “talk about a weekly paper.”<sup>95</sup>

Although the meeting to which Reid referred in his January letter apparently bore no fruit, he continued to look for other ways to capitalize on his fame and increase his income while at the same time, cautiously guarding his interests. In March the enterprising author reported that he was negotiating with the Scottish publishers, Nimmos of Edinburgh, for the republishing of several of his early works — another deal that went nowhere, in this case because the two Scotsmen wanted to pay him royalties. For the suspicious author it was a case of once bitten, twice shy. “After my experience of Carleton and Ticknor & Fields,” explained Reid, “I don’t like the idea of royalties in any shape, even if it was a large royalty, which I know these canny Scotchmen do not mean to pay.”<sup>96</sup>

In September 1873 the famed American showman Phineas T. Barnum set sail for Europe, where he spent several months traveling from place to place in order “to acquire animals, performers, and novelties” for a “Roman Hippodrome, Zoological Institute, Aquaria, and Museum” that he planned to open on “several acres of land in Manhattan.”<sup>97</sup> In March 1874 he was visiting England, when the Penny Illustrated Paper made a startling announcement: Captain Mayne Reid had entered into an agreement with Barnum to



dramatize some of his novels. The notice read:

#### A NEW DRAMATIST

is likely to entertain the playgoing public before long. Dash, “go,” and picturesqueness abound in Captain Mayne Reid’s novels, as our readers well know; and they have just that element of stirring adventure which ought to make them successful as romantic dramas. More than one, indeed, has been already seized upon by a certain piratical play-writer who preys on the property of novelists. Why then, should not Captain Reid himself profit by the wealth of dramatic effect in his stories? This question is put to English managers by Mr. Barnum, who has secured from the author-dramatist the right of producing his plays both here and in America.<sup>98</sup>

Precisely how Barnum and Reid made each other’s acquaintance is unknown but a surviving letter from the celebrated Captain to the equally renowned showman reveals that they had a meeting on the morning of March 13, 1875 in which they discussed, not the dramatization of Reid’s novels, but rather the possibility of his writing a drama based on the life of Dr. David Livingstone of African fame. Reid afterward sent the letter thinking that Barnum might have misconstrued his remark, “that if I did not or could not write the Livingston [sic] drama you should nevertheless get it done.” His fear, the fretful author confided, was “that you may imagine I meant to suspect you of abusing my confidence, and taking the idea without reference to me.” Assuring Barnum that “such a thought never entered my head,” he repeated “if I am not able to do it, let not that hinder you from having it done by someone else if deemed worth your while.”<sup>99</sup>

In any event, the announcement of their collaboration was not only inaccurate but premature. In the end, nothing came of Reid’s negotiations with Barnum who wrote, after returning to London from a short trip to Brighton, to tell the no-doubt-disappointed author that he had met there with British circus owners the Sanger brothers, “and was glad to hear that you had already arranged with them.” Reid, who apparently never saw Barnum again

after the American show owner's return to London, passed the note on to Ollivant, to "keep as a curiosity," saying: "It mystifies me. I have had no communication with the Sangers."<sup>100</sup>

Not the sort of person to let such a setback get him down for long, Reid kept busy over the next several weeks putting out a serialized version of The Death Shot in "penny weekly numbers and sixpenny monthly parts, illustrated." But it was hard work, he complained to Ollivant, "like a chapter from the history of the Little Times or Onward." That being done, however, he went on to negotiate with Dr. William Chambers, publisher of Chambers's Journal, "to take the 'Flag of Distress'...for three hundred guineas!" There was just one difficulty:

...he must see the whole of it copied out in clear hand, as he saw the five first chapters copied by yourself. How I'm to get this done, Heaven only knows. No ordinary copyist could make head or tail of my manuscript, and you are too busy.<sup>101</sup>

Despite the fact that he was indeed "very closely occupied at this period," Ollivant once more found it impossible to say "no" to his old friend, particularly in light of "the difficult position in which Dr. Chambers's action placed Mayne Reid." For most of the next two months, during "the four leisure hours at my disposal," and apparently without any monetary compensation of any kind (Ollivant called it "truly 'a labour of love'"), the young man copied "over twelve hundred large foolscap sheets written in a hand that puzzles even me at times," he revealed, "and would assuredly been a nut to crack for any printer." Two years later Ollivant derived some satisfaction from the fact that when the book was published as a three volume set in England by W. Tinsley, Reid dedicated The Flag of Distress to him "as a token of friendship and esteem."<sup>102</sup>

In July 1874 Reid and his wife took another extended holiday in the Malvern hills,

returning to London, as they had the year before, in the early fall. Then, suddenly and apparently without any warning, the author's old war wound came back to haunt him yet again. On October 3, Ollivant later wrote, "he was laid in his bed with a dreadful abscess in the leg that was attacked in New York more than four years previously." It was not long before "the worst case of blood poisoning" his doctors "had ever known" set in, "accompanied by fever and delirium." By mid-month, Ollivant wrote, they were holding out no hope for his recovery. Unconscious for most of the time, with his leg turned black "down to the foot," and his doctors expecting "mortification" to set in at almost any time, it seemed a certainty that on this occasion the old soldier was not just waiting at death's door but that he had knocked on it and it had started to open.

On October 19 Elizabeth Reid wrote to Ollivant, to keep him updated and to give him advance notice of Reid's almost certain demise. The letter painted a grim picture. Despite having "several doctors to see him — the best advice possible," it was New York all over again. "On Thursday last," she wrote, "he was not expected to survive the night." With "fever and delirium increasing," he remained unconscious until Friday morning when he unexpectedly opened his eyes and told his wife, "There is no hope, dear, I am dying."<sup>103</sup>

Despite having two nurses to assist her and a friend, Mrs. Brantley-Moore, to keep her company, her husband's illness wore so heavily on Elizabeth Reid that in short order she too became ill, which, as Ollivant later remembered, "compelled her to keep to her room." Her condition was not so serious, however, that she could not give "the necessary directions for her husband's funeral — even to the cemetery where he was to be interred." Others were also preparing for the inevitable, recalled Ollivant, including the American residents of

London, who having “heard of his illness” in the Anglo-American Times, wrote its editor, were expected to “take the proper steps in honour of his memory.”<sup>104</sup>

Finally, during the evening “that he was at his worst” Elizabeth Reid “entered the sick room — to take, as she supposed, a last look” at her husband “who was then quite unconscious, his countenance presenting such a palid [sic] and death-like appearance, that it seemed to her an utter impossibility that he could survive even for an hour.” After “a short time” at his beside, the distraught young woman “tore herself away, never expecting again to behold that form imbued with life.”<sup>105</sup>

The following day, in an amazing reprise of his unexpected recovery in New York, Reid started to move away from the edge of the grave. After regaining consciousness, he “began to show signs of revival,” causing his astonished doctors to proclaim it “a positive resurrection.” Even so, his recovery was more gradual this time, remembered Ollivant, who observed that the swelling and inflammation in his friend’s leg, along with “several relapses,” left him bedridden for several more months. Additionally, every one of “his finger and toe nails came off, and he grew a new set.”<sup>106</sup>

At the end of 1874 or early 1875, Ollivant received a letter from his old friend, dated December 29, accompanied by a note from Elizabeth Reid, who remarked, no doubt quite accurately, “I am sure you will be delighted to see the Captain’s handwriting once more.” Reid’s message, which was “written in a very shaky hand, much blurred and blotted” read as follows:

I am sorry to say I am still abed, and suffering severe pain, which tortures me continuously. Still I am a little stronger, and if favoured by circumstances, may yet survive this terrible trial. I cannot tell you all I have endured, and am still enduring. But I am very uneasy about the ‘Flag of Distress’ — afraid of its being full of

anachronisms and other errors, so that it may damage my literary repute. I think my mind is clear enough to enable me to read it over, and possibly to detect some serious errors and set them right. It was a fearful punishment to inflict on you, the copying this manuscript, but we had no alternative, and leant on your tried friendship. We have much to thank you for, and shall do that, as we have greatly to depend on the proceeds of the book for our future sustenance.<sup>107</sup>

“The manuscript copy,” remembered Reid’s faithful friend, “had been completed months before, but had not been forwarded on account of his illness.” Ollivant now sent it and on January 3, 1875 Reid responded:

The MSS. is beautifully executed. I know not how I can ever show my gratitude to you for taking so much trouble. I fear I shall not be able to do any revision, though I see many weak parts that need it. I have tried to steel myself to look it over; but alas! my mind is too confused. For although I think gaining in bodily strength, I still suffer intense pain in the knee — and this though the suppuration has nearly closed! This is what gives me fear, that after the various vent-holes have healed up, the mischief will still remain. In that case we know not what may be the end. Last night I had to fall back upon the sleeping draught [here Ollivant has marked out the name of it] to get relief from the pain. This is bad and retrograde. The New York sickness was naught to what I have gone and am going through now.<sup>108</sup>

Although it took him longer to recover this time, and although the long-term physical effects were clearly more severe, the very fact that Reid had pulled back from the brink of death when all hope had been lost was nevertheless a remarkable reprise of the New York episode. Less astonishing perhaps, was the similar effect of his illness on his pocket book — but just as remarkably as the first time, it was the same sort of people who came to his rescue. When news leaked out that “my sudden attack found us unprepared with money,” he informed Ollivant in his letter of January 3, “Some American friends...proposed to get enough for present needs by subscription among such of their countrymen as are in London at present.” And true to their word, Ollivant later remembered, members of the expatriate American community, motivated no doubt by the fact that Reid had not only become an

American citizen but had shed his blood for the United States (which was, of course, the direct cause of his current condition), raised over £100 to help him. Their names, unfortunately, are unknown, due to the fact that although Ollivant included them in his unpublished biography of Reid, he later obliterated them with his pen.<sup>109</sup>

Being relieved of money worries seems to have greatly aided Reid's "resurrection," which his doctors termed nothing short of a "miracle." On February 6 the ailing author reported that although he was not yet able to leave his bed, he was gaining in physical strength and in fact, had felt well enough during the past two weeks to write "five sketches, one of which appears this week in the Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News," a piece entitled "Yachting on Ice." Another piece, titled "Nursing Sisters," a subject with which Reid had become "too practically acquainted," followed almost immediately. It appeared in Chambers's Journal on May 15. Around this same time Chambers also bought the serial rights to "The Flag of Distress," paying three hundred guineas as earlier discussed, although as Ollivant pointed out in his unpublished biography of Reid, the story did not commence until the issue of August 7, 1876.<sup>110</sup>

When Reid was finally able to get out of bed in March, "he found himself a cripple" who would need "the use of crutches" for the remainder of his life. He apparently also felt the need for a change of scenery. At the end of that same month he and his wife took furnished rooms at 21 Clifton Villas, in the Maida Hill section of London,<sup>111</sup> only a short walk from Fulham Place — where Reid had resided nearly a decade earlier, following his bankruptcy. One cannot help but wonder: As the recovering author rode in the carriage that took him to his new residence, did he reflect on all that had transpired in his life during the

intervening eight years? Did he recognize the irony inherent in the fact that after all he had experienced and after all the thousands of miles he had quite literally traveled, that he had come nearly full circle in more than one sense of the term? It is hard to imagine that for a man with his intellect, such thoughts did not cross his mind.

The fact that he was unable to walk unaided did not mean that the author became housebound. Elizabeth Reid remembered years later that after returning to live in Maida Hill, her husband “enjoyed daily rambles in a bath chair,” although he didn’t care much for “being wheeled in Kensington Gardens.” His preference was for “Regent and Bond Streets, where he could do some shopping occasionally, and buy himself a new ‘rig-out’ as he called it.”<sup>112</sup>

Before moving to his new address, recalled Charles Ollivant, Reid “sent out nearly fifty copies of the ‘Death Shot’ to the provincial press for review, accompanying them with over fifty letters to the editors written by himself.” Considering “his then weak state of health,” it was “a somewhat noteworthy feat.” It was also, apparently, a smart move. Continuing to regain his physical strength bit by bit, Reid’s spirits were also fortified when in April, R. H. Stoddard, “one of the proprietors of the Glasgow Herald,” invited him to “write a novel for them, the author retaining his copyright — besides having the privilege of simultaneously publishing in any other provincial newspaper south of Manchester.”<sup>113</sup>

On May 2, Reid wrote to Charles Ollivant to share some even more exciting news — the discovery of a brand new and promising outlet for his work:

With returning health I seem to have a return of prosperity; tide — so long at the ebb. Mr. Cowan, that noble Scotchman, is incessant in his endeavours to serve me. Had I died, he would have stood by Mrs. Reid to the end — even with his purse. He has just got from Mr. Tillotson (of Bolton News and other papers in Lancashire) an assent to pay £400 for a novel to run through his papers! Now Mr. Sullivan, M.P. for County Louth, Ireland, and owner of the Dublin Nation and Young Ireland, is mad after a

novel, and will give £130 for 100,000 words, with clichés [electrotype or stereotype plates] of twenty-six illustrations to be made by a proper artist. This would bring his offer up to quite £250, as the twenty-six pictures would be worth at least £120. So you can see here are three Richards in the field: Glasgow Herald, Bolton News, and Young Ireland — Scotch, English, and Irish! These country papers that publish original novels have opened up a new chance for popular authors. Miss Braddon, Florence Marryat, Yates, and others have been gleaning in this field for some years past; while poor I remained in ignorance of such chances. The new light that has burst upon me will, I hope, enable me to do better in future.”<sup>114</sup>

Toward the end of May the Reids went on a short holiday to Ilkley Wells, a spa or resort town in Yorkshire, similar to Matlock, “which it was thought would prove beneficial to the health of both.” Perhaps like the famed Madame Tussaud and scientist Charles Darwin before them (who visited in 1859 around the time his controversial Origin of Species was published), the couple stayed at the Ilkley Wells House hydropathic establishment. Perhaps they also bathed, like Darwin, in the cold waters of the celebrated White Wells. In any event, the respite seems to have had the desired effect. Upon his return to London, Reid plunged into his writing with renewed vigor, rewriting The Finger of Fate, “besides adding many new chapters, the initial ones being laid in Italy, instead of England, as in the story when originally published.”<sup>115</sup>

That summer, in addition to Reid’s recovery, there was another reason to celebrate. On July 8, 1875, Charles Ollivant, age thirty-one, was married at Manchester Cathedral. His bride was twenty-four year-old Elizabeth Hallam, who, like her new husband, was a native of Lancashire. Curiously, neither Ollivant nor Mrs. Reid mentioned this momentous event in either of their writings. Being that Reid was well enough to travel to Yorkshire on holiday, it is difficult to imagine that he would not also have gone to Manchester for the wedding of his most faithful friend.



Following their wedding it appears that Ollivant and his wife immediately settled down to a life of domestic tranquility. By the time the 1881 U.K. census was taken, the by-then thirty-seven-year-old man was employed as a buyer to shipping warehouses in Italy and Africa. Calling his residence “The Beeches,” Ollivant resided in the village of Chorlton Cum Hardy in Lancashire, where his household included himself and his wife, two daughters — four-year-old Gwendoline and one-year-old Ivy, a two-year-old son named Frank, and a twenty-year-old Irish servant girl named Kate Dalton, who hailed from County Roscommon.<sup>116</sup>

September 1875 was a noteworthy month for Captain and Mrs. Reid. On the 11th, the first installment of the revised version of “The Finger of Fate,” re-titled “A Brother’s Revenge,” appeared in The Glasgow Herald. For the serialization rights Reid was paid the sum of £200. Tillotson also paid “the same amount for first right of publication in their papers published south of Manchester,” earning the recovering author the tidy sum of £400 altogether. The month of September also saw what Charles Ollivant very accurately described as a “radical” change in the Reids’ residence. “An advertisement,” he remembered, “was seen in the Times of a furnished house near the town of Ross, in the county of Hereford.” Tempted, as Ollivant put it, by the description of the property, the Reids “were induced to take train there for the purpose of inspection.” Liking what they saw, the couple decided to “bid farewell to London smoke,” making what Reid’s young friend considered “a wise resolve.”<sup>117</sup> Shortly before moving to “Chasewood” or “Chase Cottage,” as his new home was called, the obviously pleased and excited author described it and its surroundings:

It is a most charming bijou residence in a most charming district of country on the famed river Wye. It is a little over a mile from Ross, about a quarter of a mile from a

little knot of houses, but no shops, only a church: in short, a hamlet...Although only a cottage, it is of the special kind inhabited by gentry, and where a poor gentleman like myself can ask anyone to visit him without feeling ashamed of his abode...It has a well-stocked kitchen garden, grounds ornamental — in all an acre. Furnished, of course, else I could not have taken it. Verandah in front, with distant view of the Welsh mountains — buried in trees, and a large wood (Chasewood) close round the premises of back. Rent furnished and taxes inclusive £120 per annum. Ross is a rural town celebrated for the ‘Man of Ross,’ whoever he was, for I have forgotten; but am likely now to know all about him. We were, indeed, delighted with the place, as it combined these rare qualifications, rurality [sic] without dullness, as Ross is not a dull but rather lively place, with plenty of society in the neighborhood. As good luck has it, one of my friends, Captain Pryce Hamilton, lives there. It was he who reported on the place before we went down to see it...Moreover, we are only eighteen miles from another of my friends, Captain Hill, late High Sheriff [sic] of Monmouthshire, who lives at Abergavenny, and who will be only too glad when he hears I am coming to settle so near him. On the whole, it looks as though we might find it the very place in which to rest ourselves a long while; for we are both sick of London — the loneliest place in all England. I am for the next few days over head and ears in business. I shall to buy a carriage and horse, harness, &c. — all of which I can get better here than I could in Ross. I have already got a boy groom.<sup>118</sup>

On September 24, four days after moving to “Chasewood,” Reid sent another letter to Ollivant, adding some further description of the vicinity:

The neighbourhood is thoroughly rural, the scenery exquisite — the finest on the Wye, believed by most tourists to be the finest in England. We have the grand old Goodrich castle right before our front windows — taken by the Parliamentary army from the Popish Royalists in 1646. Other castles, as Wilton, Penyard, &c. within a short ride or drive — country hilly, and thickly wooded everywhere. The river Wye is a great route for tourists. Boats are kept on it at Ross, and people come from all parts to sail down it to Tintern Abbey and Bristol Channel...This would have been the place to have laid the scenes of the ‘White Gauntlet,’ and I’m not sure I may not yet be tempted into that tract for a more ambitious effort of painting the scoundrelly [sic] Cavaliers in their true light — shabby dogs as they really were.<sup>119</sup>

To better acquaint himself with the countryside, recalled Mrs. Reid, her husband “spent a great deal of time driving about in an open phaeton, frequently making long excursions of twenty and thirty miles.”<sup>120</sup> He also concentrated during this time on rewriting “The Finger of Fate,” becoming so absorbed in his work that Ollivant had no letters from him

at all from mid-October through late December. Finally, on December 21, he broke his “long silence,” informing his faithful young friend that he was nearly done with “The Finger of Fate” and was looking forward to starting a “splendid” new story, “the scene to be laid on the banks of the beautiful Wye,” which “if I can make a good combination with the newspapers I shall set about it cheerfully.” He added that he and Mrs. Reid were planning to travel to Abergavenny on January 5, to visit “Captain Hill of ‘The Brooks,’” where there was to be a ball, “at which I’m not likely to do much dancing — except on crutches, to which I have to keep.” His knee, he complained, was “still swollen, but not painful to speak of.” The weather in Herefordshire, he remarked, was “very mild” and “green” — “not at all like Christmas.” He concluded with a wish that he “was starting on my new story, and had a good prospect of payment for it,” but added optimistically: “Mr. Cowan, of Perth, will assist me in getting the clientele, as he did before.”<sup>121</sup>

Around this same time W. Tinsley published The Flag of Distress, in three volumes, in England. The following year, after James Miller of New York put out a single volume edition in the United States, an anonymous reviewer for a New York publication, The Galaxy, had this to say about it:

Mayne Reid’s stories always have interest for the class of readers to whom he addresses them, and “The Flag of Distress” is a fair specimen of his skill in the narration of adventure. It is a story of the sea, as its title indicates; and its personages when on land live the adventurous life of California and New Mexico. It abounds in strongly marked characters, who are painted with rather too heavy a brush, and in thrilling incidents which are rather sensational than natural or possible. But although sometimes coarse, it is not vulgar, and it will do no boy any other harm than that which comes from over excitement, and from interest in that which is not quite possible. And to this sort of excitement and interest in a moderate degree for boys and very young men, there is no particular objection. It is much better and more wholesome in the end than shallow sentiment or even than an overdose of didactic morality. Captain Reid amuses the young folks hugely, and does them no particular harm.<sup>122</sup>

In early 1876 Reid received a “request of Henry Lee, of the Brighton Aquarium,” which had recently acquired a Mexican salamander called the *axolotl*, to provide some information about this exotic “reptile-fish” and its habitat. Almost needless to say, the flattered naturalist-author was happy to oblige, replying on February 28.<sup>123</sup> His letter was afterward published in the March 4, 1876 issue of Land and Water. In response, Lee praised Reid as “a noted author of romances” the “great charm” of which was “his keen appreciation and sympathetic description of the localities which he has visited.”<sup>124</sup> An unsigned article titled “The Axolotl,” nearly identical to Reid’s letter but with a little more “polish,” appeared earlier in the August 7, 1875 issue of Chambers’s Journal.<sup>125</sup>

On January 26, 1876, in much the same way that he had involved himself in local affairs when he was living in Buckinghamshire, Reid felt compelled to write a letter regarding England’s game laws, which was printed in the pages of The Hereford Times. Whereas most of his rural neighbors favored their repeal, Reid “defended the laws on this subject, asserting that to abolish them would not only be a backward leap in legislation, but an injustice to the majority of the nation, and to the whole a loss.” In support of his position, he pointed to the United States, arguing, “While we are in the act of abolishing game laws, they are in the act of establishing them!” When challengers came forward to rebut his views, he simply ignored them, secure in the certainty that he was right and they were wrong.<sup>126</sup>

In February, Reid was pleased to learn, from an article in the Athenaeum, that he was “the most popular of English authors” in Czarist Russia, “some half-dozen of his novels figuring in the present list [of English authors whose works had been translated into Russian], one of which had ‘been printed in 3,000 copies, and one in 3,400.’” Furthermore,

reported the magazine's St. Petersburg correspondent, "With regard to Captain Mayne Reid's popularity abroad, we have heard that a similar statement may be made as to Spain and Italy." In a letter to Ollivant, the gratified author remarked that this news demonstrated "that where there is fair play, and no sinister criticism against me, I rise ahead of them all."<sup>127</sup>

That same month Reid began sending letters of inquiry to provincial newspapers, offering for serial publication the new romance he had envisioned in his Christmastime letter to Charles Ollivant. It represented a significant departure from his usual work, in that its setting was present-day England. One of these letters, addressed to Joseph Cowen, a Member of Parliament and proprietor of the Newcastle Chronicle, explained his plan:

I am writing an English romance of modern life — the scenes mostly laid here on the banks of the beautiful Wye — and I am seeking to effect a combination of newspapers in which to issue the tale simultaneously — each having a district that will not clash with any other. Messrs. Jaffray Feeney & Co proprietors of the "Birmingham Post" having written this day [February 7, 1876] to accept my offer for their paper, have also suggested my writing to the "Newcastle Chronicle" a journal whose high character is well known to me. I ask therefore if such [a] story as I speak of from my pen would be acceptable to you. I can only say that I have a plot conceived, as fine as any I ever set to work upon — that it shall be worked out without the sparing of pains, and thought the scenes and incidents be of civilised life I fancy I can make the one as picturesque, the other as stirring, as any I have depicted in far-off savage lands. I can promise that the tale will be of a pure morality and not tainted with disgusting murders, seductions, and elopements with other men's wives — incidents which seem to be the staple of interest in most modern novels, to the disgrace of our English literature.

If this communication have any interest for you, will you kindly let me know, when I shall be happy to furnish you with full and particular details.<sup>128</sup>

Although it appears that the Newcastle Chronicle turned down "Gwen Wynn: A Romance of the Wye," which was the title of the new work, eventually "No less than ten first class provincial newspapers" agreed to Reid's proposal, paying "from three to four and a half guineas a week, according to the importance and circulation of the various journals." The projected total of about £600 made it one of his more lucrative efforts. Reid also predicted

the tale would be “one of my best.” But he was worried. In June, shortly after the serial commenced in the papers, he told Ollivant, “if I could only keep health, I might yet bring my ship safe into port.”<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, it was a struggle. In August he wrote again:

I am so busy with ‘Gwen Wynn’ that I haven’t a moment to spare. I have even got a little behind, and if any illness laid me up for three days, all would be wrong. My health as it is will not allow me to work with the rapidity of former days. It takes me all the week to complete a week’s instalment of the tale. As I am struggling to make a hit with it, of course it would never do to write carelessly. I fancy it is liked by all except the Roman Catholics, who are savage about it, and have been complaining to the proprietors of the different papers — several of whom have written me on the subject. I do not allow them to dictate to me.<sup>130</sup>

The primary source of Roman Catholic readers’ dislike of “Gwen Wynn,” recalled Charles Ollivant many years later, was the fact that the “most unmitigated villain” of the story was a French priest named Father Rosier. According to Reid’s niece, Helen Cromie Mollan, her uncle got the idea for the character when during one his drives through the Wye Valley (where the book is set), he happened upon “a little chapel,” not knowing (or so he claimed) that an actual French priest named Hamelin resided therein! When Father Hamelin read the story in the newspaper, he not only found Reid’s anti-Catholic sentiments objectionable, he also concluded that the disagreeable cleric of “Gwen Wynn” — described in the opening lines of “A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing,” the chapter in which the character of Father Rosier is introduced — was based on *him*.

Father Rosier is a French priest of a type too well known all over the world — the Jesuitical. Spare of form, thin-lipped, nose with the cuticle drawn across it tight as drum parchment, skin dark and cadaverous, he looks Loyola from head to heel.

He himself looks no one straight in the face. Confronted, his eyes fall to his feet, or turn to either side, not in timid abashment, but as those of one who feels himself a felon. And but for his habiliments he might well pass for such; though even the sacerdotal garb, and assumed air of sanctity, do not hinder the suspicion of a wolf in sheep’s clothing — rather suggesting it. And in truth is he one; a very Pharisee — Inquisitor to boot, cruel and keen as ever sate in secret council over an Auto da Fé.<sup>131</sup>

In short order the angry churchman dashed off a letter of complaint that was printed in the Liverpool Weekly Courier. Although Reid allegedly knew nothing about Hamelin “more than what he has made me know by his letter,” the agitated author composed a scathing response, which was also published, making it clear that his antipathy was neither personal nor directed at the French alone, but that it applied to English and Irish priests “to boot,” as well as “ritualistic clergymen” of any denomination. As for the openly expressed “antagonism” he held “toward the religion of Rome,” Reid declared that he had only to look to his “own experience” as a soldier in occupied Mexico for several specific examples of what he termed the “imposture” of a faith he compared to “a poisonous serpent.”<sup>132</sup>

I have dwelt in lands where it is the only form of Faith tolerated — has been for centuries — not only allowed free exercise and “full swing” but sustained by State and beyond anything ever known — the and there have I beheld its fruits — the “lust, hypocrisy, perfidy, plunder, and devastation” — aye, the complete catalogue of crimes — not omitting the blood. I have seen the priests of this blood Faith come their Sunday duties — to the very steps of the altar — with a game cock under one arm, and a bag of leaden images on the other — have witnessed their sale of these so-called “indulgences” to the poor deluded creatures, victims of their sacerdotal craft — have visited these same celibates at their own houses, seen them surrounded by large families of children, their own, and who they facetiously styled their nephews and nieces; have dined with monks at monastery mess — aye, more than once — monasteries as “Bolton Abbey of the olden time” — taken part in their card games, joined them in their cups, and heard them boast of their amourettes with the charming “muchachas!” Need I continue the argument, or call history to my help? I have myself seen and heard enough, and I think, said enough.<sup>133</sup>

Not surprisingly, Reid’s letter “called forth numerous responses” from offended Roman Catholics, which he decided to treat with what Charles Ollivant termed “a dignified silence,” judging them, so he said, to be unworthy of the effort. “They are all weak, like the answers to my ‘Game Laws’ epistle,” the unashamed author sniffed contemptuously. Not to be outdone, Liverpool’s Roman Catholic priests urged their parishioners to boycott the

Courier, “an edict so slavishly complied with,” recalled the equally anti-Catholic Ollivant, “that this popular Conservative journal lost nearly three thousand weekly subscribers!” What *was* surprising, in view of the fact that they were surely losing money as a result, was that the owners of the paper stuck by Reid and continued to publish the serial. It was “a course of action,” applauded Ollivant, which “eventually secured them the support of all who love justice and fair play.”<sup>134</sup>

In the waning months of 1876 Reid revealed to his young friend that he had at long last given up the idea of starting a new periodical, believing, no doubt correctly, that the weakened condition of his health “would not bear such strain.” His only hope, he confided, was “to make ‘Gwen Wynn’ a success, and go on with another [serial] if I can make a similar engagement.” But it was “a hard struggle,” he grumbled, “for living is now so dear [expensive] that no ordinary income gives a man more than bread.” His “repurchased copyrights” were also giving him “unceasing trouble.” An “arrangement” he had made with publishers Ward, Lock and Tyler to print them had “proved anything but satisfactory” and he was “not sorry,” remembered Ollivant, “when their three years’ contract expired in July 1877.”<sup>135</sup> In a letter dated November 14 Reid told of his struggles:

I am at work on the closing chapters of ‘Gwen Wynn,’ and must finish it next week. It is spoken of as having pleased everywhere, and all save the Papists. When it is off my hands, I shall endeavour to concoct some scheme for the better bringing out of my novels. For after all, I do not regret having purchased them; and if I had only been in funds to bring them forth economically for cash, I do believe my profits already on them would exceed £1000. I am now getting into funds by dint of constant toil, and if my health hold good, I shall yet make of them what I bought them for — a little annuity for my wife.<sup>136</sup>

One way of making a little extra money, he discovered, was to sell the clichés (electrotype or stereotype printing plates), of his book illustrations. “A Spanish firm,” he told



Ollivant, had offered to pay him £75 for them. In another letter he reported that he had “got the clichés in the hands of Ward and Lock at last,” and told of awaiting a cheque in the amount of “£94 odd” from them.<sup>137</sup>

For a while after moving to the Wye Valley, Reid continued to harbor the idea of re-publishing his older books himself, thinking that if only he could do so, he would be able to earn a substantial profit on them (and hopefully put some money aside for his wife, who being twenty years his junior, was almost certain to outlive him, which indeed she did). Eventually, however, he gave up the idea as too expensive and time consuming for him to undertake on his own and so, in late 1877, he entered into an agreement with George Routledge and Sons that gave the well-known London firm the exclusive rights to publish twenty of the titles he had re-purchased from Clarke between 1872 and 1874. “I could not have gone on with them myself,” he explained to Charles Ollivant, “The worry of uncertainty made me quite ill, and I am yet suffering from it.”<sup>138</sup>

Despite his financial worries (or perhaps, *because* of them), Reid decided in November 1876 to take out a lease on “a country house, with land and farm buildings attached, known as ‘Frogmore,’” although his lease on “Chasewood” did not expire until June 1877. (How he got out of the first lease is unknown.) The impulsive author, who was thoroughly delighted with what he called “the prettiest residence in all Herefordshire,” immediately wrote an excited letter to Ollivant, describing his new abode, to which he and his wife moved at the end of January 1877 after buying new furniture in London and having it brought by train to Ross-on-Wye.<sup>139</sup>

I wanted a house with some land, and I could not resist the temptation of a beautiful thing about two miles from here, on the other side of the wood. It is more

secluded and retired than even “Chasewood” — in fact, a very picture of a rural nook; but a beautiful house, with some fifteen acres of land, a magnificent kitchen garden, ornamental grounds and shrubberies, with a perennial brook running through them, carriage entrance, and separate entrance to the farmyard and stabling.

On the brook there is a wheel worked by the action of the current itself, which pumps water up to the house and all over the garden. And below in the grounds there is a sluice built across the brook, by which I can, simply by putting a door upon it, dam up the water to form a pretty fishpond, with trees overhanging. It was constructed for this very purpose, but the water is now let off, the sluice-gate gone. It will be restored as soon as I take possession.

Water-hens, or moor hens, as they are called — meaning mere hens — come up on the lawn. The green woodpecker and blue jay are heard all around the shrubberies, while Penyard Wood, a continuance of Chasewood, the two covering a grand hill or ridge full three miles long, is just behind the house, a hundred yards back. There is a little farmyard quite separate and distinct from the stable and coach-yard — coach-house to hold half a dozen carriages, stabling of the best kind for eight horses, flagged courts, kitchens, larder, dairy, servants’ rooms, and a big bell hung on top of the house to ring them all up betimes!

All this for £60 per annum. The land is eight acres, but I am to have five or six more next year if I wish it at forty-eight shillings per acre. It is, indeed, a little paradise of a place, and a great bargain at £60. The reason for its being so low rented is that it has lain for two years without a tenant, so they were glad to get me. Tenants that have had it found it too lonely. And so they might if they had no acquaintance of the gentry class in the neighbourhood. But as we know all, or nearly all of that ilk, I don’t think we shall be less visited there than in “Chasewood,” thought it be a mile or two farther from their residences.

My chief object is, that in a house with a little grass land attached and good gardens — such as it has — I may live rent free; whereas, in a paltry affair of the usual Cockney villa kind, your house eats his head off twice a year! This is true. The apples at “Frogmore House” — for that is the hideous name of it, soon, however, to be called “The Ranche” — will go far towards liquidating the rent.<sup>140</sup>

After moving to “Frogmore,” or “The Ranche” as he called it, Reid began taking a taking an interest in the Wye Valley’s flora and fauna. On May 2, he wrote to tell Ollivant that he was unable to work, not because he was ill, but because he was “so charmed...with this truly rural life, which occupies me all the day long, in gardening and observing facts in home natural history.” The land surrounding his new residence, he remarked happily, was “more like a grand zoological garden; than a bit of ordinary English terrain.”<sup>141</sup>



Figure 34. Frogmore, Reid's home in Herefordshire. From the Strand Magazine, July 1891.

I have badgers, foxes, squirrels — even pole cats, I hear, in the adjoining woods. In my own grounds, waterhens (miscalled moorhens), wild pigeons, woodpeckers, jays, magpies, starlings, rooks, jackdaws, the carrion crow, the nightingale, thrush, blackbird, missel thrush — and a host of smaller birds.<sup>142</sup>

The day before, he added, his gardener “killed a blind worm,” which, he explained, was not actually a blind worm but rather “a real sighted snake.” It was “seventeen inches long,” he wrote, apparently still astonished, “which is two inches above the greatest size of this reptile given in Chambers’s Encyclopedia.”<sup>143</sup>

Reid’s wife remembered that his love of nature also manifested itself in “a great fondness for pets.” In his room an “owl and a magpie occupied cages...while a baby otter, caught on the banks of the brook which ran through the grounds,” was “fed by hand.” Every night, she reminisced, “The Captain have milk and fish left at his beside” so that he could “feed this little pet.” He also raised a hawk “from the nest,” which afterward remained on the grounds, “in view from his window.” The bird “was a pretty little creature, and so tame that it would come at the author’s whistle, and dart down for food in his hand.” Its behavior contrasted, she recollected, with that of “a fierce badger, that snarled and snapped whenever he was disturbed, and at last made its escape.” Reid also kept “bull terriers, cats and kittens,” as well as “goats and kids,” all of which made themselves at home on the lawn.<sup>144</sup>

On May 19, 1877, more than four years after he had last seen Captain and Mrs. Reid in London, Charles Ollivant, accompanied by his wife Elizabeth (who was probably then pregnant with the couple’s first child), arrived at Ross-on-Wye to visit his old friend, “spending the Whitsuntide holidays there.” It was a happy reunion, which Ollivant later remembered with fondness in his unpublished memoir of Reid.<sup>145</sup>

“I found him looking well,” he wrote, “stouter than when we met last, four years

previously, in 1873, and just as genial, hospitable, and talkative as ever.” Reid’s house and surroundings, thought Ollivant, were precisely as charming and picturesque as his old friend had described them — surrounded by trees and all sorts of animals, both wild and domestic. Over the next ten days the two couples amused themselves by taking drives in the countryside in Reid’s open carriage, and on at least one occasion they walked along a “wildwood path” up a nearby hillside to “an old ruin known by the name of ‘Penyard Castle.’” It was quite an “excursion,” wrote Ollivant, which was all the more “vividly impressed” upon his memory because the distance, not “less than three miles there and back,” was “accomplished” by Reid “with apparent ease on crutches!”<sup>146</sup>

Although he did not say so in his memoirs, seeing Reid in a rural setting once more must surely have reminded Ollivant of the first time the two men met, more than twenty years earlier, when he was a youth who went to Gerrard’s Cross seeking out his favorite author, and no doubt never imagining in his wildest dreams that he would become one of the most important people in Reid’s life. Surely too, this first meeting was verbally revisited for the benefit of Ollivant’s wife, who was new to the circle.

Observing his friend at home in the Herefordshire hills, the younger man later recalled that Reid “spent a portion of his time every day, when fine, seated or strolling about his extensive grounds, studying with careful eye the varied aspects of nature in the form of bird and animal life in this veritable naturalist’s paradise.” Early evening, he added, “was devoted to conversation, Mayne Reid fascinating us both by his charming narrations from his varied lore of experience.” Later, the author would separate himself from his wife and guests, oftentimes working until midnight on his “literary labors.” It was “not without reluctance,”

Ollivant recalled fondly, that he and his wife left “this picturesque spot, and the society of dear Mayne Reid,” to “return to the prosaic duties in connection with mercantile Manchester life.”<sup>147</sup>

There appears to be no record of Elizabeth Ollivant’s impressions of the man her husband had almost literally worshiped since childhood, nor do we know what she thought of Mrs. Reid. The innermost thoughts of Elizabeth Reid, by the same token, are equally unknown. There may or may not be any significance attached to the fact that she did not even mention the Ollivants’ visit to “Frogmore” in her biography of her late husband.

In the fall of 1877, after finishing its run as a serial in the provincial papers, Reid’s Gwen Wynn was published as a three-volume library set by Tinsley Brothers of London, the rights for which the author was paid £100. Ollivant remembered that his old friend “would have issued the work himself, and made a larger sum, but the state of his health was such that he felt the burden and worry of printing and superintending publication would be more than he could bear.”<sup>148</sup>

Having made a success of Gwen Wynn, however, both as a serial and as a book, Reid was determined to repeat the formula, only this time with some older material that was already written, but little known. In short order he turned his hand to revising and lengthening “The Lost Sister,” the unfinished romance he had been writing for Onward when it failed in 1870. “Strange to say,” he remarked to Ollivant in a letter, the story had already been translated into French and published in Paris by Hetzel, after Reid had hastily written what he described as a “lame conclusion” for it. If he could get his hands on the plates for the French illustrations, he conjectured that Routledge would run it in his Boys’ Magazine “and I

shall thus get bread and cheese to last all the winter.” Fortunately for the always-cash-short author, this “project,” as Ollivant called it, was “carried into effect” and by the end of the year, a revised “Lost Sister” — re-titled “Gaspar the Gaucho” — was being enjoyed by the readers of Routledge’s Boys’ Magazine. As a result, Reid earned £200, enough to tide him over for a while.<sup>149</sup>

In late December 1877, shortly after finishing “Gaspar the Gaucho,” Reid was taken ill again, but fortunately, although the relapse was “prolonged,” it “was not a very severe one.” By spring he had come through it all right except that now he had sciatica in his right leg, “which completely cripples me,” he told Ollivant in a letter dated April 5, 1878. The pain, he confided further, was aggravated by other matters that were giving him grief — “bad servants and the putting in of my crop.”<sup>150</sup>

That same month the ailing author began revising a manuscript that had apparently been forwarded to him by his old friend and Onward contributor Frederick Whittaker, a task that took Reid until July to finish, not because he was feeling unwell, he revealed to Ollivant, but because he “had absolutely to rewrite it.” This seems surprising in light of the fact that Whittaker, who lived in New York and who, like Reid, was a regular writer for Beadle and Adams, had recently made a name for himself with his popular biography of the late Gen. George Armstrong Custer. In any case, this collaborative effort, titled Away Westward; or, the Cadet Button, was “published the ensuing autumn by W. Mullen & Son, with Mayne Reid’s name appearing in the title page as editor.”<sup>151</sup>

Interestingly, Whittaker’s name was printed on the title page with a noticeably smaller font than the one that was used for Reid’s. Moreover, only “Captain Mayne Reid”

appeared on the spine and front cover of the book. The obvious inference is that the publisher believed the celebrated Irish author's name was more recognizable than Whittaker's. Reid also provided a three-paragraph preface, which reveals that his lack of sympathy for the Indians of North America was unchanged from his days as conductor of Onward.

Should I receive any credit for introducing the "Cadet Button" to the English novel-reading public, it will doubtless be, because the tale illustrates certain peculiarities of American military life, little known on this side of the Atlantic. And, I might add, almost as little on the other side; since the interior life and discipline of the United States *regular* army, are as the pages of a sealed book to the civilian, who now and then gets a glimpse of them. The reason is manifest. The soldiers of the regular service — whether infantry, cavalry, or artillery — are only to be met with in small detachments; all, or nearly all, stationed in frontier garrisons, or "forts," as they are called far away from cities, or even civilized settlements. Not strange then, that the ordinary American citizen has but little acquaintance with their life; and the illustration of it in these pages will be almost as novel to him as to an Englishman.

Another topic, which the story touches on, possesses interest of quite a different kind. The treatment of the red men of America by the American Government, is a question which seems to have two sides; one showing humanity, the other shame. When closely examined, however, it is found that the guilt is not chargeable either to the U.S. government, or people — as a people — while the goodness can be fairly claimed and set to their credit — at least in intention. Every legislative enactment, or executive movement, made for the aboriginal has been with a view to his benefit, all bearing the mark of most enlightened philanthropy. If they have failed, it is because human nature in America is much the same, or no better than else-where, and the agents entrusted to carry out these philanthropic aims have proved untrue to the trust. Be it known, however, that such agents have rarely, if ever, been officers of the regular army. In that part of the world the civilian, not the soldier, has been the plunderer and oppressor.

At the moment of my writing, the Indian question has become one of renewed interest—especially to the people of the states. The red men are once more in rebellion, their blood up, their weapons drawn, with war threatened, *a l'outrance* and to the knife. The abortive expedition of the United States troops into the Yellowstone country, with the massacre of Custer and his corps of cavalry—500 skilled soldiers not only defeated, but absolutely "wiped out" had, it is superfluous to say, but emboldened the savage victors; and with such a triumph still fresh in their minds, no one need feel surprised at their new revolt. No one will, who has read the history of Seminole, Caffre, and New Zealander. A hopeless strife it will be, however, to end all the same as with these.<sup>152</sup>

Rural life seemed to agree with Reid, who clearly relished the role of "gentleman



farmer.” In the spring of 1877 he had spotted a rare black ram from “the window of the railway carriage” when he and his wife “were returning from London” and made up his mind then and there that he had to have him. “It was at a place about ten miles from here [Frogmore House],” he explained in a letter to Charles Ollivant, “and next day I put myself behind a horse and went in search of the odd animal — found him, and bought eighteen others to ensure my purchase, along with him.” The following summer, he was able to report that he now had a pair of lambs (one male and one female) with black bodies and white faces, fathered by this remarkable ram. “I should...have a small flock of the pretty creatures,” he complained, “but for the stupidity of a servant...who last winter killed eight or ten of my ewes by ‘overdressing.’”<sup>153</sup>

These unusual sheep he wrote in a letter that was printed in the London Daily Telegraph on June 8, 1878, were “black in colour, with snow-white faces and tails; the latter long and full-fleeced, as the brush of a fox.” He was especially proud of the fact that the “strangely-marked” animals, which were small in size “and perfect symmetry in shape,” attracted “much attention in my neighborhood,” where passers-by stopped and stood “gazing over the gates, as though” the creatures “were a herd of gazelles or a drove of zebras.”<sup>154</sup>

Hoping to show them off to a larger number of people, Reid tried to enter his sheep in the Royal Agricultural Society’s annual show at Bristol but was turned down, he was told, because his animals did “not belong to any of the ordinary breed of sheep, or so-called classes.”<sup>155</sup> Believing that something more sinister, namely snobbery, was behind the society’s refusal to allow him to exhibit, the offended author responded by composing a scathing, sarcastic letter, which the Hereford Times printed in its June 22, 1878 issue:

In former times the Royal Agricultural Society must have had more elastic rules; for, I have heard, the late Lord Derby exhibited some elands, and that one fattened for the occasion was killed, and joints of it served at a large dinner at the time of one their agricultural shows. So the weight of the novelty objection seems to have given way for once at least. But that was before the still greater weight of Lord Derby; and I have no doubt that if he, or any other lord of countless acres, were to offer for exhibition a two-legged duck, or a dog with three heads like Cerberus of Hades, or the extinct Dodo, redivious, or the Devil himself, the societies in question would not only place a “pen” at the disposal of his Satanic majesty — black sheep though he be — but feed him well while in it, treat him with great respect, and show him much subservience besides. In any case, he (not the Devil but Lord Derby) deserves both respect and gratitude for having exhibited his South African antelopes; since it is more to private enterprise, or his, than to any public shows of our fattened cattle, that we owe our best breeds of Domestic animals. Without such how should we have obtained our fine carriage horses and noble hunters sprung from Arabian sires? Without it, the progeny of Godolphin [a race horse] would never have trod the turf of England; and above all, where would be the valuable ‘moke,’ lacking which our interesting neighbors of the Forest of Dean, would never get their commodities to market? Echo, in a clamour of ten thousand tongues, from the sturdy dames the denizens of that elevated district, answers “Where?” while one may almost fancy “Neddy” himself, his long ears laying back, braying out: “Still upon the plains of Mesopotamia!”<sup>156</sup>

Never one to back down from a cause he believed to be righteous, Reid followed this acerbic epistle with an effort to enlist allies. In short order, he found one in the form of Sir William Chambers, publisher of Chambers’s Journal, who recalled in the July 27 issue of his popular magazine, that twenty years earlier, he had a cape made from the wool of two black and white sheep that was fade-proof due the fact that the “colour is inherent in the substance of the wool.” The cape was also remarkably hardwearing, wrote “Dr. Chambers,” proclaiming, “we have worn it every winter [since], and as a railway wrap it always accompanies us on our travels.”<sup>157</sup> Taking Reid’s side in his dispute with the Royal Agricultural Society, Chambers added:

We may perhaps live to see Agricultural Societies offering prizes for the best specimens of black sheep for purposes of breeding. If any good comes of trying to produce a wholly black-wooled breed, we may have to compliment Captain Mayne Reid for agitating the question, by attempting to exhibit his two remarkable pets.<sup>158</sup>

Reid's wife recalled that "about a year after 'Jacob's sheep first made their appearance in Mayne Reid's pastures," like Dr. Chambers, he "had some of their wool woven into cloth, from which were obtained garments made to his own design." Later, she added, he "had many yards woven, which he used for this own clothing and that of more than one of his friends." One of these, not surprisingly, was Charles Ollivant, who in an 1897 letter to Elizabeth Reid, attested to the hardwearing, fade-proof qualities of this cloth, saying that "he has 'had an overcoat made of this undyed cloth in constant use every winter since 1879 — a period of seventeen years — and it is as good in this year of our Lord, 1897, as it was then!'"<sup>159</sup>

On September 3, in one of his countless letters to Charles Ollivant, Reid expressed a depth of contentment with country life that was based not just on his enjoyment of fresh air and natural history but on something more prosaic — the fact that he was able to use the land to pay his bills!

I now hold twenty-two acres at Frogmore [he had by this time given up calling his place "The Ranche" because none of the locals would go along with it], and unless the blight gets into my potato crop, I will this year with it and may be able to pay my rent of £86 per annum, and have enough left over to feed my pigs, sheep, cows, and horses — of which I have three in my stables that for the past four months have not cost me a shilling to keep! Still the Frogmore land is wonderfully fertile, and as you know I have a great bargain of the place. In any case, I would advise you to look forward to having a house with a few acres of land. With three, four, or five, I can put you up to keeping a cow and pony, with trap, at no cost whatever — but indeed some profit. It all lies, not in a nutshell, but in a tuber — the *solanum tuberosum*, alias potato. My crop is a splendid one, so far, and if there be not a plethora of "murphys" in this winter's market, out of the two and a quarter acres I have planted I should realize quite £60.<sup>160</sup>

Reid also looked forward to making money from breeding his unusual sheep. "I don't see how I can fail," he told his former secretary, adding a Biblical reference: "Jacob made a good thing of it, and why shouldn't I."<sup>161</sup>

Reid's "only mistake," wrote Ollivant, in ruminating about his friend's endeavors, was that he miscalculated "his own strength in the superintendence of farming operations." His poor physical condition required him "to leave too much in the hands of servants, who in all cases require close personal surveillance, which he was not in sufficiently robust health to give." As a result, in the very same year he predicted a bumper crop of potatoes, he very "nearly" lost "the whole...through the carelessness of his head gardener." Yet in spite of such setbacks, admitted his friend, the author-turned-farmer's crops usually yielded a handsome return on the outlay, and did in some years actually recoup him for the annual rental of the place."<sup>162</sup>

In the fall of 1878, with his "brain...as active and strong as ever," Reid commenced a novelette, The Queen of the Lakes, which was set in Central Mexico and based on "several of his own personal experiences in the Mexican capital." When finished, W. Mullan & Son of London published it in a single volume. Although it was later reprinted, it is today one of his most hard-to-find books. This was immediately followed by a short story, also set in Mexico, which was titled "The Spectre at the Gate." It was published in the Christmas issue of the Penny Illustrated Paper and proved "a great success."<sup>163</sup>

In December, as winter weather set in, Reid turned his hand to the first of what would become "a series of natural history sketches" published in the Live Stock Journal under the heading, "The Naturalist on the Wye. " " Dealing with "the terrible time of frost and snow we had here," the article appeared in the magazine's Christmas number. It was the severe weather, he told Ollivant in a letter dated January 17, 1879, that accounted for the near total loss of his potato crop, which a servant had failed to properly shield from the cold.<sup>164</sup>

While the winter snow accumulated outside, Reid spent his days productively, writing more articles for his “Naturalist on the Wye” series, along with a few other short pieces, which, as he put it, helped “to keep the pot boiling.” One of these, “Christmas in a Shooting Box,” was printed in a periodical called Touchstone. An “instructive monograph on the Mistletoe” appeared in another magazine around the same time.<sup>165</sup>

From time to time, Reid recycled some of his old work. A short piece originally written for the March 1869 edition of Onward, “White and Black: Which is the Warmer Color,” was revised and published in an abbreviated form in the January 24, 1879 issue of Live Stock Journal, under the title “The Merits of White and Black Colours for Clothing.” In keeping with his frequent challenges to conventional wisdom, Reid argued that black, not white, was best for keeping comfortable in the summer heat, and vice-versa.

Why do polar hares and foxes that are slate-blue in summer turn snow-white in winter? Nature effects the change; but with what object and for what purpose? The usual mode of accounting for it, when speaking of the hare, is that this defenceless creature, by becoming white, is assimilated to the colour of the snow, and so escapes the danger of being sighted by predatory animals. But the fox also assumes a white dress precisely a the same period of time; and, as he is one of these predatory animals, his altered hue enables him the more easily to approach this very prey! So if that were the design of the transformation, we should have Nature making a fool of herself, which Nature never does.

I am acquainted with the usual test of colour temperature: the two pieces of cloth, white and black, spread upon snow. When this proverbial problem comes to be more thoroughly investigated, it will go the way of the flat earth and the spherical bullet.

While campaigning in a tropical country, under the hottest suns, I became aware that a black coat was cooler than a white one, both being of the same weight, texture, and thickness — in short, *coeteris paribus*, save the colour. This fact led me to reflection, to correlation of other facts and circumstances observed at the same time, as on other occasions. For one, I could see that my negro servant alongside me, enveloped in a coal-black skin, did not suffer from the fervid rays of the sun half as much as I did under my tripe-coloured epidermis. What could this be but a provision of Nature — made for him whose home was to be in the torrid zone? And the longer I remained within its limits the more could I acknowledge her kindness in tanning my cheeks, and so making hem less sensitive of the scorching of the sun. From the coat upon my back

and the colour of my skin, thought wandered to the black bears of tropical countries — always coal black — to the brown species of temperate climes, and on to the Arctic ice, where *Ursa* is robed in white. Then, there is night and day, shadow and sunlight, the dark naked ground, and the same covered with snow — all in their opposed temperatures in conformity with my belief as above.<sup>166</sup>

Neither winter weather nor his inability to walk unaided prevented Reid, no doubt wearing a white coat, from going out. “Last week,” he told Ollivant in a January 1879 letter, “I astonished the Rossites [his term for the inhabitants of Ross-on-Wye] and all the folks around by dashing daily through its streets with my sleigh and its jingling bells — just as I had done the Gerrard’s’ Crossites some twelve years ago,” adding: “They had never seen the like before.”<sup>167</sup>

For four days our snow was in splendid form for sleighing, but for here and there a stretch of macadam [asphalt paving material] freshly laid. Still I managed to scratch over it, and glide on, everybody admiring, and not a few feeling envious. The day was when I should have enjoyed the triumph. Alas! not much now. I only did it to assure myself I could, and that the old spirit was not all gone out of me. And it isn’t yet, though I’ve suffered enough to drive it out.<sup>168</sup>

Reid’s interest in politics remained undiminished. In February he sent a letter to the Birmingham Daily Post, in which he complained “in eloquent language” about the “Tory government, then in office and their true colours.”

We have to meet the expense of war preparations, idly entered upon, in connection with the Russo-Turkish strife; the ridiculous transfer of troops from India to Malta and back again; the cost of the Cyprus occupation; the infamous invasion of Afghanistan; and, last and latest, the attempt — as yet lamentably abortive — to rob the Zulu Kaffirs of their lands. Connected with all these deeds, or rather misdeeds, closely related, because the absolute and certain result of them — is England’s present distress. As all know, she has now a pale cheek; but it will be red when men, much more nations, come to reflect on the series of disgraces, abominable blotches, with which Tory rule has smirched her escutcheon.<sup>169</sup>

In the March 17 issue of the Post, in another letter Reid let fly at a bill in Parliament that proposed to place the country’s “citizen-soldiers,” i.e., the volunteer militia, in red

uniforms, the same as the regular army's, and to extend enlistments to four years, but apparently with no appreciable increase in pay. If passed, predicted Reid, militia officers would like the change for the prestige that came with it, but he didn't think the "rank and file" would share their enthusiasm.<sup>170</sup>

The bombastic author's letter writing was not confined to British publications, however. In keeping with the transatlantic nature of his life, Reid also mailed off missives to the New York Sun, whose editor, Charles A. Dana, he remarked, was "the best...I ever knew." In one letter, he "dealt with the parallelism of these times and those of Charles I, pointing out the grasping of the Crown, its thirst for more power, and how the Jew-juggler Disraeli was helping it." In another, he castigated the same army bill that he had raked over the coals in the columns of the Birmingham Daily Post, and in a third, he blasted Britain's Tory government. To his astonishment, Dana refused to print them, saying they were "too plain spoken." Clearly disappointed, and no doubt genuinely puzzled, Reid thought that the professed reason for Dana's rejection was peculiar, "proceeding from the editor of a newspaper published not in autocratic Russia, but in the freest country on the globe!"<sup>171</sup>

In the early spring of 1879 Reid could boast that he now had "forty lambs, but, alas! as yet only one with the white face and tail." The others were all "curiosities," however. Four, he wrote, were "black with a white spot on the crown." Two more were "speckled or flecked like hounds," while the remainder were "milk white." The happy author also remarked that he enjoyed watching the lambs play, calling it "one of the prettiest sights imaginable."<sup>172</sup>

They run about in troops — dance and cut the most extraordinary capers — and yesterday every two of them [visited?] upon the back of a ewe which was lying down,

and stayed there for several minutes; one, her own lamb I believe, pawing at her head and ears as if scratching her, she all the while seeming pleased by the thing! I never witnessed such a sight before. No wonder at one of my servants exclaiming: "It's as good as a circus!"<sup>173</sup>

In March Reid traveled to London, where "he made a good literary engagement with Mr. Ingram, proprietor of the Illustrated London News." Proposing "to enter the field of boys' journalism" Ingram planned to publish "a new weekly magazine for the young, and he was naturally anxious to secure the services of the prince of juvenile story-tellers." The agreement Reid reached with Ingram, revealed Charles Ollivant, "was for six novelettes, each to occupy about five columns weekly in the new paper and to be completed in six numbers." But although the remuneration offered by Ingram "was liberal," Reid had some misgivings about the prospect "of having to conceive six complete plots, and write tales to them." Furthermore, he confided to Ollivant, "I must make them different as to scenes, character, and country."<sup>174</sup>

That summer, the busy author's niece, Helen Cromie Mollan, came from Northern Ireland to visit her aunt and uncle at their Herefordshire home, "accompanying" them "in all their walks and drives" and "doing much to cheer and amuse them" with "her unflinching spirits and lively sallies of wit." A few years after her celebrated uncle's death, Mollan wrote a brief memoir of this visit, which was originally "intended for delivery by a nephew of the author" at the meeting of "a literary society." Acknowledging her as the author, and almost certainly with Cromie's permission, Charles Ollivant, incorporated these notes into his unpublished biography of Reid.<sup>175</sup>

The Wye Valley, remembered Mollan, was "a very beautiful place" that abounded in wild life of all sorts, particularly wild birds, which were both "numerous and tame." This



gave her uncle “great delight,” she observed, because he enjoyed “studying the bird and animal life in which that lovely wooded country abounds.” One of her most vivid memories was seeing a green woodpecker, “which we have not in Ireland,” pointed out by Reid “as it flew like a flash along the woods as we drove.” On another occasion, the young woman was alone “in the depth of the wood,” when she happened to spot “a weasel killing a rabbit.” When she told her uncle about it, “he quite envied me.”<sup>176</sup>

We already know that Reid’s domestic animals (Mollan called them his “pets”) also gave him enjoyment, particularly his flock of “Jacob’s sheep.” As a rider since youth, the former soldier’s horses — of which he had four — were another source of pleasure. “One horse,” his niece remembered, “had been a hunter.” However, when it “grew too old even to drive,” her uncle sold it, but no doubt to the Captain’s delight, when the new owner had taken it several miles away, “it broke loose and came galloping home!” Mollan remembered too that in addition to the sheep and horses, her aunt and uncle owned “a white pony, a large white goat, a white kid, two white bull terriers, eight white puppies, and a white Persian cat,” as well as “a set of little mere-hens who were too aristocratic to stay with the other fowl and always roosted in the high trees of the shrubbery.”<sup>177</sup>

Although he was never again able to walk without the aid of crutches, Reid was “a fearless whip,” who delighted in taking drives of “from five to twenty-five miles — often to visit friends, and always to gain knowledge of the country, its ancient lore and landmarks.” He knew the history of all the houses in the Wye Valley, remembered his niece, one of which was an old Elizabethan mansion built on the site of an ancient Roman battlefield. “Another,” she recalled, was “the veritable house in which Cromwell stayed with his soldiers, and

through the floor of which he listened to their talk in the room below.”<sup>178</sup>

Mollan noticed that during her stay her uncle, who she described as a “pleasant kindly man” who was “odd as ever and odd-looking,” and who routinely wore a Norfolk jacket, was frequently overcome “by the sadness of life.” On the other hand, she also observed, when he was in a good mood he was capable of great playfulness and fun. “One favourite trick,” she remembered, “was to drive into Ross in his open carriage,” then “stop in front of the principal shops, and preventing my aunt, self, or servants from getting out, would roar at the shop people until they came out and attended to him.” On another occasion Reid took his wife and niece to a missionary meeting, arranging to meet them “at the close...and drive to a garden party at the Rector’s.” When the appointed time came, recalled Mollan, she and her aunt were embarrassed to find Reid sitting outside the meeting place in his open carriage, shaking hands “with his friends,” and singing in a loud voice: “I wish I was a cassowary, on the plains of Timbuktoo. Wouldn’t I eat a missionary, Bible, bones, and hymn book too!”<sup>179</sup>

Another time they were “driving out of Ross” when the trio “overtook a little tailor,” who Reid “sometimes employed out of charity, toiling along with a heavy-looking sack on his back.” At that point, the man was four miles from home. “Uncle drove so close,” wrote Mollan, “I thought he would be over him; but that was not his intention.” Drawing up alongside him, Reid “seized the sack, and before the little man could speak, drove off with it.” Arriving at the tailor’s cottage, he stopped and “shouted until the man’s daughter came out.” Tossing the sack out of the carriage, he roared: “Tell your father to have that suit of clothes made for me at once, or I won’t pay him for it,” leaving “the astonished girl to find out the meaning of the joke when her father came home.” He did this, Mollan explained, not

just for fun, but to relieve the man of the burden of carrying the heavy sack,” doing this “kind action” in such a way “that neither [the father or the daughter] should thank him.” He often did such things, she commented further, “for he had an utter hatred to any doing of charity or kindness for mere show or thanks.”<sup>180</sup>

One anecdote related by Mollan recalls the early days of the Reids’ marriage, when they lived in their isolated cottage near Stokenchurch, demonstrates that although he was no longer a young man, Reid’s spontaneous nature was unchanged:

During my stay at Frogmore he had a severe cold, of which he became so tired that he suddenly, one evening after dinner, announced his intention of going to Malvern next morning. He told Auntie and myself to pack up, and not to put in more frills than necessary, as he meant to drive all the way and take no baggage that could not be put in the carriage. Off we started next morning, my aunt and I riding [on horseback] by turns, he driving with the servant and luggage in the carriage. In due time we reached Malvern, twenty-four miles, and proceeded to Dr. Raynor’s establishment where he had been before. He had left home in “the blues,” but as soon as he came down from his rooms to the drawing-room he began — and from then for a whole week he kept them all in fun. An old clergyman was there for [a] nervous ailment, and he fairly roused him up and made a new man of him. He made himself most agreeable to the ugliest lady in the house. In fact, he was so attractive that we were all three most cordially invited to remain another week free of all charge. Dr. Raynor said that he did his patients more good than he could. He [Reid] made fun of the hydropathic treatment — of the cocoa in the morning, which he used to call out to the waiters to bring him by the name of a “decoction of burnt shoe leather” — in short, of everything. And all in such an irresistibly funny clever way, that it is impossible to give you a proper picture in mere words.

However, the impulse to go home was as strong as it had been to come — he was most impulsive always — and we rode and drove back the twenty-four miles in a torrent of rain.<sup>181</sup>

Although the region’s “disagreeable weather” failed to prevent him driving home from Malvern, Reid found that Herefordshire’s cool, damp climate frequently interfered with farming and the outdoor activities he enjoyed. Likewise, his wife was convinced that the frequent cloudbursts “aggravated his afflictions,” which included rheumatism, sciatica, and

occasional bouts of melancholia. As evidence of the extent to which the weather troubled him, Elizabeth Reid cited the following extracts from Reid's diary for 1879:

June 16. — Rain, rain, rain every day, and most days all day long! No chance to clear the ground for the green crops.

July 1. — Cold and dark, with the same strong wind. Rained all last night.

July 4. — Cold and dark skies with high wind, rain still continuing without a day's intermission. This day the thermometer all day at about fifty-five degrees.

August 17. — After eight days of fine weather, again cold rain. Hay not all gathered yet.<sup>182</sup>

Despite the rain, Reid continued throughout the summer of 1879 to write his "Naturalist in the Wye" series for the Live Stock Journal, which, he confided to Charles Ollivant, gave him great pleasure in that it did not "task" his mind. That same summer also saw the serialization in the New York Ledger of Reid's story "The Free Lances" (re-titled "Cris Rock; or, A Lover in Chains") after lying "idle in Mr. Bonner's desk exactly ten years." Ollivant also remembered that around this same time, a friend of his, "R. B. Blaize by name, an African merchant from Lagos, West Coast of Africa, expressed a wish to possess one of Mayne Reid's books with autograph inscribed therein." In July, Reid complied, forwarding Blaize a complimentary copy of The Headless Horseman.<sup>183</sup> At the same time he sent a note to Ollivant, which shows that although he was intolerant of Roman Catholics, the English aristocracy, and possibly Jews (Benjamin Disraeli in any case), Reid harbored no ill feeling toward blacks.

I had always a kindly feeling for people of his [Mr. Blaize's] race and colour, as my "Quadroon" and "Maroon" both attest. I wish I were young enough, with health and wealth, to visit the country he comes from. It must be a very interesting part of the world — especially to a naturalist as myself. And just now with these dark cold skies above us one might well long for the burning sun of Africa. One of the most accomplished gentlemen I have ever met was the minister from Hayti to our Court. He was quite black, and withal as graceful as any of our tripe-coloured race.<sup>184</sup>

In ten hand-written pages that are now in the safekeeping of the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Reid's niece recalled two incidents in the life of her aunt and uncle that left an impression on her memory. Unfortunately, she failed to note whether they occurred during her 1879 visit to Herefordshire or some earlier date. In any event, in a piece entitled "Fuel," she remembered an episode that must surely have displeased her uncle:

It is Sunday evening. Mayne Reid is not at home. All the servants have gone to church. Mamsie and a number of friends, young men & girls are in the drawing room talking & laughing round the fire for though the room is warm, outside there is a frosty nip in the night air. After a time the fire begins to alter from leaping flame to a heart of orange-rose, movement gives place to glow; outlines of grey furry ash appear. Some one says put on more coal but in the big gleaming copper coal scuttle there is none. Laughing consternation, 'We must go look for some,' exodus from the room, out through the green baize covered door to the back hall where the full coal scuttles are kept, all empty! The new footman, whose duty it is to fill them has gone to church with the other servants, leaving it undone; greater consternation; what can we do? The obvious journey to the coal house is evidently not to be thought of. 'Here's a big box, what is in it? Discovered to be Mayne Reid's special set of croquet mallets & balls, he is an expert player & lover of the game, the only out-door one his increasing lameness permits him to enjoy. 'Hurrah! The very thing!' & soon the beautifully made & perfectly balanced mallets are blazing brilliantly.<sup>185</sup>

On another occasion, recollected Mollan, the Reids were preparing to leave the home of some friends, where they had been enjoying an afternoon visit, when her beloved "Mamsie" was nearly killed by their careless host.

The groom has brought the carriage to the door, the host holding up departure by a discussion with Mayne Reid about firearms, to prove his point leaves the room returning with his revolver in his hand, holding it negligently while he talks he points it inconsequently at Mamsie seated in a chair with her back to a window. The horses are impatient & jinglings & head tossings are taking place, still the revolver-waving conversation continues, but Mamsie observing that now a finger is on the trigger quietly leaves her chair for one nearer to her hostess at the side of the room: "O don't be frightened Mrs. Reid, I assure you it is unloaded." Smack! a bullet shatters the glass of the window in a direct line with where a moment before the golden head had been. Sang froid Mamsie the imperturbable, merely a deepening of shell pink in the charming face, all the other complexions in the room are in tatters Mayne Reid, his sallow colouring dark grey, after a reassuring glance from those calm blue eyes —

rushes from the house — the groom, the horses — all is well the bullet imbedded in a tree.<sup>186</sup>

In the autumn of 1879 Reid had his “fancy sheep sheared, and their black and white wool carded and woven into cloth, which came from the loom a rich brown; and being free from any dyeing matter whatsoever — Nature having coloured it in the sheep’s back — it could not fade, like the very best of dyed cloths do.” Around this same time, W. Mullan & Sons of London published The Flag of Distress in a single volume, which had, wrote Reid, “the most ludicrous caricature of gold picture on the binding, enough to make a horse laugh.”<sup>187</sup>

On September 18, 1879 Charles Ollivant arrived by train at Ross-on-Wye for a second visit to Frogmore. Years later he wrote pensively:

Once more, then, I beheld in person my favourite author and dearest friend — once more did two kindred spirits enter into the closest communion. Ah! But the time was rapidly approaching when I should experience a dreary void, and seek in vain for that warm, welcoming grasp of the hand — that genial sunny smile that gave a charm to every feature — and most of all the eloquent tones of that voice, whether discoursing on political themes, or relating the strange facts observed by him in Nature’s wondrous kingdom.<sup>188</sup>

For three weeks — “weeks which sped only too quickly” — Ollivant (apparently, he was unaccompanied by his wife this time) enjoyed the companionship of his old friend, who was “just as jovial and entertaining as ever, full of anecdote, and never at a loss for something interesting to talk about.” His health, observed the younger man, “was good,” although he still suffered “from sciatica” and from time to time, would slip into “his old complaint, melancholia.” But physically and despite his infirmities, he “carried full flesh — indeed looked stouter than when I had last seen him.”<sup>189</sup>

“When the weather permitted” the two men drove around the countryside in Reid’s

carriage — “this picturesque sylvan abode,” Ollivant called it — “exploring the Forest of Dean, and miles beyond to the borders of Wales — spending a day at the curious old town of Monmouth, where ‘Harry the King’ was born.” All during their rambles Reid was in good spirits, never failing to call out to “even the humblest labourer in the road without exchanging speech and cheering him in his work by a kindly word or jocular remark.” They also visited “the beautiful old Abbey of Tintern, far down the river Wye,” Ollivant remembered, to which they had to take a train.<sup>190</sup>

During his friend’s visit, Reid became embroiled in yet another newspaper war-of-words, this time with “Mr. J. T. Kay, the librarian of Owens College, Manchester.” Kay had fired the opening volley by asking in an editorial in the London Daily News, “Who ever heard of devourers of Aimard, Mayne Reid, Cooper, and Marryat being led to more substantial literature?” Novels penned by those authors, he opined, “illustrated none of the nobler principles of human nature; they contained no true chivalry, and were nuisances to mankind at large.” Such words not only wounded Reid’s pride, they were inaccurate, as the insulted author’s letter of response, printed in the issue of September 19, made clear:

For M. Aimard’s novels I have nothing to say; they are the works of a Frenchman, and let Frenchmen defend them. But if there be writings in the English language which illustrate “the nobler principles of human nature of human nature,” and inculcate “true chivalry,” to a greater degree, or in a more effective manner than the romances of Captain Marryat, I have yet to read them. And almost as much may be said for those of Fenimore Cooper. It is not pleasant for an author publicly to speak in praise of his own works, however gratified he may be to hear them praised by others. But as Mr. Kay has thrown his gauntlet direct into my teeth, I am constrained to take it up — the other authors with whom he has done me the honour to associate my name, being long since deceased, and unable to do so. And I answer him by him by saying that if there be any merit in my writings, it is just hat which he would deny them — leading their devourers to “more substantial literature.” Many letters have I received (with many instances otherwise made known to me) from men now distinguished in various walks of life — especially in the natural sciences — telling me that the first inspiring cause

which led them to study, and carried them to distinction, came from the lessons I had taught them in my novels. I knew this without such testimony; for I had had set the lessons for just such purpose. And if Mr. Kay could read the letters I have received from parents, thanking me for having instilled “noble principles” into their children, he would possibly be merciful enough to omit my name from his Index expurgatorious, and speak of my books as something else than “nuisances to mankind at large.

Dr. Livingstone in his last letter, written in the very heart of Africa, says, “The boys who, on reading Mayne Reid’s books, would like to be ‘castaways,’ have the ring of the true missionary metal.” I never had the honour of personally knowing this greatest of travelers — and I might even say, greatest of modern men. So much the more do I esteem the compliment he has paid me; and, with it in sweet consciousness, I can calmly bear the flippant and somewhat vulgar criticism of J. T. Kay, Librarian of Owens College, Manchester.<sup>191</sup>

Ollivant’s visit also coincided with Reid’s successful efforts to form a “‘syndicate’ of newspapers to publish the ‘Free Lances.’” One of these papers, Ollivant reported proudly, was a hometown publication, the Manchester Weekly Post. He also remembered that the two men “discussed between us” Reid’s “projected Cromwellian story, ‘No Quarter!’ as well as his “plans...for its future publication.” No Quarter, published posthumously, was Reid’s “last effort in the novel line,” he noted with a tinge of sadness.<sup>192</sup>

“We parted reluctantly,” Ollivant recollected in one of the few passages from his unpublished biography of Reid that provides us with a glimpse of his own life, “the first week of October, necessity compelling me to return to the capital of Cottonopolis — Manchester — with its daily round of mercantile duties.” He added, expressively: “What a change from the broad green meads and clear sunny skies of Herefordshire, with its pure bracing air, to the smoke-begrimed buildings and enervating atmosphere of the great northern city, with its cotton mills and factories belching forth poisonous vapours, and causing a dun veil to hang externally over it, totally obscuring the blue vault of Heaven.”<sup>193</sup>

Reid spent the remainder of the year hard at work on “The Free Lances,” revising it



for publication in “three other newspapers in England and one in Ireland,” hoping “to improve it greatly.” He had originally written the story while living in the United States, for Bonner of the New York Ledger, and the “haste and worry” of “that awful New York life,” he confided to Ollivant, was “evident in every line of it.” He also began composing “a tale” for Ingram’s Penny Illustrated Paper, the editor of which gave only a week’s notice that he needed it sent to London no later than Monday, November 8. “Of course I couldn’t,” Reid complained to his faithful friend, “but hope to send it all off to him on Tuesday — and even then it will be a close shave.” The hastily penned work, “The Iguana Hunter,” was set in Vera Cruz and its environs, drawing upon Reid’s wartime experiences in Mexico.<sup>194</sup>

Remarkably, the pressure of all this work seemed to agree with him, he wrote, commenting that it was not his own but rather his wife’s well being that worried him. “She is in very delicate health, and looking quite ill.” As a result, the quality of his work suffered, “for when she is not cheerful, I don’t write nearly so well.” He added, woefully: “And alas! she is far from being cheerful.”<sup>195</sup>

On New Year’s Day 1880 Reid wrote to tell Ollivant that he had been so unhappy with the original version of “The Free Lances” that he was then in the process of rewriting the entire story. Ironically, the same pressure that seemed to energize him in November had put him “in low spirits” through the end of the year. As winter set in, he grew more despondent. “We are both anything but well,” he confided to Ollivant on-January 13. There were some days, he complained, “such as this one,” when he could not bear to work, and “so I occupy a little time in pouring my griefs [sic] into your ear.” The “whole of ‘The Free Lances’” had to be redone, he grumbled. “Not a scene, not a line of it” as originally written

was “fit to go forth.” As a result, he was having trouble keeping up “with the papers — having to write out every chapter at least twice, before I can get it to suit.”<sup>196</sup>

Toward the end of January the nearly exhausted author wrote again to report that he had finally finished “The Free Lances” and was heartened by an offer of £40 from the Manchester Weekly Post to serialize “No Quarter!” This suggested the editors had liked “The Free Lances,” he wrote, explaining “it is unusual for a paper to run the same author in continuation of two tales.” The Newcastle Chronicle and the Bristol Mercury had also agreed to take it, which gave him some additional income. But “I have been rather poorly in health,” he confided, and needed a few days to rest before starting on it. Besides, he added, “I haven’t yet thought of a plot!”<sup>197</sup>

“No Quarter,” the first installment of which was due by April 3, was more than just another tale of adventure. It was a political statement. “I shall do the story strong radicalism,” Reid told Ollivant, “whatever be the result.” Indeed, those were “dark days for the Radical cause,” remembered Ollivant, “when Toryism was rampant throughout the land, and a little pandering to the popular fallacy would have served to advance his position in literature.” But Reid was a rebel. Referring to the upcoming British elections, on March 6 he wrote:

There is really a fear the Tories will get another seven years lease of their destructive rule — through Bung and the Bible. God help England if they do. The people seem to like it — and rush to their destruction. It is exactly as it was in the early days of Charles I — though, indeed, then the people were more disposed to liberty.<sup>198</sup>

As it turned out, Reid’s fears were unfounded. In 1880 the Tories, “whose claim to be the party of competent imperialism was severely dented by their mishandling of events in South Africa and Afghanistan in the late 1870s and by the high cost of their military exploits,” lost the general election, “borne down partly by Gladstone’s oratory,” which pointed these things

out, and “partly by the trade recession of that year.”<sup>199</sup>

Although he was almost certainly glad to have the income, the job of writing “No Quarter” seemed daunting. “Oh! what a terrible pull of work it will be,” he complained to Ollivant in the spring of 1880, worrying that it would keep him confined to his house throughout the summer, when he liked to be outdoors, enjoying his drives in the countryside. This was ironic considering that he had apparently been giving some thought to moving, perhaps back to London. However, he remarked: “I have no time to think of leaving Frogmore now.” He had to stay, he said, at least until “No Quarter” was finished, “as I need being on the spot for the scenery and other reasons.” As for the plot: “It will be strongly republican — no nonsense, but plain speaking out.” And if the papers that had agreed to publish it decided it was not to their liking, well, that was *their* problem. They “made no objective conditions,” he pointed out, “and I will force them to take it as I write.”<sup>200</sup>

As spring approached Reid also began to give some thought to agricultural pursuits. In addition to his “Jacob’s sheep,” he was particularly proud of his crop of Mexican potatoes or “papas” as he called them, explaining that the word “potato” was a corruption of “batata,” the so-called ‘sweet potato’ of the West Indian Islanders.” If he had not been so ill and so wrapped up in his writing, conjectured Ollivant, being free of the “blight” that affected so many other farmers’ crops, “they could have been made to yield him a handsome income.” In March Reid sent his friend a clipping from an issue of the Live Stock Journal, which had published his letter extolling the virtues of the Mexican variety and giving some history of the tuber’s New World origins. He added his opinion that if the British government would only “encourage the importation of seed-potatoes, fresh from the native original stock of Peru

and Mexico” he believed “we should cease to hear talk of potato blight.” It was also important to store them correctly, he wrote in another letter. “The most convenient and therefore most economical way” was the “field ‘pit,’ or ‘bury’ as it is called here in Herefordshire.” If the potatoes were shielded from winter weather with an “‘overcoat’ of dry litter” in these pits, he instructed his readers, they would be safe. “I treated my ‘Mexicans’ in this way during the last winter,” he boasted, “and they are now being turned out of the pits perfectly sound from skin to core.”<sup>201</sup>

Later that same month Reid informed Ollivant that he had sold nearly all his potatoes “at fourteen shillings the bushel” or “twenty-four shillings” per cubic weight, earning him “£48, leaving £25 worth of seed for myself.” He added that his household had consumed about £10 worth during the winter and complained: “If they had been planted in a proper field, instead of that old orchard under the trees, I should have had £200 worth at the very least.” If only he were “young and strong,” he added wistfully, he could “make a fortune” from his unusual sheep “and another out the Mexican ‘papas.’”<sup>202</sup>

The result of the recent elections (“A splendid victory, and the country is saved,” he trumpeted) also led Reid to reflect on what might have been if he had entered politics as a young man. “I could have gone into Parliament long ago,” he reminded his friend, if not for the need to earn a living. More recently he grumbled, “I hadn’t even time to make a speech, which was wanted here.”<sup>203</sup>

Although Reid was initially pleased by the “crushing defeat” of the Tories, his elation over the recent elections quickly turned to disillusionment. The problem, as he saw it, was that the Liberal party was still dominated by aristocrats. The result, he feared, would be a

sham democracy. As he explained in a letter to Ollivant dated April 13:

The worst of it is, that when Gladstone gets in and [Lord] Hartington and all that gang their Liberalism will go back to Whiggism [sic], rather than forward in the direction of Freedom. I still hold to my original belief that Gladstone is grand old deception. I know he is. He was for the South in the American rebellion, and no man who went that way could be first-class either as statesman or honest liberalist. But the backslidings of Disraeli, whose rival he was, gave him the finest chance man ever had for running up a big score of popularity, and he has made the most dexterous use of it. That is the whole story.<sup>204</sup>

Unfortunately, Reid's outspoken political beliefs proved detrimental to him in at least one instance. In the spring of 1880 Charles Ollivant's heartfelt concern for both the health and economic well being of his old friend, who was then over sixty, led him to suggest that he try to "secure Mayne Reid a pension from the Civil List," which would have entitled the aging author to an income of "£200 per annum." Although undoubtedly flattered, Reid wrote a letter to Ollivant, "throwing cold water upon the proposition," proclaiming: "I would rather try on a bit as I am, and only surrender when there is no hope left."<sup>205</sup>

Sincerely believing that only a reliable source of income could prolong his hardworking friend's life, Ollivant ignored Reid's objections and went ahead secretly, seeking advice from Thomas Bayley Potter, "the well known free trader" and Member of Parliament for Rochdale. Potter advised him to draw up a memorial and then he would "do his best to procure signatures of members of Parliament and others," after which it would be presented to Gladstone, who, it was hoped, would then recommend it to Queen Victoria for her stamp of approval.<sup>206</sup>

"This I undertook to accomplish" wrote Ollivant in his unpublished biography of Reid, "and having secured the endorsement and signature of the late venerable Bishop of Llandaff, Dr. Alfred Ollivant, forwarded the memorial to Mr. Potter, who then obtained the

necessary names.” Despite Reid’s “well known republican opinions,” recalled his friend, “men of all parties” signed the document — from “Sir Henry Holland, to the great Radical commoner, John Bright; besides [ironically] several members of the peerage.” Unfortunately, the memorial got no further than Prime Minister Gladstone, who “turned a deaf ear to the urgent appeal and refused to send up the name of Mayne Reid to the Queen.” This action (or *inaction*, to be more precise), wrote Ollivant, was based on Gladstone’s alleged fear of harming his “favour” with the Queen “by recommending for a civil pension such a pronounced Republican as he [Reid] was known to be.” Not surprisingly, the Manchester man, who discretely waited two years before telling his old friend about the effort he had made on his behalf, was both disappointed and angry, writing:

Though why this bounty, set aside by the nation for the most deserving of her sons, should bear any relation whatever to the opinions of the recipient thereof, is what many besides the writer cannot understand. For it is not in any sense a Royal bounty, and Royal sanction is only asked out of courtesy to the lady ruler of these realms. I feel sure that had Mayne Reid’s name been presented to Her Majesty to receive this sanction, it would have been freely granted.<sup>207</sup>

In early June 1880, while his wife was away at Malvern, Reid had “a bit of a scare” when during dinner one night, a chicken bone became lodged in his throat and he nearly choked to death. Afterward, he spent an anxious night alone thinking that some of it might still be there and that he was still in danger. The next morning, when the pain had not subsided, he sent for a doctor who assured him that “it was only the inflammation from the scratch it had made” that was causing him pain. Unfortunately, this news did not put him at ease. Thinking that his throat might swell as a result of the inflammation, he continued for a day or so to worry that he would choke to death after all.<sup>208</sup>

During the summer of 1880 Reid “kept steadily at work upon ‘No Quarter,’ writing

only a few brief letters.” By summer’s end, he had only one more installment to write “and that,” he wrote Charles Ollivant in early September, “seems a Herculean task.” It had been “the greatest struggle,” he confided, “to write the book at all, and I even dread yet not being able to finish it without a breakdown.” He added that he had found one other paper to take it, the Laborer’s Chronicle of Leamington, which agreed to pay him £20.<sup>209</sup>

In the same letter Reid told Ollivant of an “episode” that “will interest you.” He had recently been invited to Newcastle-on-Tyne “to be present at the Inauguration ceremony of their public library, all my expenses to be paid.” Obviously flattered, he had accepted the invitation and was pleased to learn that the French and American ambassadors, along with the American writer Bret Harte “and others,” would also be present.” But when one of the town’s aldermen, a Tory, “made insulting remarks about them” and another (“an infamous old man” named Gregson) “called me a ‘humbug,’” the insulted author “wrote a letter to punish him, which it did.” He also sent his regrets to the city, saying that “ill health” would prevent his attendance, which, he claimed was “a fact, my refusal having nothing to do with the attack by Gregson.” Reid later told his friend that the people of Newcastle were very disappointed when they learned he was not coming, the editor of the Chronicle writing to inform him “there was a great rivalry as to who should be my host while there.”<sup>210</sup>

Reid’s 1880 potato crop, he grumbled in a later missive, was not quite as good as it had been the year before. Some of his “papas” had got the blight, though not many. Yet sales were good. “I actually have a letter from the Consul-General of the German Empire,” he boasted, “ordering two cwt [cubic weight] to be sent to the Ducal Government of Meiningin.” He was also pleased to report that “Sutton’s, the great seedsman of Reading,

wants to get them; and another big potato grower in Yorkshire.”<sup>211</sup>

In early October 1880 Reid made a trip to London. While there, he stayed at his old haunt, the Langham Hotel, “the most popular resort of Americans” — a place where hotel guests along with people “coming from theatres or other places of amusement” routinely adjourned to “the smoking room” to drink brandy and smoke cigars while “the gossip and experiences of the town were interchanged, often lasting till ‘the wee sma’ hours ayant the twal.” Here, Reid met some Americans who could not help but notice the crutch he used to get around and informed him, after learning he was a veteran of the U.S.-Mexican War, that Congress had enacted a law “six years previously, making an appropriation of money for all soldiers who had been wounded while serving in any of their wars; the amount being half-pay from the date of the passing of...the bill, to be continued during life, and after death, to the widow during her widowhood.” This was essentially true. On March 3, 1873 (which was actually *seven* years earlier), Congress had indeed passed “An Act to revise, consolidate, and amend the Laws relating to Pensions.” However, what it provided for, among many other things, was a monthly allowance of \$15 per month for any veteran “so disabled as to render their inability to perform manual labor equivalent to the loss of a hand or foot”<sup>212</sup> — the section of the law under which the former lieutenant evidently qualified, and not “half-pay” as he was told. (Half pay was allowed for veterans who were *totally* disabled, which Reid was not.) One of Reid’s newfound friends, “a clever New York lawyer” visiting London on business, agreed to act as his agent. After returning to Herefordshire, the hopeful author immediately wrote a letter to Ollivant, excitedly informing him that at that very moment “the particulars of my claim are now on the way across the Atlantic to New York.”<sup>213</sup>





Figure 35. The Langham Hotel, London. Photo by the author.

The “clever New York lawyer” to whom the old soldier referred was one Jared F. Harrison, who had come to London on business, staying for four months. Twenty-five years later he remembered Reid well. “He was a slight man of pleasing, intellectual appearance, walking with much difficulty, aided by a crutch, the result of a disability occasioned by a wound received in the Mexican war.” As the two men conversed, Harrison discovered that the former lieutenant “was effusively American in sentiment, and as our acquaintance progressed,” the no doubt fascinated New Yorker “learned many of the incidents of his then later life.” At this “or an early subsequent visit some one asked if he had ever applied for or obtained a pension, and ascertaining that he had not, it was at once proposed that an application should be made, and as a New York lawyer I was requested to take charge of the application.”<sup>214</sup>

Harrison admittedly had no knowledge of the law regarding pensions, nor could he know with certainty whether Reid was actually entitled to one. Furthermore, he wondered if, “after the lapse of so many years,” he would be able to adequately establish Reid’s identity and connect “his disability with wounds received in the Mexican war. Nevertheless, he “undertook the service with enthusiasm, writing at once to my office in New York for a set of blank pension papers, thinking they might in some measure point out the way, and upon their receipt entered upon the task.”<sup>215</sup>

Although Reid had written to Ollivant on October 14 saying that the particulars of his case were even then being sent across the Atlantic, in truth this statement was premature. Several weeks later, probably in late November or early December, he had to return to London to sign the application that had been forwarded to Harrison, who remembered:

The great seeming difficulty was to obtain proof of his identity and to connect his disability with the wounds received in the war. But he had many friends in London, and collecting all the facts possible, I embodied them in affidavits, and attaching them with earlier and later photographs to a petition, I had the affidavits sworn to before the Lord Mayor, and his signature attested by the great seal of the City of London, impressed upon about four pounds of wax.

Upon my return to New York I went personally to Washington to place the papers immediately in the hands of the Commissioner of Pensions, with a view to getting him personally interested in the application and I venture to say that no more formidable collection of pension papers was ever filed in his office. My action seemed to have the desired effect, for some months later I learned that additional testimony was taken and the application granted, with \$2,400 of back pay, and I received a Pension Office check for \$10 as compensation for my service.<sup>216</sup>

Charles Ollivant added that when “the Lord Mayor, City Marshall and other dignitaries” received Reid, they treated him ‘with great respect.’” He also recollected that the former soldier had to find two witnesses willing to testify, “that he had not fought on the ‘Secesh’ side in the Civil War” and furthermore, that it was Mayne Reid “who led the ‘forlorn hope’ at the storming of Chapultepec” and not “a fellow named Reed of Kentucky, a corporal or sergeant in a Kentucky regiment,” who had been elected “to Congress on the strength of having done the deed, and swaggered on it throughout his life!”<sup>217</sup>

During the time that his application was under consideration at the Pension Office in Washington, Reid speculated on the amount he might expect to receive. “As my full pay as lieutenant commanding company (I had two companies under me at Chapultepec, one of Marines and my own New York dare devils) was about twenty pounds per month, the half of that for thirty-three years would be a neat little sum.”<sup>218</sup> But he was mistaken, at least partly. Arrears were not calculated from the date of wounding but rather from the date of the application and furthermore (as previously noted) Reid was not entitled to half pay due to the fact that he was not completely disabled.

Curiously, Reid's Mexican War pension file at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. does not include any of the documents to which both Harrison and Ollivant referred in their individual accounts of this affair; neither does it contain the photographs that Reid had taken in London "of the poor old cripple on his crutches to form part of the 'exhibit.'"<sup>219</sup> Instead, and in contradiction to the former soldier's claim to have never before applied for a government pension, it holds an application dated September 22, 1869, sworn before a deputy clerk in a New York city court, for what is termed an "Old Wars" disability pension. The application, printed on a form provided by the law firm of Nettleton, Gilbert & Camp, whose offices were on Broadway, is supported by the testimony of Addison Farnsworth and H. Hobart Ward, both former officers in the New York volunteer regiment, who knew Reid personally. There is also a letter from the United States Pension Office, sent on September 28, 1869, requesting the Adjutant General's Office to provide evidence of Reid's service — along with the Adjutant General's letter of confirmation dated October 5, 1869.<sup>220</sup>

*However*, although the documents carried to Washington by Jared Harrison seem to be missing, Reid's federal pension file *does* confirm that while his original application was made in the United States in 1869, his pension certificate (number 218.256), "for 'Gun-shot wound of left thigh,'" was not approved *until September 20, 1882* —prompted, obviously, by the Pension Office's receipt of the second, much later application. Be that as it may, the arrears he was owed, at a rate of \$15 per month, were calculated from the year of his *original* application— dated 1869. This amounted to almost precisely thirteen years, or one-hundred-and-fifty-six months — from September 24, 1869 to September 20, 1882 — worth of pension benefits, for a total of \$2,340 — slightly short of the \$2,400 that Harrison remembered but no

doubt a welcome sum all the same.<sup>221</sup> Sadly, as Charles Ollivant pointed out, it was a shame that this windfall came so late in Reid's life. By September 1882, he had only a little more than a year left to live.

While there is no doubt that Reid's original pension application arrived in Washington in 1869, for some unknown reason it seems to have languished in some sort of bureaucratic limbo until his 1880 application obviously revived it. Precisely why it happened that way is something of a mystery. The United States' declaration of war against Mexico, passed by Congress on May 13, 1846, contained a provision clearly stating: "That the volunteers who may be received into the service of the United States by virtue of the provisions of this act, and who shall be wounded or otherwise disabled in the service, shall be entitled to all the benefit which may be conferred on persons wounded in the service of the United States."<sup>222</sup> It is equally plain that Reid qualified — there being ample evidence of both his service and his wounding. Although his illness in the summer of 1870 and subsequent return to England almost certainly accounts for why he did not immediately follow up on the seemingly wayward application, it is difficult to understand why he made no inquiries after recovering. (At least there seems to be no evidence that he did.) Does this mean that he simply forgot? It seems unlikely. After all, he was not seriously ill at the time he first applied. It also seems unlikely that by 1880 he had forgotten the earlier application, although it could be that he simply assumed it had been denied. Equally mysterious is why his second application took so long — *nearly two years*— to process.

Although we cannot be sure if Reid was anxious about his first pension application, there is no doubt he worried about the second one. In 1880, Gen. Rush C. Hawkins, an

American who had met the former lieutenant in the 1850s, returned to England, where the two men renewed their acquaintance — probably at the Langham Hotel. Hawkins later remembered Reid as a “gifted writer” who was “at his best” as “a social companion.”<sup>223</sup>

In 1881 Reid wrote a letter to Hawkins, who was touring England at that time with his wife. It reveals not only that the ailing author was wondering about his application but also that he had either moderated his view of the “awful” New York experience to which he sometimes referred in his letters to Charles Ollivant or that he was capable of suppressing that sentiment in order to flatter a friend whose influence could possibly be useful.

Frogmore House  
Ross, Herefordshire, October 11, 1881

My Dear Gen. Hawkins:

Your letter from Dunstable only reached me this (Tuesday) morning. I trust they may not be so long in delivering this, else it may miss you. I am pleased to hear that you have enjoyed your Summer tour and that Mrs. Hawkins' health has been benefited by it, though how any one can be happy elsewhere than in your own dear land — one who has the privilege of a residence in New York, is a mystery to me. I once announced to you, viz., that I would rather spend my life picking oakum in an American prison than live in an English palace. How I envy you the warmth of welcome and friendship that will meet you on your return! Would that I were with you, or could hope ever to see that fine city again!

I am just recovering from another assault of the enemy, ill-health all through that old wound I got on the crest of Chapultepec. Alas! for the pension; I fear it is hopeless. My poor services to your country are of too old a date, now, to be remembered, must less remunerated; though I should be the last man to charge the great Republic with ingratitude. I hold it too highly, love it too dearly for that.

It was kind of you to again remember me and my needs, but I should have been better pleased had you brought Mrs. Hawkins to visit us in Herefordshire, and given me the opportunity to show you some of our country life, with a bit of England's best scenery.

Trusting and hoping you may have a safe and pleasant voyage homeward, I am, my dear Gen. Hawkins, yours very sincerely,

MAYNE REID<sup>224</sup>

That Hawkins was unaware of Reid's earlier application is evidenced by the

following remarks:

In relation to his service in our army he maintained an attitude worthy of all praise. He felt that our Government had bestowed an honor upon him when it gave him an officer's commission, and he was proud of the disability which came from a painful wound received in the assault upon the Castle of Chapultepec Sept. 14, 1847, the effects of which were to last him through life. And although by his writings he did not succeed in accomplishing great financial success, he never applied for a pension until thirty-four years after he had become entitled to receive it, and it is doubtful if at that late day he would have made an application if he had not been urged to do so by others.<sup>225</sup>

As 1880 drew to a close, the readers of the Christmas supplement of the Penny Illustrated Paper were treated to one of Reid's lesser-known works, "Billet and Bullet" — a short story set in Cromwellian Herefordshire, which made use of the farmer-author's extensive knowledge of Wye Valley history and landmarks.<sup>226</sup>

In February 1881 the no-doubt snowbound and seasonally depressed author received some news that cheered him. Perry Mason, publisher of the Youth's Companion of Boston, sent word through Hezekiah Butterworth, one of Reid's former Onward contributors, that he (Mason) wanted "a little tale of only twelve thousand words, price three hundred dollars." Of course Reid was delighted; not only because he could use the money but also because it was his old acquaintance that tendered the offer. In a letter, he reminded Ollivant that Butterworth was the author of the poem "Fountain of Youth," a piece that had "got him great fame, as I predicted, and he says helped him in getting."<sup>227</sup>

As it turned out, Butterworth and Mason's proposal had to wait. The month before Reid had accepted an offer that pleased him even more — joint editorship, with John Latey, Jr., of William Ingram's newest venture, the Boys' Illustrated News. "It is to be twelve pages," he told Ollivant excitedly, "and a newspaper, not a dry collection of stories." Based

on his own image of what it would be, “there is nothing to hinder Mr. Ingram making a small fortune out of it,” he predicted.<sup>228</sup> The trouble was, he complained in a slightly later missive, that Ingram was exercising a greater control over the venture than the new editor wished.

I am up to my eyes in work, and hardly know how I will ever be able to do all that should be done. If Mr. Ingram had given me carte blanche to do what I pleased about the paper, I could make it a sure success. For I designed a sort of periodical that would at once show its superiority to all the others — so much there would be no mistaking it. As it is I hardly know how much control I am to have; but likely, if success attend the first number or two, all will be given me that I care for.<sup>229</sup>

The first issue of Boys’ Illustrated News appeared on newsstands on April 3, 1881, carrying the first installment of a new Reid serial, “The Lost Mountain,” along with an assortment of “short tales and articles” from his prolific pen. It was everything the wary author had hoped for, at least in terms of sales. “Its success,” remembered Charles Ollivant, “was unprecedented, 125,000 copies being disposed of on the first day!”<sup>230</sup> A little less than a week later, Reid crowed:

The success has been wonderful, despite everything to hinder it. Smith [W. H. Smith, the celebrated British newsstand and bookstore chain, which is still in business in the 21st century] took only 200 copies...to put on all his railway stands, while some small men took 500. Then the railway stands have been without them for the whole of two days. His [Smith’s] copies were snapped up in less than an hour everywhere and had there been papers on the stands, 250,000 would have been sold now. For hundreds of people were inquiring after could not get it. Not a copy at Paddington, Swindon, or Gloucester as I came down [to London] last night — not a copy to be had anywhere in the town.<sup>231</sup>

Complaining that he was “all behind with my work — the more from having to go up to London to have a good talk with Mr. Ingram,” Reid added hopefully, and also a little cynically: “Since the unexpected success, I think he believes more in me; and if he don’t fully rely on me, perhaps someone else may, and give me such control as will enable me to put a boys’ paper before the world that will circulate 500,000.”<sup>232</sup>



Toward the end of April Reid suffered a relapse of his old illness, prompting his wife Elizabeth to notify Ollivant that his friend was in bed with “a high fever,” and promising to let him know if his condition became grave. Expecting again that her husband might not survive, she asked: “Should he get worse, and I telegraph to you, would you like to come to see him?” But once more Reid surprised them all. A few days later he was on the road to recovery and by summer, was out and about on his drives through the Herefordshire countryside as if nothing at all had happened.<sup>233</sup>

Reid’s relapse, combined with Ingram’s reluctance to give him the control he wanted over the Boys’ Illustrated News, prompted the dissatisfied author to resign his position as co-editor, his name disappearing from the masthead after only ten issues. In the eleventh, dated June 15, 1881, an explanation mentioning only his illness was printed for the sake of the paper’s readers. It concluded with a wish for his “complete restoration to health, and of his being able to resume writing for the Boys’ Illustrated News those stories of adventure which he tells with undimmed freshness.” But that was unlikely to happen, he confided to Ollivant in a letter composed the following day, revealing that while he was indeed “not at all well...that is not the true reason for withdrawing my name from the Boys’ Illustrated News as Editor.” He did it, he explained, “because Mr. Ingram would insist on filling the periodical with all sorts of trash, both political and otherwise.” He was also angry that he “got nothing for the use of my name...and besides had no editorial control whatever.” He felt certain that if he had been given free rein he could have increased the circulation to a quarter of a million copies, “and would so still with a similar periodical all controlled by myself.”<sup>234</sup>

Around this same time, Charles Ollivant later recollected, an American newspaper

printed a short article about his friend, which revealed that whenever Reid made a visit to London without his wife, he would send her a postcard bearing the single word “Rover,” to let her know he had reached the capital safely. Ollivant explained that the reason for this ritual was due to the fact that “as he was such a cripple, his wife was always nervous lest anything should happen to him getting in and out of trains.” Accordingly, he added, “she was in the habit of placing a post card in his pocket for him to fill up and post immediately on his arrival.” Generally, Ollivant clarified further, his old friend “wrote the single word ‘arrived,’ or ‘arrove’” but one day “in a joking vein he wrote ‘Rover,’ and handed it to a young American friend to post.” When the young man “commented on it in the smoke-room” of the Langham Hotel, where Reid was staying, his remarks were overheard by a newspaper correspondent, who passed them on to his editors.<sup>235</sup>

Although he had resigned as co-editor of the Boys’ Illustrated News, Reid’s stories continued to appear in its pages. After “The Lost Mountain” serial finished, he went to work on another tale, “The Chase of Leviathan,” which took up most of the summer of 1881. This was followed in the fall by “a rehash of the tale ‘No Quarter!’” that was re-titled “Fight in Flood; or, Kin Against Kin: A Romance of the Forest of Dean.” Combined with his poor health, Reid’s concentration on writing for Ingram’s publication resulted in a slacking off of his correspondence. It was not until late September that Ollivant heard from him again.<sup>236</sup>

He had recently suffered “a fresh attack of the knee,” he revealed, and was at that very moment laid up in bed, “but the crisis is, I believe, past, and I am feeling strong again.” Although continuing to contribute to Ingram’s paper, he was critical of it, calling it a “weak sheet” that was sure to fail. “Besides the pictures,” he grumbled, “there is absolutely nothing

in it, and I don't see how it could interest anyone." In a later communication, he was equally critical of a similar publication, the Boys' Own Paper. It was "a dead puzzle to me," he wondered, how it managed to have "a circulation of 180,000." The current number (October 1, 1881), he wrote, "is about the silliest wish-wash I ever read." But reading it, he added, had "fortified me much," leading him to conclude that if he but had a chance, he could do much better than either Ingram or any of his competitors.<sup>237</sup>

Reid also continued to be disappointed with Gladstone but had grown cynical and resigned. Responding to a criticism penned by Ollivant, he agreed that the Prime Minister "is all you say," adding:

I told you his character truly, once when you asked me about him long years ago. I never make mistakes about men, and I knew the man who had truckled to England's vanity and wicked perversity in regard to the American Rebellion — taking side with the South, as he did — could not be other than an imposter — He is that every inch — from the crown of his head to the nails in his toes — an imposter but the most adroit one the world ever saw. But let him alone. What need we to trouble ourselves about him; since we cannot convince the silly world of his empiricism. And just now he is doing no great harm — whereas his predecessor, the Jew [Benjamin Disraeli], did that with a vengeance.<sup>238</sup>

For the remainder of the fall of 1881 Reid was hard at work on the "Vee-Boers," the "little tale" set in South Africa he had agreed to write for the Youth's Companion of Boston. As a result, he did not correspond with Ollivant again until January 5, 1882, when he wrote to inform his friend that he had finally completed the story, sending the last installment "off by 5 p.m. on the 31st ult. — to catch Steamer at Cork." He also commented upon the "changed appearance" of the Boys' Illustrated News, which had recently commenced a serial version of "The Scalp Hunters" for a new generation of youths who had not even been born when it first appeared in 1851. Ingram's paper, remembered Ollivant, had been much

“reduced in size” and was then being “printed on inferior paper.” Reid called it “a miserable thing,” declaring that if the publisher had only given him more latitude as editor, he “could have added ten thousand a year to his income.” Holding fast to his belief that he could do better if given the opportunity, the hopeful author proclaimed his intention “to find a man who would establish a boys’ paper on my pattern — as I meant the Boys’ Illustrated News — perhaps to be called the ‘Boys Illustrated Times,’ but if he could not, he added, “then I must be content to toil on as ever.” Ollivant later recalled that following a trip to London in January 1882 specifically for the purpose of finding a publisher willing to undertake such a venture, his old friend returned to Herefordshire disappointed and disillusioned. He also recollected that Ingram’s Boys’ Illustrated News “ceased to appear after the 31st of May, 1882,” which almost certainly elicited an “I told you so” from the former co-editor, and no doubt reinforced his already firm belief that if he had only been given a free hand, the paper would have thrived.<sup>239</sup>

Reid’s favorable opinion of Perry Mason’s Youth’s Companion stands in marked contrast to his jaundiced view of the Boys’ Illustrated News and similar British publications. “We have no juvenile periodical in England at all to compare with it,” he opined, “either in elegance, quality of literature, or engravings.” Impressed by its circulation of “210,000 weekly,” he commented further that the rates the Youth’s Companion charged for advertising were no less than the equivalent of “fifteen shillings the line of agate type — and no advertisement taken under one pound!”<sup>240</sup> Overlooking his own unfortunate experience in magazine publication in New York, he added:

Fancy our scurvy things alongside that — and fancy the capacity of the nation that can support such a paper with, with doubtless a half-dozen others nearly equal to it. All

from freedom, and nothing else.<sup>241</sup>

Reid's high regard for the Youth's Companion may have been colored by the fact that Mason had generously remunerated him for the "Vee-Boers" in the dollar equivalent of £60, which had motivated him to do "my best and I think I have done it well," he proclaimed. In addition to his South African story, he had sent two short pieces, "The Mad Jackal" and "Riding in Rodeo" for which the paper paid "five pounds each." Even more impressive, he revealed to his Manchester friend, was the fact that an assistant editor had written "to say they had not got such splendid articles from my pen for a long time — asking me to give them more — and saying if the price of five pounds was not enough, to put a price on them myself!" Henceforth, he told Ollivant, "if all else fail, I would get writing to do on the other side [of the Atlantic] more remunerative than here."<sup>242</sup>

In February 1882 Reid undertook two new ventures. One was to write "a series of natural history sketches" called "Our Home Natural History," which were published in the Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News, for which he received "thirty shillings per column — about three pounds a week." These articles, remembered Charles Ollivant, "were similar in character" to Reid's "Naturalist on the Wye" series, which had appeared in the Live Stock Journal in 1879. The second undertaking was "an engagement with Whitelaw Reid [no known relation to Mayne Reid], editor and part proprietor of the New York Tribune, to write a series of letters for that journal." Beginning in the April 2 issue of the paper, these letters appeared under the heading "The Rural Life in England." Before starting, Reid sent Ollivant a letter in which he ruminated over how he would approach the project.<sup>243</sup>

I could do two distinct sorts — one giving my views of our politics and political men — the other sketches of English country life — the relations existing between the

different classes; in short, letters semi-social, semi-political. I have asked him [Whitelaw Reid] which he would prefer, and whether he wishes my name signed. I would rather write the political letters — the haute politique — and not sign my name till some time had elapsed. But then I might make these letters too bitter for even an American paper. Some of them are squeamish too, and more of late, since the trashy compliments that have passed between the two countries. But I have just learnt that Whitelaw Reid is an out-and-out Blaine man; which will just suit. For I could put a spoke in Blaine's wheel, who is now unpopular in the States, on account of his assisting the 'Monroe Doctrine.'"<sup>244</sup>

Reid's twenty-six "Rural Life of England" letters commenced in the April 2, 1882 issue of the Tribune and ran each Sunday through September 24. The first, entitled "The County, the Parish, and the Squire," was a relatively straightforward explanation of the common political divisions of England combined with a frank description of the sort of man — the Country Squire — about which Reid seemed to harbor conflicting sentiments; admiring and yet faintly contemptuous all at the same time. His second article, "The Parson," coming as it did from the pen of an unashamed "dissenter," as Presbyterians and other non-Anglican Christians were called in England, was far more critical. What followed, over the next two months, was a series of observations, mostly complimentary, dealing with various country types: the Farmer; the Farm Labourer; the Ploughman, Waggoner, and Shepherd; the Thatcher, Drainer, and Sheep-Shearer; the Mole Catcher and the Rat-Catcher; the Bark-Strippers, Hurdle-Makers, and Charcoal-Burners; the Gamekeeper; and the Poacher. These were succeeded by three articles dealing with "Country Society," followed by two sketches dealing with Hunting with hounds and other types of dogs.<sup>245</sup>

In the April 30 issue of the Tribune, editorialist Whitelaw Reid himself according to Charles Ollivant, commented upon the relative objectivity that Reid exercised in the writing of these first few sketches.

With every new instalment of Captain Mayne Reid's series of papers for the Tribune on English rural life, there is a positive gain in interest and value. The squire, the parson, and the farmer have been photographed in turn, now the farm laborer with the wretchedness and hopelessness of his lot appears in silhouette, outlined with a strong but sympathetic hand. We believe that Captain Mayne Reid is a Radical — possibly a thorough-going English Republican, but there is no evidence that his views of the agricultural conditions of his country are colored by political prejudice. He lives in a prosperous county, as prosperity goes in the unhappy England of to-day., and has not been confronted with unusual forms of rural distress, yet his heart has been troubled by the hardness of the farm laborer's lot. It is the testimony of his eyes and ears, the results of the experience of many years, in which our readers may profitably reflect this morning. If they have an instinctive loyalty to truth, they will honor the sincerity and unaffected simplicity of this trained observer who tells what he knows of the sorrows of his once "Merry England."<sup>246</sup>

Reid's letters of July 16 and 23, focusing on "Representation in Parliament" were of course political in nature and as might be expected, instead of confining himself to simple observation, as he done more successfully with his preceding sketches, the politically liberal author seized this golden opportunity to blast his usual set of bugbears — Tories, Whigs disguised as Liberals, the English aristocracy, and anyone else he saw as an enemy of true democracy and republicanism. He concluded by stating that in view of Britain's far-from-universal-suffrage combined with Parliament's domination by landed gentry, "if there was ever a myth or misconception in the world, it is that of England's having a representative form of government." He called it "sham democracy."<sup>247</sup>

Almost all his subsequent sketches were more subdued, dealing in turn with public education, sports and other pastimes, markets, fairs, public dinners, farm auction sales, and clubs and societies. Perhaps the most interesting, and apart from his political letters the most likely to provoke comment, was the twenty-fifth, entitled "The Best Kind of Englishman for America," in which he encouraged the mass immigration of English farm laborers.<sup>248</sup>

In July 1882, Reid made a short trip to London, staying as usual at the Langham

Hotel — where “he met scores of Americans and made many friends.” He was especially pleased, he wrote to Ollivant, “to see how they honoured me, most of them showing enthusiasm in their greeting,” adding: “Some are of great influence in the United States.” Perhaps not thinking of the hurtful effect his comment might have on Ollivant’s sensitivities, he declared further:

The young men of America now grown up seem to have great faith in me. I met so many nice fellows of them, and could not help noting their superiority to the youth of England — superior in manners, education, intelligence, everything — even to money, and generosity in spending it.<sup>249</sup>

Reid also mentioned hearing from a friend about a dinner party in New York where the highlight was a “marriage” of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, thanks to one of the company having “brought home some bottles of Pacific water from Los Angeles, California.” When another guest, the daughter of a wealthy Californian named Crocker, “spoke of me with enthusiasm, and said she would like to know me,” Reid’s friend sent him her card. As a result, reported the flattered author, “I am to meet her with her mother and father at the Grand Hotel, London, on August 1st at one p.m.” where the young woman planned to present her favorite novelist with “a bottle of the mingled Atlantic and Pacific waters!”<sup>250</sup>

On July 20 Reid wrote a letter to the New York Tribune reporting the widespread failure of the English hay crop for 1882 owing to an almost constant rain. It was published on Wednesday, August 2, in addition to his regular Sunday sketch for that week.<sup>251</sup> On July 23 he wrote to Ollivant on the same subject, boasting that because he had gathered “a good three fourths” of his own hay “into large ‘cocks,’” it was “pretty safe.” The remainder, which was “still scattered over the ground,” would probably be lost. None of the other farmers, he noted, had gathered their hay in the same manner, the result being “some millions of pounds worth



of hay now spoilt” that would otherwise “have been safe cured.”<sup>252</sup>

In early August, Charles Ollivant was shocked to learn that his old friend had narrowly escaped death or serious injury in an accident. In a letter dated August 15, Reid explained what happened:

We had a frightful accident, near being fatal to my wife, her lady friend, and myself as also my little man Johnny [Reid’s groom]. My wife and friend were at Cheltenham, and I met them with the carriage at Mitcheldean Road Station. Near Pontshill, on the way home, a runaway horse in a cart ran right against my mare and threw her into the ditch where a struggle followed; and it was two or three minutes before we all got extricated from the smashed carriage. The mare’s struggles were most violent, but luckily for us, she was not able to get up, so completely was she held down by the shafts and harness. Johnny behaved splendidly — got hold of my wife, and lifted her out of the carriage — then tackled in to the mare, and held her down, till the harness was got off. No injury to any of us — only that the fright has very seriously thrown my wife back in her ill-health. It occurred on Saturday evening at half-past seven, and she kept her bed till yesterday. She is now up again, and better, though still nervous.<sup>253</sup>

Reid added that although the carriage passengers had escaped physical harm, his mare, “a splendid animal” valued at “from fifty to one hundred pounds,” was likely to die and indeed, he remarked, he was surprised that she was not dead already. “The cart shaft went clean through her ribs, broke one, and I fear has entered the lung,” he explained. A veterinarian who examined the animal predicted she would not last beyond twelve hours, “But she is alive yet,” he reported, “and there is hope she may come round.”<sup>254</sup>

Considering that she did not write for a living, Mrs. Reid’s report of the incident was much more complete than her husband’s:

We met with a most dreadful accident the other evening returning from the station, and it is a mercy we are alive. Our poor mare is nearly killed, and the carriage smashed. An unmanageable horse in a cart ran right into us, and the shaft penetrated the mare’s side, breaking her ribs, and entering the lung. Meanwhile the poor mare struggled up again. When the made horse made a second charge at her, she reared and fell back on the carriage, completely bending down the silver rail in front. I felt completely paralyzed with horror, for I realized at a glance that if the animal rolled on to us in the

carriage we must be crushed to death. Her struggles were fearful to behold. Then she tried to leap over the hedge. I could not move, as we were close into the ditch on the side where the mare was struggling — and on the other side of us was the horse and cart dashing into us. The Captain, being so helpless, could render no assistance. Our groom, who was very brave, did his best to get the horse out of the way. At last the poor mare twisted the shaft right round, and fell down just under the splash board at my side of the carriage. The groom dragged me out some way, and the Captain was helped out. We thought the mare was dead, but after they got the harness off here, and the carriage lifted out of the ditch where it was firmly wedged, she got up and walked home. The Captain and I meanwhile were picked up by a neighbour driving, and taken home.

I have been dreadfully ill since, and the doctor says it will be some time before I recover from the shock to my nerves. It occurred on Saturday. The Captain was not one bit the worse. He being in the off side of the carriage, did not seem to realise the horror, which I — having the horse as it were struggling by the side of me, and nearly falling on the top of me — did. We are all so sorry for the poor creature.<sup>255</sup>

As it turned out, Reid's mare died shortly thereafter. However, believing the cart driver to be "a poor man," from whom any judgment would almost certainly be impossible to collect, he declined to prosecute. When it later emerged that the other man and his passengers were drunk at the time of the accident and "driving in a reckless fashion," Charles Ollivant thought his old friend had been too magnanimous, considering his "loss of a good carriage horse" and "the fright to which all the occupants of the carriage were subjected." "Though poor," he remarked, "they richly deserved punishment — if only as a lesson to be more careful in future."<sup>256</sup>

In late September 1882, some good news followed this unlucky episode. According to an article in the Pall Mall Gazette, Reid's United States government pension had been approved. Around this same time the pleasantly surprised author received a note of congratulations from Beadle and Adams in New York. He received, remembered Charles Ollivant, a similar message from "a Mr. Herrick, writing from the United States Consulate-General offices in London." Reid was amazed. "It is very strange," he remarked to Ollivant,

“that everybody seems to know of my getting a pension but myself.” Shortly thereafter, a letter came from Washington, confirming what he more or less already knew: He had been approved for a disability pension of \$15 per month, which was the equivalent of approximately three English pounds. The arrears came to about £480, which Reid received in the form of a U.S. Treasury check in early December<sup>257</sup>

A far less satisfying reminder of those long ago days followed this no doubt welcome token of his long ago military service. In the October 23 edition of the Cincinnati Commercial an anonymous commentator recalled Reid’s killing of the unfortunate Sergeant Keilly at Puebla in 1847, claiming that the episode, “which he [Reid] so deeply regretted,” had “clouded his whole life.”<sup>258</sup> Several other papers repeated the story. What angered the former lieutenant most, after he received a copy of this “garbled report” and read it, were not just the errors it contained but also the details it left out — with the intent, or so it seemed, to both embarrass him and malign his character. Not surprisingly, Reid quickly rose to his own defense, dashing off a lengthy clarification that several newspapers throughout the United States afterward printed.<sup>259</sup>

My attention has been called to a letter that lately appeared in some American newspapers, under the heading “Mayne Reid’s Mexican War Experiences.” In them certain statements are made gravely affecting my character and reputation which I trust you will give me an opportunity of refuting. The writer says that in Pueblo [sic], Mexico, “Lieutenant Reid, while reproofing one of the men of his company, became very much heated and ran his sword through the man’s body. The man died the same night.” Now sir, it is quite true that I ran a soldier through with my sword, who shortly after died of the wound. But it is absolutely untrue that there was any heat of temper on my part or other incentive to act than that of self-defence with the discharge of my duty as an officer. On the day of the occurrence I was an officer of the guard, and the man was a prisoner in the guard prison, where he spent most of his time. For he was a noted desperado, and, I may add, robber; long the pest and terror, not only of his comrades in the regiment but of the poor Mexican people who suffered from his depredations; as all who were then there and are still living may remember. Having several times escaped

from the guard-house prison, he had that day been recaptured, and I entered the cell to see to his being better secured. While the manacles were being placed upon his wrists — long-linked, heavy irons — he clutched hold of them, and rushing at me aimed a blow at my head, which but for my being too quick for him would have been dealt me with serious, if not fatal, effect. He was a man of immense size and strength, and, as all knew, regardless of consequences. Indeed, he had often been heard to boast that no officer dare put him in irons, and to threaten those who, in the line of their duty, had to act toward him with severity. Still, when I thrust out it was with no intention of kill, but only to keep him off; and, in point of fact, in his mad rush toward me he impaled himself on my sword.

The writer of the letter goes on to say: “Lieutenant Reid’s grief was uncontrollable. The feeling against him, despite the fact that he had provocation for the act, was very strong in the regiment...If the regiment had not moved with the rest of the army toward Mexico the next day, Lieut. Reid would have been court-martialled [sic], and might have been shot.”

In answer to these serious allegations — not made in any malice, I believe, but from misinformation — I have only to say that I was tried by court-martial, and instead of being sentenced to be shot, was ordered to resume command of my company for the forward march upon Mexico. And so far from the feeling being strong against me in the regiment, it was just the reverse, not only in the regiment, but throughout the whole army, the lamented Phil Kearney, commanding the dragoons, with many other officers of high rank, publicly declaring that for what I had done, instead of condemnation I deserved a vote of thanks. This was because the army’s discipline had become greatly relaxed during the long period of inaction that preceded our advance into the Valley of Mexico, and we had much trouble with the men, especially of the volunteer regiments. My act, involuntary and unintentional though it was, did something toward bringing them back to obedience and duty. That I sorrowed for it is true, but not in the sense attributed to me by the newspaper correspondent. My grief was from the necessity that forced it upon me, and its lamentable result. But it is some satisfaction to know that the unfortunate man himself held me blameless, and in his dying words, as I was told, said I had but done my duty. So I trust, sir, that this explanation will place the affair in a different light from that thrown upon it by the letter alluded to.<sup>260</sup>

While Reid’s recollection of this regrettable incident after more than thirty-five years does not completely match his 1847 testimony in every detail, it is essentially accurate, the purpose of his correction clearly being to point out that the man he killed was a notorious troublemaker who was in custody and seemingly trying to escape, and not just some unruly private. As for whether there was any “feeling against him” in the regiment, we have only Reid’s word for that. In all probability, none of the officers mourned Keilly’s loss. Whether

the enlisted men felt similarly is difficult to ascertain.

The writer of the letter to which Reid responded also alleged that it was due largely to Reid's remorse for "this ill-starred episode," combined with "the friendly advice of a brother officer," that prompted him to volunteer to lead the charge at Chapultepec. Not so, denied the former soldier, who declared that while it was true he had stepped forward of his own accord, to suggest that regret over Keilly's death had anything to do with it was absurd. Reid's motivation, he proclaimed, whether truthfully or not, was simply the realization that a U.S. victory, following the pointless slaughter at Molino del Rey, was essential, particularly in view of the fact that the Americans were vastly outnumbered and hundreds of miles inside the enemy's territory. In other words, they *had* to win. *This*, he claimed, was what drove him to lead his men up the slopes of Chapultepec.<sup>261</sup>

That very same autumn Charles Ollivant made a third, and last, visit to the Wye Valley to see his old friend. Later, he looked back at their parting, which took place on November 4, 1882 at Mitcheldean Road Station.

I can recall this last meeting with the vividness of yesterday — our conversation on the way to the station — our arrival — and how I stepped from the carriage and grasped his hand in farewell greeting. After ascending the wooden stairs leading to the station, I well remember turning round to take a parting glance at the familiar features. Giving me one of his genial smiles, and a graceful wave of the hand, he whipped up his horse and drove on, leaving me standing alone. But not before I had noted the somewhat mournful expression on his face, and that his eyes seemed to have lost much of their usual fire and lustre. A painful thought crossed my mind that I should never more behold him in this world — a premonition which proved, alas! too true. For this was indeed our last meeting face to face. Twelve months thereafter, his soul winged its flight to a happier place.<sup>262</sup>

In one of his letters following Ollivant's visit, Reid predicted, accurately as it turned out, that the next President of the United States would be a Democrat (Grover Cleveland,

elected 1884). In another he told of traveling to London where he visited the former U.S. minister to Portugal, Benjamin Moran, who was dying of “creeping palsy” at the home of a friend, Joshua Nunn. After the veteran diplomat, who had also been “for nearly a quarter of a century” the “Chief Secretary of the United States legation in London,” asked Reid what the American newspapers were saying about him — which was nothing — the thoughtful author composed a flattering “Tribute to Benjamin Moran” that was published in the New York Tribune and the Detroit Free Press.<sup>263</sup>

“The winter of 1882 at ‘Frogmore,’” remembered Elizabeth Reid, “was noted for a very heavy fall of snow, which rendered the roads almost impassable; in fact for days there was no postal delivery.” As her husband watched the snow “falling on frozen ground” where it “lay for weeks” in “enormous” drifts, his “active brain” conceived the idea, the same as it had many years earlier when living at Gerrard’s Cross, of converting his carriage “into a sleigh.” Sending for the village carpenter and blacksmith, “runners were quickly made and the woodwork painted over.” Early the next day “the wheels were removed from the carriage and the new gear adjusted in their place; by two o’clock in the afternoon all was ready for the author to take his coveted sleigh ride.” In short order two black horses, “ornamented with bells, were harnessed to the sleigh — which, with its fur robes trailing over the snow, was a really smart-looking affair.”<sup>264</sup>

“With the assistance of his coachman and the groom” and his ailing wife watching with no little trepidation, Reid “steered the craft safely down the carriage drive into the road, making for the town of Ross, four miles distant.” Unfortunately, this sleigh ride was in many respects quite different from the one he had taken all those years ago in Buckinghamshire.

“Then,” recollected Elizabeth Reid, “the Captain had the smooth, wide road and open common at Gerrard’s Cross for experiment, whilst he himself was active in his limbs.” This time, she recalled, “the roads were narrow, winding, and steep, and in places blocked with huge drifts of snow — the driver a cripple!”<sup>265</sup>

Although Reid’s progress was impeded by a “huge drift” about “a mile and a half” from Frogmore, thanks to the efforts of his driver, his groom, and “a man who fortunately happened to come along,” enough snow was cleared “to let the sleigh pass” through to “the main road, where traveling was easier.” Elizabeth Reid remembered that her husband was “determined” to “astonish the town folks of Ross, and...he certainly succeeded!”<sup>266</sup>

Mrs. Reid recollected further that as her husband was on his way back home, he was “in high spirits at having, as he thought, fully accomplished his purpose.” Then suddenly, “while he chuckling to himself, singing at the top of his voice, and cracking his whip, lo! over went the sleigh, becoming firmly wedged in deep snow!”<sup>267</sup>

With one of the runners “wrenched off,” the crippled author had no choice but to sit and wait in the disabled vehicle while his coachman took one of the horses and rode back to Frogmore to reassure Mrs. Reid, who was already wondering why he was taking so long to come back, and also to bring back “the shafts and wheels of the carriage, a single harness, and some tools for converting the sleigh back into its proper shape.” With his groom to keep him company, his fur robes, a foot warmer, and “a flask of whisky,” to keep him warm, Reid managed to stay relatively comfortable until the man’s return.<sup>268</sup>

Elizabeth Reid later remembered that “it was quite dark” by the time the carriage had been re-fitted with its wheels and could be driven home down the narrow, snow-covered road

leading to Frogmore. She also recollected, “This was Mayne Reid’s last sleigh ride!” The following day, she added, a friend who was clearly impressed by her husband’s daring-do remarked to him: ““You know, Captain, this could not have happened to anyone but yourself; you can make adventures even in this prosaic land!””<sup>269</sup>

As a new year dawned, it appears that the granting of his disability pension, combined with the letters recently published in the United States drawing attention to his past military service, prompted Reid to begin thinking about what Charles Ollivant termed “a new departure...in literature.” In January 1883, he wrote to tell his friend that he was thinking that his “next and best move will be to write my personal recollections of the Mexican war, to be published first in some American newspapers, and afterwards in book form.”<sup>270</sup>

Americans tell me it would be a most popular thing, and I think there is money in it. It appears the American people now thirst after records of their old wars, and that of Mexico is among them. The “boom” of my Chapultepec letter lead to my getting better paid for writing them than I have ever been. It is no use longer writing for any publisher or periodical in England. You may see my “Vee-Boers” in the Union Jack, two-and-a-half guineas per week — not worth the tenth part of the time I spend on it. Hereafter I shall look solely to America for anything and everything.<sup>271</sup>

A subsequent letter praised the editor of the English edition of the Detroit Free Press for sending him, at no charge, more than fifty copies of the issue in which his “Tribute to Benjamin Moran” appeared. Another told of an article published in the Turkistan Vedomosti, which revealed that the most popular book for the previous five years in the military library at Tashkend had been the Russian translation of Reid’s Headless Horseman. “Isn’t it strange,” the disconcerted author lamented, “that with all this world-wide celebrity, I can’t now earn even the humblest of livings by my pen?” Continuing in this vein, he also grumbled about Herefordshire’s “disagreeable weather.” Even in the summer, he said, a cold rain



sometimes poured down for days on end, aggravating his sciatica. He had come to believe that the region's red sandstone was "very productive of rheumatism of all sorts." One only had to look at the "roads all around...covered with hobbling cripples" to see it was true.<sup>272</sup>

Reid also revealed, apparently to Ollivant's surprise, that after more than seven years of living in the Wye Valley, a place where he had seemingly found contentment, he and his wife were moving back to London. "I am out of the world here," he complained, "away from any money opportunities." He also cited "Mrs. Reid's health," which "is above everything," as a reason for the move. "She couldn't live in it [Frogmore House] any longer," he confided, adding: "Besides, if she be in any danger, London is the best place for her," where she could be "near to the best doctors."<sup>273</sup>

Before the Reids left Herefordshire, Ollivant learned further that "Mary Mapes Dodge, Editor of St. Nicholas magazine," a children's periodical published by Scribner's in the United States, wanted his old friend "to write for it, promising high prices." The aging author was clearly delighted with this new opportunity, revealing that he had "said 'Yes' provided the terms 'tickle' me."<sup>274</sup>

In mid-March 1883, with only a few months left to live (although of course he did not know it), Reid and his wife returned to London, taking up residence at 12 Blomfield Road, Maida Hill, W9 — the same neighborhood in which they had resided prior to removing to Herefordshire. They did not have an auspicious beginning. A week after arriving, the aging novelist wrote to Ollivant to tell him that he was in bed with a cold he "caught in Bonham's Sale Rooms, when there buying furniture on Thursday last — at night." It was "cold feet," he thought, that 'did it.' As a result, he had "much pain" with "rheumatism in the legs."<sup>275</sup>

In late April Reid reported that St. Nicholas magazine had made him an offer of £300 “for a tale of only thirty-thousand words” but he had “not...yet accepted it, till I hear from them whether they mean it for complete copyright — English as American.” Even if they wanted both, he confided, the amount they offered was so much better than the £30 he received from the English publisher of The Vee-Boers, that “I will be but too glad to write for them.” The story he had in mind was a South American adventure he tentatively titled “Land of Fire.”<sup>276</sup>

The hopeful author reported further that Texas Siftings, a “young paper, somewhat after the style of the Detroit Free Press,” was wanting “some ten or twelve articles for their paper of a couple of columns each, myself choosing the terms.” Trouble was, he added, “they have said nothing about terms, so I can’t tell how I shall feel about writing for them till I know these.”<sup>277</sup>

A few weeks later, after receiving word that St. Nicholas wanted only the American copyright, Reid commenced writing “The Land of Fire,” for which he already had a rough draft. The story consumed his summer, remembered Ollivant, causing him to cut back on his personal correspondence.<sup>278</sup>

The late spring of 1883 saw the publication of two letters by Reid. One, which appeared in the May 3 issue of the London Daily News was a further rehash of his 1869 Onward article “White and Black: Which is the Warmer Color,” which had already been revised and published in the January 24, 1879 issue of Live Stock Journal, under the title “The Merits of White and Black Colours for Clothing.” This time the heading was “White or Black — which the better colour for clothing” but its content was essentially unchanged. The

second letter, printed in the June 4 edition of the London Echo, was the last that ever appeared under his name in any newspaper on either side of the Atlantic.<sup>279</sup> In view of Reid's immense popularity in Russia, both today as in the late nineteenth century, it seems appropriate that it should touch upon a subject relating to that country.

In "The Czar's Coronation," Reid took aim at "the costly pageant" of Czar Alexander III, who had ascended to the throne in 1881 following the assassination of his father, Alexander II. "For every rouble [sic] spent," the agitated author raged, "some poor peasant will have to heave a sigh, feeling the weight of taxation lie heavier on his shoulders."<sup>280</sup>

And if it be the opinion of the Russian people that all this ringing of bells, braying of trumpets, waving of flags, and spread of gold cloth, redounds to their credit, then they must be even more insensate and brutalized than their worst enemies have represented them. Above all, in its religious aspect has it been a thing of abomination. We read of a human being, of the most ordinary type — possibly a tyrant in embryo — receiving adoration such as should only be given to God — aye, greater than is given to God — not only receiving, but by the very act of reception intimating it to be his due! Verily it would seem as though we were back amid the knee-bendings and superstitions of the dark barbarous ages. Indeed, the whole pageant, instead of evincing progress in civilization, is absolute evidence of retrogression towards barbarism — a return to the grandeurs of the Great Mogul, with the wild beast shows and gladiatorial spectacles of ancient Rome. Such displays, so far from giving proof of a nation's strength and glory, but make manifest its weakness and shame.<sup>281</sup>

On August 13, after a lengthy silence due to his concentrating on writing "The Land of Fire," Reid wrote to Ollivant to explain why he had not heard from him for several weeks. In the same letter he revealed that owing to the high cost of taking cabs, he now had his own horse and carriage again, which he found far less expensive and far more comfortable and convenient. Elizabeth Reid, who later recollected that her husband's driver, William Davies, had brought the vehicle at Reid's bidding up from Herefordshire, "remained in close attendance upon his master until the end." A few weeks later the aging author wrote again to

announce that he had finally finished “The Land of Fire,” which in the end came to “40,000 words, and I hope may take with St. Nicholas.” If the editors liked it, he wrote hopefully, “then likely they would give me another chance; and maybe also in the Century, which belongs to the same company.”<sup>282</sup>

“The Land of Fire,” Reid added, was scheduled to appear in the December issue of St. Nicholas (which it did), “and in the number preceding will be a biographical sketch of me by J. T. Trowbridge, who is a celebrated writer for American boys’ periodicals, and one of the best writers they have.” He went on to say that if he could find a “first class American periodical” to take them, he would begin next on what he called his “Mexican War Souvenirs.” Reid’s belief that he would succeed in this endeavor was strengthened, clearly, by the opinion of several “distinguished Americans” who had told him that his “Tribune letters were the best that ever appeared about England.”<sup>283</sup>

During his final months in London Reid enjoyed himself as best he could, considering his age and physical condition, working mostly at night and “devoting the day to driving about, visiting friends.” According to his wife, the inventive author “contrived a novel kind of check-string in his brougham, by which he was enabled to guide his Herefordshire coachman through the labyrinth of London streets.” Forsaking the parks, she added, he preferred “the busiest parts of the great metropolis.”<sup>284</sup>

Charles Ollivant later remembered that the last letter he ever received from Mayne Reid was dated Monday, October 1, 1883, “exactly three weeks before his death.” It was in reply, the younger man recollected, to one he had sent a few days previously, “in which I had given him some information he required with respect to a Christmas story he was preparing

for the Penny Illustrated Newspaper” (“A Christmas in Kerguelan’s Land,” which was published posthumously). The four-page missive, he recollected, “was wholly unselfish in character, being devoted to criticism and advice with reference to the projected literary venture of a friend.” It concluded with Reid’s request for a newspaper clipping of some article Ollivant had mentioned. “Thus ended,” he wrote sadly, “my correspondence with Mayne Reid, extending over eighteen years.”<sup>285</sup>

In 1883 Reid kept a diary or notebook. An extract included in Ollivant’s unpublished biography of his friend reveals that the very last project that occupied the aging author was his Mexican War memoirs. On October 2, he noted that he had sent letters of inquiry to A. R. McClure of the Philadelphia Times and Charles E. Smith of the Philadelphia Press, “inclosing Chapultepec and Churubusco letters” along with a “card of introduction from Mr. James, late U.S. Postmaster-General.”<sup>286</sup>

On Friday, October 5 Reid was driven in his carriage to the Langham Hotel, where he was scheduled to enjoy dinner with some friends. In his impatience to get out “he flung the door open,” failing to wait until his driver had brought the vehicle to a complete stop. Unfortunately, the carriage door caught “against a lamppost,” causing it to be “wrenched off” its hinges. When the driver returned to 12 Blomfield Road to report the incident to Mrs. Reid and to let her know that the Captain would be coming home in a cab while he [the driver] took the carriage to be repaired, she viewed the accident as an “ominous” sign.<sup>287</sup>

After arriving home in a cab during the wee hours of Saturday morning, Reid stayed home until Tuesday, October 9, working for a while each evening on his Mexican War memoirs. “On this particular evening,” however, “he persisted in going out, though he

admitted that he felt far from well.” Despite his wife’s entreaties that he should stay home, he went to an auction, which was one of his favorite pastimes. When the impetuous author arrived back home at around 9 p.m., he showed her his purchases, which included “a large black chest, and some pictures.” One of these was “a framed ‘In Memoriam,’ with black borders, and a tomb in the centre!” Reid commented offhandedly that he hoped it was not an “ominous” sign. Because “he looked ill and pale,” his wife remarked that she wished he had not gone out.” Following “a hot supper,” however, she later remembered that “he seemed to rally a little; and soon settled down cheerfully to a page or two of his ‘Mexican War Memories’ before going to bed” at a little past 11 p.m.<sup>288</sup>

Reid “never arose” again from his bed. The next day he began complaining that his wounded leg was troubling him again. After Mrs. Reid put a poultice on it, she called a doctor. The following day, in a letter, she told Charles Ollivant the news. “At first,” he remembered, “it was thought to be one of his usual attacks with the leg, as it suppurated in a similar manner to former occasions.” But shortly after, “other and graver symptoms set in.” As before, a nurse was hired and doctors were summoned, who, also as before, held out little hope of his recovery.<sup>289</sup> This time their diagnosis was correct.

After receiving another letter from Elizabeth Reid, in which she reported all that was being done for the Captain and passing on the doctors’ opinion of the situation, Ollivant replied immediately, asking her to telegraph him in the event that Reid “expressed a desire to see me, and I would at once come up to London.” She responded by assuring him that she would do so, adding: “He may linger some time in his present state, or go suddenly — unless a change for the better takes place.”<sup>290</sup>

On Sunday, October 21 Reid suddenly showed signs of improvement, causing his doctor to remark that he would “not be surprised if he was downstairs by another week!” But it was an illusion. The very next day, the ailing author began “sinking fast” and Elizabeth Reid wrote to Charles Ollivant to say “I do not think he will last through the night.”<sup>291</sup>

Thomas Mayne Reid spent his last day on earth lying quietly in the upstairs bedroom of his house at 12 Blomfield Road, where remarkably he did not “suffer much pain,” remaining “conscious to within an hour or so of his death.” Finally, at about 8 p.m. on Monday, October 22, 1883, shortly after sinking “into a heavy sleep,” he passed away “in the 66th year of his age.”<sup>292</sup> His widow afterward wrote:

The poor Captain passed away quietly in the end, and anyone who witnessed his sufferings for the few days previously would not have wished his life prolonged. I prayed so earnestly that God would not let him suffer any more. After death he looked quite peaceful and happy — so I am sure my prayers were heard.<sup>293</sup>

## CHAPTER TEN

### EPILOGUE

Cooper begat Mayne Reid, and Mayne Reid begat Ned Buntline and ‘Buffalo Bill’s First Scalp for Custer’ and similar abominations.

— Brander Matthews, American author and teacher, 1889<sup>1</sup>

“On Thursday, the 25th of October,” wrote Charles Ollivant, “the mortal remains of Mayne Reid were borne in a plain hearse” from his home at 12 Blomfield Road, Maida Hill, “without pomp or show, to Kensal Green Cemetery, London, where they were interred.” The funeral ceremonies, remembered the author’s widow, “were quite private, only a few personal friends being present.” These included the Rev. J. Bramley-Moore, Mr. D. Moylan, Mr. E. Collins — Member of Parliament for Kinsale, Edward Denny — Reid’s old friend from his Onward days in New York, as well as Colonel L. H. Mitchell and “Mr. Kelly,” both representing the United States legation in London, which “sent a beautiful wreath for the casket.” “America thinks highly of him,” Mitchell remarked, “a sentence,” commented Ollivant, “that would have made the still heart beat with pleasure.”<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, it is uncertain whether Ollivant was there to hear these words himself. Neither he nor the widow Reid acknowledged him as one of the mourners.

Kensal Green Cemetery, one of the largest Victorian-era burial grounds in London, was established in 1830. Surrounded by a fortress-like wall, it covers fifty-four acres. Many famous people are buried here, including two children of King George III — Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex, and Princess Sophia, as well as a grandson, George William



Frederick Charles, Duke of Cambridge. Ironically, considering his lifelong contempt for royalty and the English aristocracy, they surround Reid now. Other celebrated figures interred at Kensal Green are tightrope walker Blondin; engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel; caricaturist George Cruikshank; and novelist William Makepeace Thackeray — as well as Lady Bryon and Anthony Trollope, both of whom Reid criticized in print. Oddly, his remains repose in the larger part of the cemetery reserved for Anglicans instead of a small section at the extreme eastern end of the grounds, which was set apart for “Dissenters.”<sup>3</sup>

Whether or not he attended Reid’s funeral, Charles Ollivant almost certainly visited his old friend’s grave after the widow had a marker of her own design erected at the site. In his unpublished manuscript, he described the tombstone as well as the scenery that surrounded Reid’s final resting place:

The grave is situated on high ground with but few other graves in its vicinity. Just over it — a weeping ash, on which birds occasionally perch and sing. [It is] a quiet spot, away from the crowded portion of that mighty receptacle for the dead. The place is breezy, and the view embraces green undulating meadows stretching away for some distance right and left. It is admirably suited to be the last resting-place of the free spirit who loved country scenes so well.<sup>4</sup>

Reid’s widow, Ollivant added, “has erected a rough-hewn block of white marble” at the head of the grave, “on which is chiselled a rope and anchor.” “On the latter,” he noted, was “the simple word, ‘Safe.’” Beneath this, “fittingly carved” is “a sword and pen” and in the area immediately below these features the following words were added:

In Loving Memory of  
 Mayne Reid  
 Author  
 Born April 4th, 1818  
 Died October 22nd, 1883  
 Gone to his dreamless sleep



Figure 36. Mayne Reid's grave in Kensal Green Cemetery, London. Photo by the author.

Ollivant observed further that a line from Reid's best-known book, The Scalp Hunters, was carved at the base of the marker: "This is the weed prairie. It is misnamed. It is the Garden of God." He noted too that, a "beautiful variegated ground ivy has been planted by his widow on the tomb, — thus to keep perennially green the memory of him who reposes beneath."<sup>5</sup> (Visitors to the site today will notice that Mrs. Reid's ivy has long since been displaced by ordinary grass.)

Although Charles Ollivant was undoubtedly Reid's closest and most intimate friend apart from his wife, Ollivant's sister Caroline also held the recently deceased author in high regard and was so moved by Reid's passing that "less than twenty-four hours after the sad event took place" she quickly composed a "poetical tribute," which read as follows:

A warrior has gone home!  
 A might spirit fled!  
 Hush'd is the magic tone —  
 A noble man is dead.

Oh, boys of England! Mourn,  
 Ye well may grieve and weep,  
 As to the grave is borne  
 This hero! — gone to sleep

No more his wondrous pen  
 Can thrill you with delight;  
 He may not come again  
 To breathe fresh spells as bright.

His kindly heart is stilled'  
 Imagination's fire  
 For us is quenched and chilled,  
 And seemeth to expire.

But no! Beyond the veil  
 Of this dim shrouding clay,  
 His powers can never fail,  
 And there — he lives to-day.

Then, dear Mayne Reid, farewell!  
 Thou' st gained a happier shore.  
 Where we, too, hope to dwell  
 When earth's tide flows no more.

Thou' st fallen as thy guns,  
 Thy keen lance is laid by;  
 But in the hearts of England's sons,  
 Thy name shall never die.<sup>6</sup>

Curiously, this very same poem, which William Ingram reported had been “forwarded to me by a firm friend of the departed novelist,” was published in the November 10 issue of the Penny Illustrated Paper, attributed to one “Ashton Carr”<sup>7</sup> — a pseudonym perhaps, used by Caroline Ollivant? But why?

Almost immediately following Reid's death, obituary notices began to show up in newspapers and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. Thanks to the great telegraph cable that connected the United States to Great Britain, one of the earliest appeared the very next day in the New York Times. Like nearly all the notices printed in other publications, it was essentially factual as well as flattering, reviewing the late author's early life, his military service in the war with Mexico, and his long literary career. Americans especially, at least those in the North, deemed it important to point out that Reid had not only shed his blood for the United States at Chapultepec but also that he “was a warm friend of the North during the rebellion, and strongly advocated her cause among his countrymen.”<sup>8</sup> Curiously, the New York Times, of all papers, failed to mention that Reid had also become a naturalized American citizen while living in New York and that at the time of his death he was, for all intents and purposes, a dual national. (No other newspaper pointed this out either.) Some of the reports were surprising in other ways. The Illustrated London News for example,

published by Reid's friend William Ingram, included an engraving of the late author but the accompanying report was remarkably brief as well as almost completely free of the hyperbole that characterized similar notices.<sup>9</sup> Ingram more than made up for it however, in his regular column, "Our London Letter," which appeared in the October 27 issue of the Penny Illustrated Paper. "Though I was aware of the dangerous illness of the veteran romance-writer, Captain Mayne Reid," the celebrated publisher remarked, "the sad news of his death last Monday night came as a great shock, as I am confident it will to the numberless readers in every land he has charmed by his thrilling tales of adventure." Continuing in this vein, he added:

The most popular writer of fiction of his generation (most popular in the sense that his works were not only read by myriads of English-speaking people, but were translated into every Continental language), Captain Mayne Reid was so brilliant an ornament to English literature that it is earnestly hoped the Prime Minister will be moved to grant his young widow an income for life out of the Royal Bounty. I learn the United States will continue to Mrs. Mayne Reid the slender pension given almost too late to be of use to the valiant soldier who shed his blood under the Stars and Stripes in the Mexican War.<sup>10</sup>

Ingram went on to reveal that he had last seen Reid "a little more than a month" before his death and that "he looked brighter than usual in face, but still had to use crutches, owing to the open wound in his leg." Lauding the old soldier as "the most captivating conversationalist I have ever had the good fortune to meet," Ingram remarked further that during their last encounter Reid "was full of cheerful chat of literary tasks in view; a gay laugh for the hard work he expended on his gem of a newspaper, *The Little Times*, intermingled with a good-humoured jest or two; and a sigh of relief to know he had completed a new story of adventure, which would have appeared in the *Boys' Illustrated News* had it lived, but was destined for an American periodical of mark."<sup>11</sup>

He had previously told me the plot of this last romance of his; and I can promise every lad who reads “The Land of Fire” in the best of monthly magazines for youth, *St Nicholas*, not only a most interesting story of adventure in Tierra-del-Fuego, but a fund of instruction pleasantly conveyed, for it was always the aim of Captain Mayne Reid to instil some of that love for Natural History which was part of his being into the minds of his readers.<sup>12</sup>

The remainder of Ingram’s soliloquy, which was accompanied by a drawing of Reid sitting in a chair resting on a bearskin rug, in a book-filled parlor with a rifle hanging on the wall, recalled the author’s birth in Northern Ireland, his travels in the United States, his service in the war with Mexico, his thwarted plans to join the Hungarian revolt, and his life’s work as a writer of adventure books. In conclusion, Ingram commented warmly: “So charmingly genial a man was Captain Mayne Reid (I shall always cherish the recollection of my association with him in the starting *The Boys’ Illustrated News*) that it is impossible not to feel the deepest regret at the departure of the eminent writer whose remains were followed to their lasting resting-place in Kensal Green Cemetery by a few sorrowing friends on Thursday.”<sup>13</sup>

Anyone aware of Reid’s long-standing feud with The Times of London, which had its origins in the Kossuth affair of the early 1850s, and knew further that England’s most prestigious newspaper had never published a single review of any of his books (supposedly in retaliation for Reid’s chastisement of its editors), was no doubt taken aback to see a report of the scrappy writer’s death in its pages. What made The Times’ notice all the more remarkable, as William Ingram observed, was that it was “a cordially sympathetic and appreciative review,” which read, in part:

Every schoolboy, and every one who has ever been a schoolboy, will hear with sorrow of the death of Captain Mayne Reid. Boys commonly divide books into those which have to be learnt and those which ought to be read — and authors into bugbears and heroes. Among the former, it is to be feared, are all the classical writers and their commentators; among the latter are the devoted men who have written thrilling stories

in a language that does not require a dictionary and grammar. Captain Mayne Reid has long occupied a place of honour in the latter list.<sup>14</sup>

The Times' obituary was not entirely complimentary, however. In its concluding paragraph, the anonymous writer remarked that it was "impossible to take Captain Mayne Reid seriously as a novelist," predicting, "His books will hardly live, even among the favourites of schoolboys; and if they do, it will be rather as fairy tales than as literature." Contrasting Reid to James Fenimore Cooper, "with whom it is natural to compare him," the unnamed critic commented further:

Verbose and full of false sentiment as Cooper is, he has, at his best, a real power of interesting the reader in his characters of which Mayne Reid had no share. The death of Uncas [in Last of the Mohicans], for example, is a scene that it is impossible to read without being moved, whether it be an untrained boy who reads it or a man hardened by a long experience of novels.<sup>15</sup>

Another surprising notice appeared in The Spectator, an English periodical that routinely criticized Reid's work throughout his career. It continued to do so after his death, but in a way that somehow managed remarkably to combine disparagement with high praise.

As our judgment on Mayne Reid's novels is not that of our contemporaries, we are disinclined to allow his death to pass without a word of criticism. As an individual, we know nothing about him, except that in our judgment he missed his true career, and would have made a first-class agent of the Geographical Society, to explore dangerous or excessively difficult regions, like Thibet [sic], the Atlas Range, or the unknown hills and locked-up valleys of Eastern Peru. He was a man of exceptional daring, having a positive liking for danger; he had the topographical eyes which should belong to any General; and he had a faculty of description, which he watered down for his novels till it was hardly apparent. During the only interview which this writer ever had with him, accident induced his interlocutor to ask about the Pintos — the parti-coloured race sprung from native Mexicans and the cross-breed between Indians and Negroes — who are stated to exist in one State of Mexico. The writer disbelieved in them, and expressed his disbelief; but Captain Mayne Reid, who declared he had seen specimens of the race, held him quite fascinated for half an hour by a description which, if imaginary, was a triumph of art, but which left on the hearer's mind an impression of absolute truth.<sup>16</sup>

But there were limits to the Spectator's moderation. Hard on the heels of these relatively gracious opening remarks, the journal reverted to form, revealing to its readers the reasons why it thought that Reid's work would not stand the test of time. Simply put, "Captain Reid could not analyze a character at all, and never created one." Likening those that populated his books to marionettes, the periodical's unnamed critic declared, "Good and bad, his Mexicans, men and women, and mountaineers, and American desperadoes, and faithful Indians, and villainous bandits are all alike." And while "They all go through wonderful adventures...if they had all got killed in them, as about three-fourths of them did, nobody would have cared." The Spectator also thought that Reid's stories were not only "not very exciting" but also "devoid of plot," being "made up of a succession of violent scenes, in essence stagy, in which the reader knows from the first that a proper time the machinery will move, and the good folk, usually American, will be protected from their murderers, usually Mexicans."<sup>17</sup>

While even his most uncritical admirers seemed to agree with the Spectator that Reid had missed his calling, that the educational discourses on geography and natural science with which he peppered his thrilling tales of adventure were his strongest suit, there was at least one exception. Two days after the author's death, an anonymous writer for the London Standard remarked that Reid's habit of introducing "botanical and zoological technicalities into the midst of his most thrilling narratives," along with "digressions which might serve for papers before the British Association," were intrusive "peculiarities" that got in the way of the story. Even so, admitted the unnamed critic, this practice "did not prevent boys from reading him," no doubt because the beloved author also knew how to keep "his narrative



moving.” He also praised Reid for being the sort of author whose books could be purchased with confidence by parents for their sons. “There was not,” he observed, “a word in his books which a schoolboy could not safely read aloud to his mother and sister.”<sup>18</sup>

One cannot help but wonder how Elizabeth Reid reacted to these mixtures of flattery and disdain, if she chanced to read them. Unfortunately, the widow Reid’s opinion regarding almost *anything* is unknowable. Although she survived her author husband by slightly more than twenty years, she was a much more private person than he, revealing very little of her inner self in either of the biographies she claimed to have authored. So far as it is known, any letters or diaries she might have kept, which could have shed some light on her private thoughts, have not survived.

Equally unknown are the state of Mrs. Reid’s financial affairs during her widowhood. In his will, written on December 11, 1864 at Gerrard’s Cross, Captain Reid not only left his entire estate to his wife but also made her his sole executrix. Probate was granted on November 5, 1883,<sup>19</sup> only two weeks after his death. But no inventory or appraisal accompanies the will, for clearly none was needed. The Reids had no children and apparently there were no living relatives with an interest in his property. Consequently, we have no idea of Reid’s net worth as of October 1883. In all probability the amount was insignificant, in view of the author’s complaints, almost to the very day of his demise, about the difficulties of making a living with his pen.

Although William Ingram’s plea for Elizabeth Reid to be added to the Civil List of England seems never to have been seriously considered by Prime Minister Gladstone, the optimistic publisher’s mention of Mrs. Reid continuing to receive her husband’s Mexican

War pension *was* accurate, albeit slightly premature. On November 1, 1883 U.S. Consul General Edwin A. Merritt began the process for making Elizabeth Reid the new recipient by forwarding a letter from Reid's doctor, Cambridge Cary Cocks, attesting to the cause of death, to the Pension Office in Washington. It was not until November 28, however, a little more than a month following her husband's demise, that Elizabeth Reid apparently went in person to the American legation in London, where she completed and signed an application for a widow's pension, which was witnessed by Colonel Lebbeus H. Mitchell, one of the two men who had attended Reid's funeral as representatives of the United States government, and attested to by Merritt. On December 4 she returned to complete another form and to provide a copy of her marriage certificate, which the Pension Office in Washington received on December 26.<sup>20</sup>

In his unpublished biography of Reid's life, Charles Ollivant wrote that his old friend had received a slight increase in the amount of his pension only a few weeks or months prior to his death. While there is no evidence of this in Reid's pension file, it does not necessarily invalidate Ollivant's statement. In any event, any increase would have applied only to the former soldier and not his widow. Elizabeth Reid was granted a pension of \$15 per month, the same amount her husband was awarded in 1882 — an amount that remained unchanged until her death more than twenty years later.<sup>21</sup>

There is some reason to believe that for at least a few years, Mrs. Reid had more than a tiny U.S. government pension on which to depend. Almost immediately following her husband's death, George Routledge and Sons reprinted the Captain's most popular titles in England while Carleton, who was later succeeded by G. W. Dillingham, did the same in the

United States. In 1888, five years after Reid's death, William Ingram of the Penny Illustrated Paper assured his readers that "the widow of Captain Reid still derives a benefit from the cheap edition of his exciting stories sold by Routledge."<sup>22</sup> The extent of this benefit, however, was left unstated.

In 1890, as recounted in Chapter One, Ward & Downey of London published Mayne Reid: A Memoir of His Life, naming Elizabeth Reid as author, apparently not realizing that she based her biography almost entirely on a manuscript she borrowed from Charles Ollivant, to whom the book was dedicated. Apart from that seemingly magnanimous gesture, the would-be biographer derived no known benefit, financial or otherwise, from this barefaced act of plagiarism. Surprisingly, although he probably had ample grounds upon which to bring legal action against his old friend's wife, Ollivant appears to have remained silent regarding the matter for more than ten years.

Ironically, shortly after publication of this book, Mrs. Reid's attention was called to a charge of plagiarism — not by her but by her late husband. On April 7, 1891, the London Standard published a letter written by a Thomas Wilson of Hornsey, England, referencing the paper's "recent interesting Article upon the Colorado 'Death Valley' and also recalling "a letter...from Mr. [Maltus Questell] Holyoake, claiming for the late Captain Mayne Reid the credit of having personally explored this forbidding tract of country some fifty years ago."<sup>23</sup>

"Your correspondent," Wilson corrected, "has made a ludicrous blunder in identifying the 'Journey of Death,' an account of which fills up a chapter of 'The Scalp Hunters,' with the howling desert so vividly described in your Article of the 3d instant," calling attention to the fact that Death Valley lay to the west of the Colorado River, whereas

the *Jornada del Muerto* lay to the east of the river, in New Mexico. Holyoake also erred, wrote Wilson, in his inference that Reid's knowledge of New Mexico was derived from his service in the U.S.-Mexican War. "Captain Mayne Reid, it is true, took part in the United States' War with Mexico...but his experiences of Mexico did not extend beyond the provinces immediately surrounding the capital, or between that city and Vera Cruz." "As a matter of fact," wrote Wilson knowingly, "'The Rifle Rangers,' his first work, records within its fictitious episodes of love and fighting, pretty well all that Mayne Reid saw or did in Mexico." "It is exceedingly doubtful," he added, "whether Captain Mayne Reid ever saw even the Rio Grande del Norte."<sup>24</sup>

In the concluding paragraph of this letter, Wilson made his charge of plagiarism, stating that he had "good reason to believe" that when writing The Scalp Hunters, Reid had "borrowed from the narratives of Doniphan's Expedition by Edwards and Wislizenus, as well as those interesting works — Gregg's 'Commerce of the Prairies,' Kendal's 'Santa Fe Expedition,' Emory and Abert's 'Reconnaissances in New Mexico,' Simpson's 'Navajo Expedition,' and those delightful books by the gifted but unfortunate young officer, Lieutenant Ruxton — 'Adventures in Mexico' and 'Life in the Far West.'"<sup>25</sup>

Although there seems to no record of Mrs. Reid's immediate reaction to this charge, in 1900, when Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures, a revised and expanded edition of the Memoir was published, she recalled this episode, saying:

Since the death of the author, a correspondent in a London daily asserted that Mayne Reid had never visited the scenes of his "Scalp Hunters," and that his descriptions in this book were drawn from no less than seven different authors. But the wise man who told this tale had to acknowledge that his statement was wrong, making a public apology to this effect.<sup>26</sup>

(Interestingly, in the copy of Mrs. Reid's book utilized for this study, a penciled note in an unknown hand, contradicts this statement, declaring: "He most certainly did not! Where?")<sup>27</sup>

In Captain Mayne Reid, Joan Steele wrote that "throughout...his professional life" Reid was plagued by "the charge of plagiarism," citing as evidence an instance in 1854 when a prospective publisher remarked that the Irish author's novels were similar to the works of Charles Sealsfield, a popular German author of western fiction.<sup>28</sup> Here is Reid's response:

You state my writings very much resemble those of Sealsfield. I cannot tell whether or no, as I am but little acquainted with the works of that author. I have heard they are very popular in Germany. From what I know of the German people, I am led to believe that works of adventure such as mine are would be more welcome to them than the usual fashionable novels.<sup>29</sup>

Although Steele was convinced that the German publisher meant to suggest that Reid was a plagiarist, in the absence of his letter, which would provide the context in which the comparison to Sealsfield was made, it is difficult to determine the German's intention. Interestingly, in making her case, Steele did not even mention Wilson's letter to the Standard, in which the accusation of plagiarism was clearly far more direct and specific. In any event, even two accusations, if the first can be called that, over a nearly forty-year period, and neither one proved, hardly add up to a lifetime of problems in this regard.

One scholar who has conducted a far more thorough examination of Reid's alleged "indebtedness to previously published works" is Roy W. Meyer, who in 1968 recalled Mrs. Reid's defense of her husband's reputation for basing his books on "first hand knowledge," terming it "unconvincing."<sup>30</sup> Focusing on the similarities between Reid's work and that of the ill-fated Lieutenant Ruxton, he wrote:

Besides the fact that he had obviously not visited all of these scenes, since some of them did not exist, there certainly are parallels between his novels and the two works

on which Ruxton's reputation rests. In addition to the speech of the mountain men and the story of the "sacred fire," either of which Reid might have heard during his own travels, there are other similarities, equally inconclusive, as well as certain marked differences.<sup>31</sup>

Meyer went on to observe, "Ruxton's view of the Mexicans is almost identical with that found in Reid's novels." The English explorer also, said Meyer, took "much the same view of the probable outcome of the war going on during his travels in the Southwest," namely that "the Mexicans are decadent and must give way before the vigorous thrust of the Anglo-Saxons from the North," a prediction that Reid put forth in The Scalp Hunters. However, writes the Mankato State College professor: "Since this attitude is found also in Garrard, whose *Wah-to-yah, and the Taos Trail* did not come out until Reid's first two novels had been written, one need not assume that Reid plagiarized Ruxton."<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, Meyer notes, there is "a close parallel, even in language, between Ruxton's and Reid's accounts of the Comanche raids into Mexico." In 1846 Ruxton wrote, "They are now overrunning the whole department of Durango and Chihuahua, have cut off all communications, and defeated in two pitched battles the regular troops sent against them." In comparison, observes Meyer, Reid wrote in The Scalp Hunters, "The Comanches did 'harry' to the very gates of Durango in 1846. They fought one 'pitched battle' with the Mexican soldiers, and completely routed the latter."<sup>33</sup>

"The placement of this information [about the Comanches] in an explanatory note and the use of quotation marks around 'pitched battle,'" remarks Meyer, "suggest that Reid was consciously citing Ruxton and not attempting to pose as an eyewitness." Other references, "all in notes," to "'Taos Lightning,' to Bent's Fort, and to other subjects possibly outside the range of Reid's experience...[also] suggest at least a willingness to make use of Ruxton's

observations, without acknowledgement, in his own work.” Additionally, there was the inclusion in The Scalp Hunters of a “fandango that takes place in Santa Fe,” which “closely resembles one that Ruxton attended in Taos.” However, says Meyer, “such affairs were well known to travelers through the area of Northern Mexico.” As before, he concludes that these “parallels need not imply direct borrowing.”<sup>34</sup>

Meyer notes further that there are as many differences between Ruxton and Reid’s work as there are similarities. “For example,” he remarks, “Reid says little about the more northerly settings chosen by Ruxton for much of the action in *Life in the Far West*.” By the same token, “Ruxton provides little or no information on the Llano Estacado, southern Texas, or the lower Mississippi, all common settings for Reid’s novels.”<sup>35</sup> In conclusion, he writes:

Though more extensive study of both men would be required for a definitive answer the likelihood is that Reid based his descriptions mainly on his own familiarity with the country and borrowed from Ruxton and other sources only minor details need to round out his own accounts.<sup>36</sup>

Although Meyer is convinced that “Reid did not directly plagiarize other authors,” he adds his belief that the Irishman was almost certainly “indebted in a general way to many of them,” most notably James Fenimore Cooper, to whom Reid was often compared by reviewers. “Besides more obvious similarities, there is an interesting parallel in the contrast between the practical shrewdness of the mountain men [in The Scalp Hunters] and the pathetic incompetence of the genteel heroes.” Meyer also sees “the frontier-Gothic tradition of Charles Brockden Brown...in the background of Reid’s work,” as well an occasional glimpse of the “Old Southwestern humor,” to which the young man was almost certainly exposed in his early “association with *The Spirit of the Times*.”<sup>37</sup>

Notwithstanding Meyer's conclusion that Reid was no plagiarist insofar as his western fiction was concerned, it is difficult to imagine that the Irish author could possibly have written about all the places he had never visited such as South America or Africa, without consulting some background reference material. Mrs. Reid as much as admitted it, writing in the 1890 Memoir, "Before commencing a new book, Captain Mayne Reid would thoroughly study his subject and work out the plot."<sup>38</sup> It is difficult to determine, however, how much unacknowledged use of such matter made its way into his books. Certainly, it is far beyond the scope of this study to do so.

In the end, we must return to Joan Steele for the only known instance of actual, as opposed to implied, plagiarism on the part of Mayne Reid. In 1871, Steele tells us, when the ailing author was still suffering from acute melancholia (and therefore may be excused on the grounds he was not in his right mind), Reid submitted to London Society a story entitled "The Maniac Skater," which was nearly word-for-word the same as "The Mad Skater," a piece that had been published in Onward in 1869 and attributed to one "Homer Green of Poughkeepsie, New York."<sup>39</sup> If there were ever any other instances of this sort of thing happening, they have so far gone undetected.

How well Elizabeth Reid's Mayne Reid: A Memoir of His Life did in terms of sales is unknown. Reviews were generally complimentary but tepid. The Spectator, not surprisingly, had little to say that was not negative. "All that was best worth recording in his career, and much else besides," wrote an anonymous critic, "Mayne Reid has related with the proper embellishments in one or the other of his books." Consequently, he added, "there was no need at all for such a memoir as the present."<sup>40</sup>



Apparently unperturbed by such remarks and no doubt in need of money, in one of the least known episodes of her life Elizabeth Reid's next effort in the world of book publishing was a novel. In 1898 Swann Sonnenschein & Company of London, which had published two of her husband's posthumous works (No Quarter! and A Naturalist in Siluria), issued a slender volume covered in blue cloth and embossed with Mrs. Reid's signature in gold. Mysteriously dedicated to "A. — —, In Memory of ———, its title was George Markham: A Romance of the West. In light of the widow Reid's unauthorized use of Charles Ollivant's manuscript, it is not out of place to speculate if George Markham was in fact her work or some final book that Captain Reid had started but not finished, or that he had set aside for editing. But while the story is not unlike a tale he might have written, the style is entirely different.

Two of the book's principal characters are a wealthy heiress and widow named Harriet Forest and her much younger second husband, the equally wealthy George Markham, who leaves her behind in England while he sails for New York on his way West to go hunting in the Rocky Mountains. During the transatlantic passage, Markham flirts with an attractive young woman named Blanche Ormiston and becomes so infatuated with her that he cuts his hunting trip short and returns to New York to be with her. While there he confesses his love for Blanche but to his credit, reveals that he is married. When Markham returns to England, hoping to find some way out of his marriage to Harriet, so that he can marry Blanche, he discovers, to his complete surprise, that during his absence Harriet has left him to become a nun (and that furthermore, she had been secretly in love with a married man named Cyril Vaughan)!<sup>41</sup>

While Markham is in the process of finding out if there is some legal way to end his marriage to Harriet, Blanche, who is some 3,000 miles away across the Atlantic, meets a rich New Orleans planter named Henry St. Croix at a ball. But although St. Croix is smitten with Blanche, his attention is not reciprocated. In the meantime, after Markham's mother dies and a trip to find his wife ends in failure (unknown to him she is living in a convent in the South of France), he returns to New York by steamship, where he is reunited with Blanche.<sup>42</sup>

Although Blanche has given him no reason to think his feelings for her are mutual, a jealous St. Croix threatens to kill Markham but nothing comes of it. The book ends with Blanche and Markham going off together to the White Mountains of New York, where during a boat ride on a lake, a storm comes up, the boat is overturned, and the two lovers are drowned. After their bodies wash up on shore, they are buried together.<sup>43</sup>

From all appearances, Elizabeth Reid's George Markham was a dismal failure. No reviews of it can be found in any of the prominent publications of the era and the only known extant copy of the book in the entire world is held by the British Library in London, where it has been microfilmed (in 2004) for a posterity that is unlikely to ever have any interest in it except as a late Victorian curiosity. From all appearances, the widow Reid did not attempt a second novel.

Unable to meet success in the same profession as her late husband, and with the income from his work no doubt dwindling as time went by, we may imagine that Elizabeth Reid was forced to raise cash from time-to-time by selling bits and pieces of his property. We know, for example, that sometime shortly after Reid's death, his flock of "Jacob's sheep" was "sold to a London dairy man who exhibited them in the Health Exhibition." (A brief

notice in the Graphic remarked erroneously that he had originally “brought them over from Zululand!”) Two of the creatures, reported Charles Ollivant, were later sold or given to the London Zoo in Regent’s Park.<sup>44</sup>

Reid’s collection of curiosities, such as the scalps and guns he once kept in his legendary portmanteau, may have been put on the market as well. Where they are today is anyone’s guess. His diaries and other personal papers also seem to have disappeared. Over time, some of the prolific author’s letters and manuscripts found their way into the hands of both private collectors and university and historical society archives. In the case of the latter, these items have not only been preserved but are also available to researchers. Much, however, is apparently either lost or destroyed. (Steele tells us that German bombing of London’s book publishing district during the Second World War may account for the destruction of most of Reid’s original manuscripts.<sup>45</sup>) For example, the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland has custody of nearly every letter that Charles Ollivant received from Reid over the more than eighteen years of their friendship, but what became of the ones that Ollivant sent to Reid? From all appearances, they have vanished from the face of the earth.

As previously noted elsewhere in this chapter, a revised and expanded version of Mayne Reid: A Memoir of His Life, re-titled Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures, was published in 1900. Neither the number of copies sold nor the income Elizabeth Reid earned from either of these books is known. It seems unlikely, however, that they produced any large sums. Not long after the second biography appeared, a brief notice, entitled “Mrs. Mayne Reid in Poverty,” no doubt surprised and dismayed at least some of the older readers of the New York Times.

LONDON, Nov. 10. — The widow of Captain Mayne Reid, United States Army (author of “The Rifle Rangers,” “The Scalp Hunters,” &c.) has been discovered in a poverty-stricken condition, in spite of the popularity her husband’s novels once achieved. She is a daughter of George Hyde, who claimed to be related to the first Earl of Clarendon.<sup>46</sup>

Elizabeth Reid passed away on December 30, 1904, while residing at 86 Portsdown Road, Maida Vale — in the same neighborhood where her husband died. The year before, she had resided at 4 Beaumont Street, Portland Place, although it is not known for how long. She was sixty-five — the same age the Captain reached. She was buried, from all appearances, in the same plot as him. In any event, her name and the years of her birth and death were later added to the marker that she had placed in Kensal Green all those years earlier. In her will, which is on file in the Probate Office in London, she left her “wearing apparel,” a watch and some jewelry, as well as her “framed engravings” to “Adelaide Mary Gregg daughter of James Woodhouse Gregg and of Jane Gregg his wife.” To “William Spencer Jackson grandson of William Harris Inglesant and of Caroline Inglesant his wife of Quorn Leicestershire,” she left “three portraits in oil framed in gilt florentine [sic] frames of my father mother and brother.” To “Eduard Lorester Hyde and Arthur Victor Hyde sons of Eduard Lorester Hyde and of Helena Hope Hyde his wife” she bequeathed “two portraits in oil framed in gilt frames of myself and my husband Mayne Reid,” along with “various volumes of books.” After deducting for debts and the expense of a funeral, which she asked “be very simple,” she directed that “any monies remaining over of my personal estate or from the sale of my copyrights or household effects” be divided equally among “James Jacob George Pugh and Adelaide Mary Gregg,” the executors of the will.<sup>47</sup>

The relationship of most of these individuals to Elizabeth Reid is uncertain, although

in light of the fact that her maiden name was Hyde, we may deduce that two, the sons of Eduard Lorester Hyde and his wife Helena, were probably nephews or grandnephews. Adelaide Mary Gregg and James Pugh may have been similarly related, although there is some reason to believe that Pugh was simply the solicitor who drew up the will.

Elizabeth Reid's last will and testament answers the questions of what became of the oil paintings of Captain and Mrs. Reid that were used as illustrations in Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures, as well as what became of Reid's own books. *But where are those paintings and books today?*

We might also ask: What became of Charles Ollivant? As noted in Chapter One, on September 3, 1885 the young Lancashire businessman (the 1881 U.K. census gives his occupation as "Buyer To Shipping Warehouse Italy & Africa") began writing his "Life" of Mayne Reid. By the time a short notice appeared in the February 7, 1887 edition of the New York Times as well as the New York Literary World, reporting its completion and announcing that it would "be published at an early day," the handwritten manuscript consisted of 971 pages. A bit portentously, in view of her betrayal, the paper also added, "It has been written under the supervision of Capt. Reid's widow." This was untrue. According to Ollivant, he had merely consulted her, asking the widow to fill in some of the gaps in his knowledge. The newspaper was more accurate, however, in its report that he had traveled to "Reid's birthplace in Ireland in order to obtain particulars of his early years."<sup>48</sup>

Ollivant seems to have done all he could to assure that the world would not forget his old friend. When he learned in 1887 that his community's library had no Reid titles on its shelves, he took it upon himself to set the matter straight, although the extent of his success

or failure is unknown. In February 1888, publisher William Ingram of the Penny Illustrated Paper reported:

As there are no works of fiction likelier to inculcate high courage, chivalry, and every good manly quality in youthful readers than the thrilling and instructive Indian stories of my late friend, Captain Mayne Reid, every boy's favourite, I learn with equal astonishment and regret that the novels of that illustrious author, though they have been translated into every language on the Continent, and have been read with an avidity and profit all the world over — are yet excluded from the Manchester Free Library. With Mr. Charles Ollivant, the doughty champion of Mayne Reid in the Manchester Guardian, I sincerely trust this omission will be speedily repaired. This totally unjustifiable exclusion of a standard author's works must deprive numbers of bright Lancashire Lads of just the kind of literary nutriment to make them brighter.<sup>49</sup>

During the late 1890s, while living at Bath, Ollivant produced a second manuscript, which he titled “Mayne Reid: An Appreciation.” In her book about the celebrated author, Joan Steele held that this work was essentially the same “manuscript of Ollivant's projected ‘Life’ of Mayne Reid” that was plagiarized by the widow Reid. But Steele was mistaken. While both works *do* contain some nearly identical biographical information, “An Appreciation” is considerably shorter. Its purpose is also clearly different. It is not so much a biography as what it purports to be, namely “an appreciation.” Unfortunately, apart from the title and contents pages, the actual manuscript seems to be missing. What we are left with are the printed “galley,” as produced, apparently, by the unlikely periodical that published this work — Uses: A New Church Journal. Of course the final printed version, as published in Uses, is also extant, although the British Library in London appears to possess the only known copies.

Uses: A New Church Journal was the short-lived (1896 to 1901) and inexpensive (each issue cost one penny) organ of the New Church Socialist Society. It was printed by trade union labor at Alfred W. Inman's Excelsior Printeries at New Worley, Leeds. The

object of the society, as spelled out in each issue was:

To study and promulgate the teachings and practices of our Lord Jesus Christ as applied to every human duty, religious, social, economic, and national by means of

- a. Lectures and sermons,
- b. The press,
- c. Lending Libraries, and Distribution of literature,
- d. Personal, and other efforts

Membership in the society, which combined “the principles of Jesus Christ, as taught in the Gospels, and as expounded by Emanuel Swedenborg,” was open to both men and women. Judging by comments he made in the “Appreciation,” Charles Ollivant was himself a Socialist and almost certainly a member of the organization. How else to account for several articles about a popular writer of romantic fiction in a periodical that otherwise concerned itself with the social and political issues of the day?

“Mayne Reid: An Appreciation” was divided into seventeen short articles, which began serialization in the November 1898 issue of Uses and finished in the March 1901 issue. The first part, entitled “His Place in Literature” was nearly identical to Chapter 57 of the “Life” manuscript, which consists of eighteen handwritten pages. (This was one of a few sections of Ollivant’s work that Mrs. Reid excluded when she published it under her own name.) Arguing, “Mayne Reid has never occupied that place in literature by reason of his genius,” Ollivant held that the “healthy moral tone,” the truthfulness, the humor, the freshness, and the originality of the plots in Reid’s novels all combined to place him on much higher plane than the one to which so many critics had assigned him. He also praised the manliness of Reid’s male character and defended their female counterparts, whose strength and independence made them seem too “masculine” to suit some critics.<sup>50</sup>

What seemed to bother the Lancashire cotton buyer the most, however, was that Reid

had not been taken seriously as a novelist, owing largely to a widely-held perception that he was a writer of juvenile fiction and nothing more.

Mayne Reid's critics are quite mistaken when they assume — as they have often done — that his novels have an affinity with boys' literature. Indeed, they contain many passages which boys are incapable of understanding — much less appreciating.<sup>51</sup>

As for the boys' books themselves, wrote Ollivant:

...none can deny their superior and enduring merit, or name a single writer who even begins to approach him in this field of which he is past master. Captain Mayne Reid, the idol of the boy readers of England, "because *par excellence*, and beyond all manner of comparison, *the* writer for them of this healthy, invigorating, delightful books of adventure." So wrote the London *Sun*, in 1853, when Mayne Reid's laurels were young upon him. If the above was its opinion *then*, what would it have said *now*, when he has added so many enduring monuments to his fame?<sup>52</sup>

In the second article of the series, "What He Had to Contend With as an Author" (which also drew in part from Chapter 57 of the "Life" manuscript) Ollivant explained that having inherited "a high spirited and impetuous disposition" from "the maternal side" of his family, Reid was "frank and outspoken to a fault." Moreover, "he refused to affiliate with the literary cliques" of the day that were little more than mutual admiration societies. Thus the forthright author was certain that when he embroiled himself in a war of words with The Times during the Kossuth controversy, his remarks, which he believed had embarrassed its editors, came back to haunt him. "From that date, 1853," declared Ollivant, "to the day of his death, October 22nd, 1883 — thirty years — the *Times* relentlessly closed its columns to any notice whatever of Mayne Reid's writings." Moreover, "nearly all the other organs of the London press," took "the Times' lead," claimed Ollivant, "either ignoring his writings or classed his splendid romances as 'mere books for boys.'"<sup>53</sup>

Yet in the teeth of this bitter hostility, Mayne Reid's works became extremely popular, circulating largely both in England and the United States — over a million copies of



the *Scalp Hunters* were sold in England alone, — they were translated into most foreign tongues. The Athenæum’s Russian correspondent wrote, February 19th, 1876: ‘The most popular of English authors appears to be Captain Mayne Reid, some half-dozen of his novels figuring in the present list, two as having been printed in 3,000 copies, and one in 3,400.’ And the editor commenting on this, added: ‘With regard to Captain Mayne Reid’s popularity abroad, we have heard that a similar statement may be made as to Spain and Italy.’<sup>54</sup>

The remainder of the second article dealt with Reid’s bankruptcy, the Little Times failure, and his tragically unsuccessful attempt to forge a new life for himself in the United States, including the Onward debacle.

Ollivant’s third article in Uses, entitled “A Dead Man Defended,” told of Reid’s defense of Lord Byron in the pages of his magazine Onward and his subsequent lecture on the same topic at New York’s Steinway Hall in 1870. The fourth part included a remembrance of Reid’s illness and hospitalization in St. Luke’s Hospital. The fifth consisted almost entirely of extracts from Onward, in which the outspoken author had held forth on a variety of topics, including a tribute to African explorer David Livingstone, who Reid had dubbed “The Greatest Traveller on Record.”<sup>55</sup>

In parts six through eight, which together constituted an essay entitled “The Pure Republic,” Ollivant focused on Reid’s republican streak. Quoting liberally from The White Gauntlet, Reid’s 1863 Thanksgiving Day toast, his “Garibaldi Rebuked” pamphlet, and several other works, the former secretary lauded his old master’s well-known abhorrence of “prince and priest.” The topic was continued and concluded in the ninth segment, entitled “The White Pleb of England,” which cautioned young Englishmen to be mistrustful of such “wicked men.”<sup>56</sup>

The remaining eight parts of “Mayne Reid: An Appreciation” are seemingly

unfocused, forming a disjointed discourse consisting largely of quotes from Reid's books. The subjects touched upon range from the "Unholy Boer War" then currently raging in South Africa (Ollivant was clearly pro-Boer) to American Indians. It concludes with a reminder of Reid's love for America, to which Ollivant annexed a poem he composed to express his own "equally strong love and admiration for the great Republic."<sup>57</sup>

#### THE LAND OF LIGHT

America! the land of light,  
 The refuge of the slave!  
 Where people come from homes of night  
 Across the ocean wave.

America! the Celt's last hope —  
 Green Erin's noble child —  
 Who leaves a father's roof to cope  
 With thy far Western wild.

America! the German's home,  
 Who comes from the "fatherland,"  
 And breasts the billowy ocean foam  
 That beats upon thy strand.

America! e'en England's slave  
 At last begins to see,  
 That to escape a pauper's grave  
 To thy shores he must flee.

America! all turn to you,  
 Bright beacon light to man.  
 Oh! may your sons be ever true,  
 And march in Freedom's van.<sup>58</sup>

Ollivant also authored a critical review of Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures. Entitled "A Wonderful Life: The Biography of a Remarkable Man," it appeared in the January 1901 issue of Uses. It was not so much a review, however, as an apparently long-suppressed condemnation of Mrs. Reid's duplicity. Although it appears he had

maintained a gentlemanly silence in 1890 — when the Memoir first appeared, this time Ollivant let fly about whose “unrequited and unrewarded” work the book *really* was, comparing several passages in his manuscript to paragraphs in the volume he derisively called “Mr. Coe’s ‘Life,’” in reference to Charles H. Coe, the American who had edited Life and Adventures. He also pointed out several mistakes in the book, including Mrs. Reid’s assertion that she was her husband’s “amanuensis,” i.e., that she took dictation from him. “Since, during my eighteen years’ close intimacy with Mayne Reid, he never wrote by dictation,” huffed the putout former secretary, “this is a manifest error.”<sup>59</sup> In conclusion, he revealed how the widow Reid had come to take unfair advantage of him:

A little explanation is needed to enable the reader to comprehend how Mrs. Reid came to have possession of my manuscript of Mayne Reid’s “Life.” It was in this wise: Publishers could not agree to bring out same. Mrs. Reid then offered me “£40 or £50” for the manuscript, with the intention of engaging a literary man to re-write it. This I declined to accede to, having devoted eighteen months to its composition as a “labour of love.” But I freely offered her the *loan* of it, on the understanding that she had it re-written as she suggested, and gave me credit for supplying the material. This she agreed to, writing: “*I shall see that your name is honourably mentioned.*” Instead of doing this, she brought out a “Memoir” herself, without recognizing my work in any way. In this new “Life” the same tactics have been adopted.<sup>60</sup>

Unfortunately, we do not know what Mrs. Reid thought of this article or even if she read it. Nor do we know whether Ollivant ever confronted her in person or by letter to complain of her perfidy. One suspects the relationship between these two individuals was never warm to begin with. Following Mrs. Reid’s egregious betrayal of trust, it is unlikely that they ever had anything to do with one another again.

Charles Ollivant’s devotion to Mayne Reid can be seen not only in his writing but his personal life. While it may be entirely coincidental that both men had wives named Elizabeth, it was almost certainly no accident that Ollivant’s daughter, who was born in

1877, was named Gwendoline. When he and his pregnant wife visited Herefordshire in the spring of that year, the Captain was then working on his latest serial, “Gwen Wynn,” the heroine of which was of course a young woman named Gwendoline or “Gwen” Wynn. The inspiration is obvious. Ollivant also took to calling his home “The Ranche,” a designation he used to the very end of his days. There seems to be no evidence, however, that any of Reid’s tales of adventure inspired the name of Ollivant’s son Frank or his youngest daughter Edith.

Charles Theodore Ollivant died on September 26, 1908 at the age of about sixty-four. At the time of his demise, he and his family were living at “The Ranche, Bloomfield Park” in Bath. The gross value of his estate, which included leasehold property, was determined to be £781, 4 shillings, and 11 pence, with a net worth of only slightly more than £21.<sup>61</sup> Ollivant’s wife, his son, and his two daughters survived him. The name and location of the cemetery in which he was interred is unknown. At his funeral, which was held at the New Jerusalem Church in Southport — a seaside community located a few miles north of Liverpool, a reporter for the Southport Guardian told how his devotion to Reid was recalled:

...in his early manhood he came under the influence, and it might be called “spell” of the famous traveller and novelist Captain Mayne Reid. And eventually Mr. Ollivant became his secretary. And as such he had a long and most intimate acquaintance with that gifted and strenuous man. In respect of Mr. Ollivant’s association with Captain Mayne Reid, Mr. Ashby afterwards added that Mr. Ollivant had in his character large capacity for true friendship; and in the case of this attachment to his old Master, it approached what might fairly be called “hero worship.” The attachment was mutual, ardent, and enduring. The Captain showed his admiration for his friend by dedicating several of his books to him. Using language most affectionate & touching when describing his love and esteem for his character, devotion, and ability. Mr. Ollivant possessed an entire collection of the novelist’s works, and he was always most willing to speak of his associations with his former master, telling of his fine character, of his successes, of his disappointments, & of his laborious and even Titanic efforts to overcome tremendous difficulties which at times opposed themselves to his success.<sup>62</sup>

It was reported further that Ollivant possessed a “a large collection of letters” in which Reid had spoken out “in condemnation of the causes which hindered the progress of his schemes for the good of mankind.” Reading these aloud to anyone who would listen, it was “most pathetic” to hear him recite Reid’s “furious” words, “so full of burning desire...to right what he considered the wrongs under which the world was suffering.” It was also observed that Ollivant “believed that there would come a time of revival of interest in the works of his master and fully expected that the cheaper publications of the day would include those informing and fascinating books of Captain Mayne Reid.”<sup>63</sup>

In language that seemed to take a swipe at Mrs. Reid’s books, the soliloquist recalled all the biographies that were “indebted to Mr. Ollivant’s assistance,” adding knowingly: “He alone possessed full information which could make a complete & satisfactory biography.” In conclusion, attention was called to Reid’s and Ollivant’s love for America, “where he had lived and travelled with his friend for many years.”<sup>64</sup>

As previously observed, one of Ollivant’s biggest gripes following Reid’s death was that many critics saw his author friend as a literary lightweight who wrote largely for the juvenile market. But Reid was just as frequently classed as a western novelist. A review of his lifetime literary output belies both these perceptions. Counting War Life as separate from The Rifle Rangers, and not including anthologies, collections, translations, and co-authored or spurious works, altogether there are a total of fifty-four books attributable to Reid alone. Of these, only four — Odd People, Quadrupeds, Croquet, and A Naturalist in Siluria, were non-fiction. Of the remainder, twenty-three or nearly half were written expressly for the juvenile market. These were Reid’s so-called “boys’ books.” In truth, we may say there were

twenty-four of these since Quadrupeds was also aimed at the juvenile market. This leaves twenty-six, or twenty-nine if we count the other three non-fiction works, i.e. *more* than half, that were written for adults. This proves Charles Ollivant's point, namely that although the majority of Reid's novels were *not* aimed at juveniles, his fame as a creator of adventure tales for boys overshadowed all his other work. In 1886, in a short piece entitled "What Boys Read," essayist G. Salmon agreed, declaring:

When Captain Mayne Reid died he was hailed as the prince of boy's authors. A more mistaken verdict was never delivered. The majority of Mayne Reid's works were read by grown-up people. Mayne Reid was far too fond of natural history and detail to be palatable to the youthful mind. Quickly changing scenes of the most stirring character are what boys desire, and what Mayne Reid, except in "The Boy Hunters" and one or two other works, did not give them. An analogous objection, from a boy's point of view, applies to Jules Verne. Mayne Reid lingered to describe the flora and fauna of the locality in which his scenes were laid. Jules Verne not only besprinkles his writings with science, but literally soaks them in science.<sup>65</sup>

A complimentary reappraisal of The Scalp Hunters in the New York Times Saturday Review of Books on or about the fiftieth anniversary of its publication<sup>66</sup> reminds us too of Reid's reputation as a writer of western fiction, which at a glance seems well deserved. But just as the belief that he only wrote for boys is illusory, so too is the notion that this particular genre dominated his output. Twenty-three of his fifty non-fiction novels, again just slightly fewer than half, are set entirely or partly in the United States and/or Mexico. Of those, only fourteen (or sixteen, if we count two novelettes, The Guerilla Chief and Wild Life, each of which was published as the title work in a collection of Reid's short stories) can be accurately characterized as *westerns*. One, The Hunters' Feast, is set in Missouri and Kansas. Another begins in Mississippi and then moves across the country, ending in California. The other twelve (or thirteen) take place either in Mexico, Texas, or New Mexico (or some

combination of the three). The remaining nine novels with U.S. settings have as their backdrop not the *West*, but rather the *Old South*, principally Louisiana, but also Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Florida. Interestingly, a significant number of Reid's short stories are also set in Louisiana — a place that seems to have made a particularly deep impression upon him. (He even wrote a non-fiction article about the state for his short-lived magazine Onward.) All the rest of his books have settings that span the globe. Two are set in the Caribbean, one in Canada, four in South America, five in Europe, five in Africa, three in Asia, and five take place on the high seas. The Child Bride, which has both the United States (Newport, Rhode Island and New York City) and Europe (primarily England) as its backdrop, is Reid's one-and-only transatlantic work, in terms of story locations.

The notion that Reid based most of his books on his own experiences, a widely held view that prevails to this day, is equally erroneous. Certainly, *some* of them *were* autobiographical in nature. Anyone who read The Child Wife and knew anything at all about the author's personal life could quickly deduce that the book's central character, the gallant "Captain Maynard," was Reid thinly disguised and that Maynard's adventures were at least partly Reid's own — as indeed one contemporary reviewer noticed. In some cases, the writer himself made it plain that he was inspired by actual events. For instance, in the preface of The Scalp Hunters, he wrote:

About a year ago, I submitted to the public under the title of the "Rifle Rangers." It was prefaced as "truth poetically coloured" — truth for the groundwork, the flowering fancy — fact, enamelled by fiction — a mosaic of romance and reality.

\ Some have said that the "poetic colouring" was a thought too vivid. Perhaps it was so; but the general judgment upon that little effort not only satisfied, but gratified me; and to you, who have pronounced in its favour, I now offer "another of the same."<sup>67</sup>

The Desert Home, a sequel to The Scalp Hunters, is also held to be “truth poetically coloured.” A few years later Reid hinted that The Hunter’s Feast, which takes place largely on the plains of Kansas, was autobiographical in nature and did the same in The Quadroon, which occurs in antebellum Louisiana. All his other Pelican State-based books, as well as those set in neighboring Mississippi, if not strictly autobiographical, may have at the very least drawn upon the author’s personal observations for characters and scenery description. The same may be said of The Wild Huntress, which is set in Tennessee, where Reid spent about a year as a tutor and schoolmaster. It is doubtful, however, that he as much as set foot in Florida, where Osceola and The White Squaw and Yellow Chief take place.

There is no doubt whatever that six of Reid’s novels were based on the ex-soldier’s Mexican War experiences. These are War Life, The Rifle Rangers, The War Trail, The Bandolero (a.k.a. The Mountain Marriage), The Queen of the Lakes, and The Free Lances (a.k.a. Cris Rock). A novelette entitled The Guerilla Chief was also inspired by Reid’s service in the Mexican War. So too was the novelette, Wild Life: or, Adventures Upon the Frontier, which its publisher combined under one cover with some of Reid’s short stories, although it is set in an earlier time, namely the Texas Revolution of 1835-1836. Most of these take place in Central Mexico. It is questionable, however, whether Reid ever visited Texas or Northern Mexico, locales that figure prominently in The War Trail and Wild Life.

But apart from the handful of books listed in the preceding three paragraphs, about four fifths of Reid’s work has no discernable autobiographical foundation, most evidently those that were set in countries or regions he never visited, such as South America, Africa, or Asia. We can be equally certain that although they were clearly inspired by contemporary



politics and are set in the places where Reid happened to be living at the time, namely Buckinghamshire or Herefordshire, his English novels such as The White Gauntlet, No Quarter! and Gwen Wynn, are entirely fictional. Remarkably, not one of Reid's books, either juvenile or adult, takes place in his native Ireland, a spot the history of which seems ready-made for the types of tales he produced. This is puzzling. In the absence of any word on the matter from Reid or anyone else, we are left to wonder why, or rather, *why not?*

Although Reid's body of work offers ample evidence that he was not exclusively nor even largely a writer of western fiction, his reputation as such was firmly established long before his death. How did this happen? The answer is very simple. Reid's western novels were his most popular. Both critics and readers alike enjoyed The Rifle Rangers, The Scalp Hunters, and The Headless Horseman far more than such later works as Gwen Wynn or The Giraffe Hunters. And clearly because they continued to sell, the popular titles were still in print decades after their initial publication.

In the United States in the 1870s, Carleton's reissues of Reid's earliest titles included an advertisement on the inside flyleaf, listing ten of the apparently most popular. At the very top of the list was The Scalp Hunters, followed by The White Chief, and The Rifle Rangers. Two of the remaining seven were Gabriel Ferry translations — The Tiger Hunter and The Wood Rangers. Two more, The Wild Huntress and Osceola, were set in the southern United States. The remaining three, like the top three, were westerns: The War Trail; Wild Life; and The Hunters' Feast.

In 1892 G. W. Dillingham, which succeeded Carleton as Reid's principal American publisher, published cheap paperback reprints of sixteen Reid titles, all but three of which

were westerns. As before, The Scalp Hunters topped the list. In an obvious effort to attract the attention of potential buyers, Dillingham used a uniform, eye-catching cover design that contributed in its own not-so-subtle way to the perception of Reid as a western novelist. Red, the color of blood as well the skin of Indians, not to mention the sandstone outcroppings of western mountain ranges, dominated. The title of each book was printed at the top, on a drawing of what appeared to be a worn piece of parchment. At either side of the parchment were such decorative items as Indian war lances, tomahawks, a bow, a peace pipe, and a quiver of arrows. In the center was a headdress wearing Indian riding wildly on the back of a pony and firing a rifle into the air. In the background, other Indians could be seen hunting bison and standing beside a teepee. A range of mountains completed the scene.

In England, the situation was similar. At the turn of the twentieth century, George Routledge & Sons republished thirty-three of Reid's books in hard cover. More than half were juvenile titles such as The Bush Boys and The Young Voyageurs. Ten of the fourteen adult works were westerns: The Death Shot; The Free Lances; The Guerilla Chief; The Headless Horseman; The Hunter's Feast; The Lone Ranche; The Rifle Rangers; The Scalp Hunters; The War Trail; and The White Chief. Whether deliberate or not, the Routledge covers resembled the Dillingham paperbacks. Each one, whatever its title or setting, was bound in bright red cloth-covered boards that depicted on the cover an Indian chief in full headdress, the heads of an Indian brave, a cowboy, and a trapper, and a third Indian, with tomahawk in hand, leaping on to the back of a huge alligator. On the spine, below each book's title, was an Indian teepee, complete with campfire.

From all appearances, these later editions found a ready market among the Captain's former childhood readers, who, looking back wistfully to the days of their youth, bought them as Christmas or birthday presents for their own children. (Not a few of the copies owned by the author of this study are so inscribed.) Indeed, nostalgia for Reid's work was manifest as early as 1893 when English-born Frances Hodgson Burnett penned an essay for the January issue of Scribner's magazine. In "The One I Knew Best of All: The Memory of the Mind of a Child" the celebrated author of Little Lord Fauntleroy described her childhood home in Manchester, England, recollecting:

It was Sir Walter Scott who transformed the sofa-arms to "coal-black steeds, G. P. R. James and Harrison Ainsworth who made them "snow-white palfreys," and Captain Mayne Reid whose spell changed them to "untamed mustangs" and the Nursery into a boundless prairie across which troops of Indian warriors pursued the Doll upon her steed, in paint and feathers, and with war-whoops and yells, having as their object in view the capture of her wig.

What a beautiful story the "War Trail" was — with its white horse of the prairie which would not be caught. How one thrilled and palpitated in the reading of it. It opened on the gateway to the world of the prairie, where the herds of wild horse swept the plain, where buffaloes stampeded, and Indian chieftains magnificent and ferocious and always covered with wampum (whatever wampum might be), pursued heroes and heroines alike.<sup>68</sup>

Burnett also recalled that when her parents began talking about immigrating to the United States (and did so in 1865, settling in Tennessee), she was eager to "find out what it was like to live in America — what American was like, what it was like to cross the Atlantic Ocean." Her brothers too, she recollected, "regarded the prospect with rapture."<sup>69</sup>

To them it meant wild adventure of every description. They were so exhilarated that they could talk of nothing else, and began to bear about them a slight suggestion of being of the world of the heroes of Captain Mayne Reid and Fenimore Cooper.<sup>70</sup>

In 1905, a Texan who signed himself “El Soltero” wrote a letter to the New York Times Saturday Review of Books to express his fondness for Reid’s work. Remembering the boys’ books he enjoyed as a child, he asked:

Why is not some notice taken of Mayne Reid? Why do we not in this country honor his memory? He wrote some very interesting books, that still sell well, and, above all, he was the first popular, successful writer of juvenile books. He is the head of a long line of such authors, and, as such, we should pay some regard to his memory.

When I was a boy I remember reading his books with great pleasure. I am now over forty, yet I find interest in some of them yet. I find his “Plant Hunters” and its sequel, “The Cliff Climbers,” just as good now as then. His “Boy Hunters,” “Ran Away to Sea,” “Ocean Waifs,” and “Afloat in the Forest,” are quite interesting. He is a little too didactic, too fond of pointing the moral, but you can skip.<sup>71</sup>

A week after “El Soltero’s” letter appeared in print, another reader, William B. Sweeny of Astoria, Long Island, wrote to express some similar sentiments:

In the last issue of THE SATURDAY REVIEW “El Soltero” asks, “Why is not some notice taken of Capt. Mayne Reid? The question has of late frequently occurred to me. His novels are extremely interesting and readable, and it seems strange that a writer once so widely read should not still be popular.”<sup>72</sup>

Sweeny went on to say that “Much of the material in his novels, like ‘The Scalp Hunters’ and ‘The Rifle Rangers’ was derived from actual occurrences in his own adventurous career, as I have reason to know,” revealing that his father had served with Reid in the Mexican War and had accompanied him on some of his excursions into the region surrounding Mexico City during the U.S. Army occupation.

Perhaps it was the publication of these letters that led the New York Times Saturday Book Review, later the same year, to comment favorably on two of Reid’s westerns, The White Chief and The Headless Horseman.<sup>73</sup> These notices in turn prompted yet another one reader, John E. Norcross of Brooklyn, who had read The Desert Home as a boy in 1852, to

compose a letter praising Reid and his work. Norcross was particularly taken by the detailed descriptions of Southwest landscapes with which the prolific author had infused his works.<sup>74</sup>

There is far more fact in Capt. Reid's stories than his readers imagined, and it must have gratified him in his old age to have been so well vindicated by the results of exploration and the opening up of the country.<sup>75</sup>

The warmth and affection that Reid's former readers seemed to feel for him as well as his work was probably expressed best of all in an essay entitled "A Forgotten Hero," published at the beginning of the twentieth century in the periodical Forest and Stream. "A long time ago," wrote the anonymous commentator, "when men whose hair is now touched by silver were rioting boys, there was enshrined in many hearts a name now almost forgotten." It was the name of a man who "told of lands that were far away and of people that were strange, and of animals that all had heard of, but none had seen; and about the inhabitants of these distant lands he wove romances so charming, so exciting, and withal so full of instruction that in all the range of boyhood's literature there was nothing that could equal them."<sup>76</sup>

The appeal of Reid's stories, observed the unknown writer, lay largely in the fact that they were frequently populated by "boys no older than ourselves, but whose opportunities were far greater." No doubt imagining themselves as one of the books' principal characters, boys on both sides of the Atlantic "followed them over the prairie and among the mountains, galloped with Basil in the track of the mysterious white steed; listened, entranced, to the tales of wild animals and their ways that fell from the lips of the serious Lucien; or laughed at the pranks of the volatile Francois." Similarly, he added, "we hunted with the Young Jægers through the land of the Boers, and as we grew older, scouted in the Mexican War, were

captured by the Navajoes or the Greasers, or mingled with and marveled at the strange characters of the far Southwest, and the manly trappers of the Rocky Mountains.”<sup>77</sup>

Upon reaching adulthood, conjectured the unnamed essayist, “not a few of these boys...traveled to and fro over the earth and visited in person those distant lands of which they had first learned through the writings of Capt. Mayne Reid.” Some, he speculated, had surely become “imbibed” with “a love for nature that led them to become naturalists, while “others,” filled with “a desire to see far countries” grew to be “explorers, while others still became soldiers.” In any event, he observed: “Wherever they went or whatever they saw, they found that the descriptions given by Mayne Reid were essentially true to life, just as they remembered that the lessons taught by his writings were wholesome and worthy.” Doubting that very many of them “took part in adventures so thrilling and so surprising as befell his characters,” he expressed his hope that if any *had* experienced the sort of exciting exploits found in one of the Captain’s tales, that “they bore themselves well, and as Mayne Reid’s heroes would have done.”<sup>78</sup> In conclusion, he wrote fulsomely:

Perhaps there never was a writer for boys who had a popularity so great and well-deserved as was Mayne Reid’s. It is true that his stories were of hunting or of fighting and were intensely exciting; but mingled with all this was a great fund of natural history lore, drawn from the best sources then accessible, and calculated to make the boy love nature and observe it. Mayne Reid taught no lesson that was unworthy. The standard that he set was high, and he showed the importance of being honest and true, self-dependent, watchful, ready. His stories, we do not doubt, had a wholesome effect on the boys of the last generation. Mayne Reid’s works are perhaps no longer read, and we are sorry for it...they were all good books, appealing to all that is best in a boy and instructing while they entertained him.<sup>79</sup>

One impressionable young man the Forest and Stream essayist may have had in mind when he wrote about boys growing up and becoming explorers was Robert Louis Stevenson, the Scottish adventure novelist who in 1891 recalled his favorite childhood author in “The

Wrecker,” a serial in which he described a character as having “the same spirit as a schoolboy, deep in Mayne Reid, [who] handles a dummy gun, and crawls among imaginary forests.”<sup>80</sup> Stevenson also wrote in his Vailima Letters (1890) that while ascending a dry streambed on the island of Samoa one day he was reminded “of old Mayne Reid, as I have been more than once since I came to the tropics.” The author of Treasure Island and other classics, who clearly appreciated that he was at that moment living the sort of adventurous life that he, as a youth, had read about in Reid’s romances, remarked further: “I thought, if Reid had been still living, I would have written to tell him that, for me, IT HAD COME TRUE.”<sup>81</sup>

A distinguished intellectual who remembered the impression that Reid’s work had on him as a boy was philosopher William James, brother of Henry. In “Philosophy,” a lecture in which he criticized churchmen who embraced theology as paramount, James recalled his favorite boyhood writer, praising him as “the greatest [nineteenth century] writer of books of out-of-door adventure.” Captain Mayne Reid, remarked James, “was forever extolling the hunters and field observers of living animals’ habits, and keeping up a fire of invective against the ‘closet-naturalists,’ as he called them, the collectors and classifiers, and handlers of skeletons and skins.” Consequently, confided James, when “I was a boy, I used to think that a closet-naturalist must be the vilest sort of wretch under the sun.” By the same token, he argued in his thesis, theologians were “the closet-naturalists of the deity.”<sup>82</sup>

Growing up in Victorian England, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, celebrated author of the Sherlock Holmes stories, was also one of Mayne Reid’s faithful “boy readers.” In 1897

Doyle fondly recalled his younger days, describing how the novels of Reid, along with one of his other favorite authors, Robert M. Ballantyne, had come alive for him:

I do not think that life has any joy to offer so complete, so soul-filling as that which comes upon the imaginative lad, whose spare time is limited, but who is able to snuggle down into a corner with his book knowing that the next hour is all his own. And how vivid and fresh it all is! Your very heart and soul are out on the prairies and the oceans with your hero. It is you who act and suffer and enjoy. You carry the long small-bore Kentucky rifle with which such egregious things are done, and you lie out upon the topsail yard, and get jerked by the flap of the sail into the Pacific, where you cling on to the leg of an albatross, and so keep afloat until the comic boatswain turns up with his crew of volunteers to handspike you into safety. What a magic it is, this stirring of the boyish heart and mind! Long ere I came to my teens I had traversed every sea and knew the Rockies like my own back garden. How often had I sprung upon the back of the charging buffalo and so escaped him! It was an everyday emergency to have to set the prairie on fire in front of me in order to escape from the fire behind, or to run a mile down a brook to throw the bloodhounds off my trail. I had creased horses, I had shot down rapids, I had strapped on my moccasins hindforemost to conceal my tracks. I had lain under water with a reed in my mouth, and I had feigned madness to escape the torture. As to the Indian braves whom I slew in single combats, I could have stocked a large graveyard, and, fortunately enough, though I was a good deal chipped about in these affairs, no real harm ever came of it and I was always nursed back into health by a very fascinating young squaw. It was all more real than the reality. Since those days I have in very truth shot bears and harpooned whales, but the performance was flat compared with the first time that I did it with Mr. Ballantyne or Captain Mayne Reid at my elbow.<sup>83</sup>

Growing up on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean, two famous men who also authored books, but are not primarily remembered as writers, were also influenced by their childhood reading of the adventure novels of Captain Mayne Reid. One was the twenty-fifth President of United States, Theodore Roosevelt. The other was Lord Baden-Powell, British hero of the Boer War, who achieved more lasting fame as the founder of the international Scouting movement.

In 1903, in an article published in Outlook magazine, writer and social activist Jacob A. Riis revealed to his readers that when the President was a sickly little boy living on East



Twentieth Street in New York City, in his “frail body there lived an indomitable spirit before which had risen visions of a man with a horse and a gun, of travel and adventure.” The reason? “Mayne Reid’s books had found their way” into the house “and they went with the lad wherever the family tent was pitched to ease the little sufferer.”<sup>84</sup>

In his autobiography, first published in 1913, Roosevelt himself looked back fondly at his boyhood. One vividly recollected episode, which occurred when he was about ten years old, provides us with irrefutable evidence of Mayne Reid’s influence in the development of an interest that Roosevelt would carry with him throughout his life and into the presidency:

While still a small boy I began to take an interest in natural history. I remember distinctly the first day that I was started on my career as a zoölogist. I was walking up Broadway, and as I passed the market to which I used sometimes to be sent before breakfast to get strawberries I suddenly saw a dead seal laid out on a slab of wood. That seal filled me with every possible feeling of romance and adventure. I asked where it was killed, and was informed in the harbor. I had already begun to read some of Mayne Reid’s books and other boy’s books of adventure, and I felt that this seal brought all those adventures in realistic fashion before me.<sup>85</sup>

“Teedie,” as his family called him in those days, went on to reveal that he was so fascinated by this dead seal that he returned to the market “day after day” to measure it using “a folding pocket rule.” The sight of the creature also inspired him to write “a natural history of my own,” which along with “subsequent natural histories,” was “written down in blank books in simplified spelling, wholly unpremeditated, and unscientific.” Although the former president admitted that as a boy he was “too young to understand much of Mayne Reid, except the adventure part and the natural history part,” he had no doubt whatever that “the adventure of the seal and the novels of Mayne Reid strengthened my instinctive interest in natural history.”<sup>86</sup>

Although Roosevelt confided in his autobiography that he “dearly loved” Mayne Reid’s books as a child, the titles that made up his boyhood collection are unknown with one exception. “Among my first books,” he recalled, “was a volume of a hopelessly unscientific kind by Mayne Reid, about mammals, illustrated with pictures no more artistic than but quite as thrilling as those in the typical school geography.” This, of course, was Quadrupeds. We also know that as a child the future president subscribed to Our Young Folks, which he later remarked, “I then believed to be the very best magazine in the world — a belief I may add, which I have kept to this day unchanged, for I seriously doubt if any magazine for old young has ever surpassed it.”<sup>87</sup> Reid, as noted in a previous chapter, was a contributor to Our Young Folks. In 1865, when Roosevelt was about six years old, Reid’s South American adventure, “Afloat in the Forest,” was serialized in its pages and a short story, “An Adventure in the Vermilion Sea,” appeared in the January 1866 issue. In 1913 the former president began a months-long expedition into the jungles of South America, which unfortunately nearly killed him. Prior to his departure he had a conversation with Robert Bridge, the editor of Scribner’s Magazine, who later recalled:

When Roosevelt was planning his South American trip, I told him that all I knew about it came from that story [“Afloat in the Forest”], and I only recalled the hero floating down the river with a life-preserver made of coconut shells. The Colonel immediately outlined the principal characters in the story and chortled with delight as he recalled what he had not read for probably forty years.<sup>88</sup>

In view of this conversation, one cannot help but wonder if while he was exploring the so-called “River of Doubt” (which was afterward renamed in his honor) Roosevelt again remembered “Afloat in the Forest” and thinking, perhaps as Robert Louis Stevenson remarked in his Vailima Letters, that it had “come true.”

While there is no way to be completely sure of it, much of Theodore Roosevelt's life outside the world of politics seems to have been driven by some unspoken desire to turn the novels of Mayne Reid, and no doubt the works of other writers as well, into true life adventures. TR's experiences as a cattle rancher in the Dakotas following the death of his first wife, his wartime leadership of the "Rough Riders" in Cuba, and his post-presidency expeditions to both Africa and South America, as well as his myriad hunting trips throughout the United States while in office, all stand as examples of Roosevelt the man actually *doing* the things he could only read and dream about as a asthmatic little boy in New York City.

By the same token, we may surmise that Roosevelt's unmatched conservation record as President was not only a direct outgrowth of his childhood interest in natural history — encouraged, as he said himself, by the books of Mayne Reid — but also by his almost certainly Reid-inspired experiences as a rancher, soldier, hunter, and explorer. And what a record it is! More often than not at odds with Congress, the foresighted TR managed during the eight years of his presidency to create by executive order five national parks, sixteen national monuments (including the Grand Canyon), thirteen national forests, sixteen federal bird sanctuaries, and the first federal wildlife refuge — the Wichita Forest of Oklahoma. In doing all this Roosevelt placed literally millions of acres of public land, most of it in the West, under the protection of the federal government, so that future generations could enjoy them.<sup>89</sup> Mayne Reid, whose love of the American West was evident in so many of his novels, would almost certainly have been proud of this man who ranks without doubt as the most illustrious American to emerge from the ranks of the Captain's legion of "boy readers."

It is interesting to note that Theodore Roosevelt also shared Mayne Reid's low opinion of the famed British author Charles Dickens. In a letter to his son Kermit, composed in 1908, TR seemed almost to echo Reid when he commented thusly:

Dickens was an ill-natured, selfish cad and boor, who had no understanding of what the word gentleman meant, and no appreciation of hospitality or good treatment. He was utterly incapable of seeing the high purpose and the real greatness which (in spite of the presence of much that was bad or vile) could have been visible all around him here in America to any man whose vision was both keen and lofty. He could not see the qualities of the young men growing up here, thought it was these qualities that enabled these men to conquer the West, and to fight to a finish the great Civil War, and though they were to produce leadership like that of Lincoln, Lee, and Grant. Naturally he would think there was no gentleman in New York, because by no possibility could he have recognized a gentleman if he had met one. Naturally he would condemn all America because he had not the soul to see what America was really doing.<sup>90</sup>

Early in twentieth century, G. P. Putnam's Sons of New York (and London) published a collection of stories for boys. It was entitled Adventures Afloat and Ashore. Included in it were "The Lion Trap," from Captain Mayne Reid's The Giraffe Hunters, as well as "The Explorers of the Far West," by Theodore Roosevelt, a brief account of the famed Lewis and Clark expedition.

Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, better known to the world as Lord Baden-Powell, was born in London in 1857. Not surprisingly, the future military hero became one of Captain Mayne Reid's countless boy readers, his youth coinciding with Reid's heyday as an author. Upon reaching manhood, Baden-Powell became an officer in the Royal Army, serving in India and South Africa, where in 1899 he made his name and reputation by successfully defending the town of Mafeking from the Boers during a lengthy siege. For this, he was promoted to major general in 1900.<sup>91</sup>

Powell also wrote a book, Aids to Scouting, which was published in 1899. He later learned it had become popular with church groups, the YMCA, and an organization for youths called the “Boys’ Brigade.” His involvement in the latter group led him eventually to write another book, Scouting for Boys, and in 1908 to form the Boy Scouts, receiving a royal charter in 1912. Three years later, in response to public interest and demand, Baden-Powell created the Girl Guides, an organization similar in style to the Boy Scouts. In 1916 he founded the Cub Scouts for younger boys. In short order the Scouting movement spread throughout the world, first to the United States and other English-speaking countries, then later to other nations. By the time the Second World War end, there were nearly 5 million scouts worldwide.<sup>92</sup>

Although Baden-Powell almost certainly drew inspiration for the Scouting movement from myriad sources — his years of experience as a military officer being one (although he carefully aimed to keep the scouts from becoming a militaristic society) — an article published in the May 3, 1900 issue of the Birmingham Daily Post reveals that Captain Mayne Reid’s most popular novel was among his influences.

It is intended by a Scotch member to ask the Under Secretary of War to-morrow if he can state whether Colonel Baden-Powell’s book on scouting has been supplied to the German army by the German Government, and if any steps are being taken to distribute copies among the British soldiers in Africa. I may mention in this connection that the gallant defender of Mafeking drew his first hints as to the best way of scouting against an enemy from the Red Indian romances of Fenimore Cooper and Captain Mayne Reid. He once mentioned to a friend that nothing more keenly interested him as a boy than the references which he found to this subject in the “Deerslayer” of the one author, and “The Scalp Hunters” of the other.<sup>93</sup>

As with Theodore Roosevelt, it is impossible to know with certainty how much of Reid’s influence on Baden-Powell found its way into his life’s work. One cannot help but

wonder whether the Scouting founder could say so himself. Be that as it may, the very fact that the Captain provided some guidance at all would doubtless have pleased a man who was writing for boys of Scouting age decades before the organization existed.

Although Reid began to fade into obscurity as the twentieth century progressed, he was never entirely forgotten. In 1933 an article entitled “The Ranchman of Bucks” appeared in the New York Times, calling attention to his influence on Roosevelt, Baden-Powell, and Doyle, adding that the celebrated African explorer David Livingstone had also thought highly of his work, pronouncing it “the stuff to make travelers of.”<sup>94</sup> Ten years later, in The Year of Decision: 1846, author Bernard DeVoto advanced Reid’s reputation as a western writer by pronouncing The Scalp Hunters to be “one of the best Wild West novels” written.<sup>95</sup>

More recently, scholars seeking to explain the influence of such novels on popular perceptions of the American frontier have included Reid’s work in their studies of the western literary genre. One of the most thorough of these is Edwin W. Gaston Jr.’s “The Early Novel of the Southwest,” in which Mayne Reid’s The Scalp Hunters, along with the works of several of Reid’s contemporaries such Frederick Ruxton, are subjected to painstaking examination. Another is “World Westerns: The European Writer and the American West,” in which writer Richard Racroft calls attention to the fact “that Europeans (along with Asians, South Americans, Australians, and nearly everyone else) have distinctive, indigenous, deep-seated literary and cultural traditions regarding life in the American West.” In other words, declares Racroft, “the myth of the American West belongs not only to North Americans, but to all mankind.”<sup>96</sup> As University of Nebraska English professor Susan Naramore Maher observes in her superlative study of Reid’s first juvenile

book, “Westering Crusoes: Mayne Reid’s Desert Home and the Plotting of the American West,” this view is shared by several other scholars, including Mabel Major, T. M. Pearce, and Joan Steele, who wrote in her book about Reid that his “expansive vision of the American West...helped to imprint that particular image on a host of readers throughout the world.”<sup>97</sup>

Europeans in particular, writes Racroft, “have a longstanding Wild West literary tradition which rivals and in some ways exceeds that of the United States,” reminding us “European writers began to shape exotic images of the...New World” from the moment of its discovery. In its nineteenth century form, this tradition resulted in “thousands of western novels and stories,” from which “has evolved a European-American western literature” distinctive from its purely American counterpart. “More awkward...in its attempts at artistry and at cultural, anthropological, and topographical authenticity,” declares Racroft, European writing “often depicts a West stranger and more fantastic than the West evoked in the wildest American dime novel.”<sup>98</sup>

In a similar study entitled “The Plains and Deserts Through European Eyes,” historian Ray A. Billington used examples of the work of several nineteenth century European writers of western fiction (including Reid) to demonstrate how they contributed to this “new school of ‘literature,’” which impressed upon the minds of their countrymen “an indelible picture of the American West as a land of violence and lawlessness that persists down to the present.” More significantly, wrote Billington, these oft-times lurid novels painted a word picture of the American West that was directly contradicted by the “message carried eastward to Europe’s prospective emigrants by immigration agents, steamship

companies, and a sizeable press campaign mounted to lure settlers to the ‘land of promise’ lying beyond the Mississippi.” In other words, whereas those who hoped to attract settlers to the West depicted “the plains and deserts” as “unspoiled Edens, awaiting only the plow to blossom with the fruits of man’s enterprise,” writers of western fiction were doing the very opposite. “Their plots,” explained Billington, “required a savage Nature, where savage beasts and savage men lurked, and where the hero could be properly tested in his unending battle against the forces of evil.” Motivated by the need to sell books, the hostility of nature, the ferocity of animals, and the savagery of the Indians were emphasized “in their reaction against the favorable image emerging in the immigration literature.”<sup>99</sup>

As Billington observed further, the “practitioners” of this form of writing “were not numerous but they were unbelievably prolific.”<sup>100</sup> Foremost among them, Racroft discloses, was Germany’s Karl May, who popularized West Texas’ Llano Estacado (“Staked Plains”), and Karl Postl, a.k.a. Charles Sealsfield, whose “eighteen volumes, most of them about life in the American southwest,” “became best sellers not only in his native land but in France, England, Austria, Hungary and the Scandinavian countries — as well as the United States.” Other popular German writers of western fiction were Otto Ruppis, Friedrich Armand Strubberg, Friedrich Gerstäcker, and Balduin Möllhausen, “an authority on the Wild West” who “drew upon this experience as an artist-topographer” on an “expedition to the Rocky Mountains” and other places in the western states and territories “to create a western fiction grounded in authenticity.”<sup>101</sup>

The French, Racroft writes, had a “zest for western fiction,” which was “second only to the Germans.” Among the most widely-read of their western story writers, he reveals,



were Paul Duplessis, Gustave Aimard, “the pen name of Oliver Gloux,” and Gabriel Ferry, the *nom de plume* of Louis de Bellemare. Like Möllhausen, Aimard and Ferry earned credibility by spending several years in America. The works of these two Frenchmen were also published in English and other languages, providing them with a much wider readership than they might have enjoyed otherwise.<sup>102</sup> As noted in Chapter 7, Ferry’s Costal l’Indien and Le Courer des Bois were translated by Mayne Reid and published in both the United States and Great Britain as The Tiger Hunter and The Wood Rangers, respectively.

Of course, as Mayne Reid’s success in the United Kingdom makes evident, the British too were voracious readers of Wild West fiction, their “shared culture and language” resulting in “more awareness than their European neighbors of current American western history, from mountain men and Mormons to the Gold Rush and the hard life of the settler.” One of the earliest Britons “who wrote about the American West during the...nineteenth century,” Racroft notes, was George Frederick Ruxton, “the first and one of the major novelists of the fur trade.” Hard on Ruxton’s heels came “Captain Marryat, Bracebridge Hemyng, Robert M. Ballentyne,” and “G. A. Henty,” almost all of who, in contrast to their continental counterparts, “directed their fiction at a juvenile audience.”<sup>103</sup>

“Most important among British Western writers, however,” declares Racroft, “is Captain Mayne Reid...often called the ‘Giant of the Westerns’ because of his more than fifty books about the American West, books which earned him the reputation of being the foremost British adventure writer of the day.” While Racroft was mistaken insofar as the nature of Reid’s books are concerned (as pointed out elsewhere in this chapter, western fiction made up only a fraction of Reid’s total output) and erred as well by saying that

“Reid’s many novels...are usually set in the Llano Estacado and southern Texas,” there can be no argument regarding the prolific author’s widespread popularity not only in the United States and Great Britain, but other countries as well. As both his widow and Charles Ollivant pointed out, Reid’s novels were translated into nearly every European language — in some cases, his entire catalogue. Remarkably, more translations appear to be in print today than English language versions and among these, Russian is unquestionably foremost.

Indeed, one of the most extraordinary aspects of Reid’s posthumous career is the popularity he appears to enjoy in Russia even to this day, a fame that has outlasted the reigns of three czars as well as seven decades of Communist rule. As revealed in Chapter Nine, Reid learned as early as 1876 that he was “the most popular of English authors” in Czarist Russia, “some half-dozen of his novels figuring in the present list [of English authors whose works had been translated into Russian], one of which had ‘been printed in 3,000 copies, and one in 3,400.’”<sup>104</sup> Just before his death in 1883 he discovered also, no doubt to his delight, that the most sought-after book for the previous five years in the military library at Tashkend had been the Russian translation of The Headless Horseman.<sup>105</sup>

“Reid’s fame in Russia,” writes Kenneth E. Harper and Bradford A. Booth, “parallels that of [James] Fenimore Cooper and Bret Harte — and for somewhat the same reasons. His colorful accounts of adventures in the New World had a tremendous appeal.” One measure of his popularity can be found in the fact that his “work was translated in its entirety.”<sup>106</sup>

By the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, when his fame was beginning to fade in the countries where he originally achieved success, namely Great Britain and the United States, Reid was one of several English language authors who enjoyed a

readership in what was soon to become the Soviet Union.<sup>107</sup> In 1916, Russian writer Abraham Yarmolinsky remarked upon this phenomenon:

The gift for inner communion with the genius of other nations seems to be one of the minor characteristics of the Slav. The ages of cultural apprenticeship, which have fallen to his lot, have only quickened and developed this capacity. Whatever are the virtues and failings of the Russian intellectual, provincialism is not among them. Ever since the intelligentsia came into being, it kept its eyes turned abroad, and it was in the West that its sun, contrary to all precedent, rose in the radiance of light and beauty. One is not surprised, therefore, to find that the New World literature is not unknown in Russia, despite the fact that the bear, to use a figure recently popularised by Shaw, was never on close terms with the North American eagle, and has, until recently, entertained distinctly unfavourable, but otherwise vague ideas concerning matters American, in general.<sup>108</sup>

Classifying Reid as an American author, which was not inaccurate in light of his naturalization in 1868, Yarmolinsky listed others who enjoyed a widespread readership in Russia: Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, James Fenimore Cooper, Bret Harte, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain, O. Henry, Richard Harding Davis, Upton Sinclair, and Jack London — a truly stellar group.

Some of Reid's Russian admirers were boys who grew up to become literary figures themselves. One of these was author Leonid Andreyev, said to be "the most modern of modern writers in Europe." In 1908, in an interview that was afterward published in the New York Times, the celebrated "author of the great war story, 'Red Laughter,' and of the remarkable morality play... 'The Life of Man,'" revealed that when he "was a child I loved America," adding:

Perhaps Cooper and Mayne Reid, my favorite authors in my childhood days, were responsible for this. I was always planning to run away to America. I am anxious even now to visit America.<sup>109</sup>

Andreyev was not the only Russian literary figure affected in this manner. In 1887, the celebrated dramatist and short story writer Anton Pavlovich Chekhov composed a tale entitled “*Malchiki*” (“The Boys”) which was published in the *Petersburgskaya gazeta*.<sup>110</sup> The story, which we may surmise was based on one of Chekhov’s own childhood experiences, focuses on two young lads, Volodya and Lentilov, who are planning to run away to America, a land they know only through the novels of Mayne Reid. As the story begins, Volodya arrives home from boarding school for the Christmas holidays, bringing his classmate Lentilov with him. That night at dinner, Volodya’s three sisters notice their brother, “who had always been so merry and talkative...said very little, did not smile at all, and hardly seemed to be glad to be home.” When at length he spoke, “he pointed to the samovar” and remarked oddly, “In Califronia they don’t drink tea but gin.” The girls noticed further that Volodya “seemed absorbed in his own thoughts, and, to judge by the looks that passed between him and his friend Lentilov, their thoughts were the same.” Later, after the children and Volodya’s father went to the nursery to make Christmas decorations out of colored paper, instead of joining in, the two youths “sat in the window and began whispering to one another; then they opened an atlas and looked carefully at a map.”<sup>111</sup>

“First to Perm...” Lentilov said, in an undertone, “from there to Tiumen, then Tomsk...then...them...Kamchatka. There the Samoyedes take one over Behring’s Straits in boats...And then we are in America...There are lots of furry animals there.”

“And California?” asked Volodya.

“California is lower down...We’ve only to get to America and California is not far off. And one can get a living by hunting and plunder.”

All day long Lentilov avoided the little girls, and seemed to look at them with suspicion. In the evening he happened to be left alone with them for five minutes or so. It was awkward to be silent.

He cleared his throat morosely, rubbed his left hand against his right, looked sullenly at Katya and asked:

“Have you read Mayne Reid?”

“No, I haven’t...say, can you skate?”

Absorbed in his own reflections, Lentilov made no reply to this question; he simply puffed out his cheeks, and gave a long sigh as though he were very hot. He looked up at Katya once more and said:

“When a herd of bisons stampedes across the prairie the earth trembles, and the frightened mustangs kick and neigh.”

He smiled impressively and added:

“And the Indians attack the trains, too. But worst of all are the mosquitoes and the termites.”

“Why, what’s that?”

“They’re something like ants, but with wings. They bite fearfully. Do you know who I am?”

“Mr. Lentilov.”

“No, I am Montehomo, the Hawk’s Claw, Chief of the Ever Victorious.”<sup>112</sup>

Confused by Lentilov’s and Volodya’s odd behavior and seemingly strange utterances, the three sisters conspired to find out what is going on. “At night, when the boys had gone to bed, the girls crept to their bedroom door and listened to what they were saying.”<sup>113</sup> What they overheard was the synopsis of probably every Mayne Reid story the two young men had ever read:

Ah! What they discovered! The boys were planning to run away to America to dig for gold; they had everything ready for the journey, a pistol, two knives, biscuits, a burning glass to serve instead of matches, a compass, a four roubles in cash. They learned that the boys would have to walk some thousands of miles, and would have to fight tigers and savages on the road; then they would get gold and ivory, slay their enemies, become pirates, drink gin, and finally marry beautiful maidens, and make a plantation.<sup>114</sup>

In the end, when the boys finally put their plan into motion the next morning (following some last minute hesitation on the part of Volodya), they got no further than “the Arcade” in the village, “where they had gone shop to shop asking where they could get gunpowder.” After Volodya’s father gave the two lads a stern lecture, he sent for Lentilov’s mother, who took him home the next day. Upon leaving however, the unrepentant boy wrote

in Katya's book, "as a souvenir: "Montehomo, the Hawk's Claw, Chief of the Ever Victorious."<sup>115</sup>

"America," writes Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, "had also been the imaginary locale of" writer Vladimir Nabokov's "adolescent fantasies of manly and heroic exploits, which were inspired by the Wild West stories of Mayne Reid."<sup>116</sup> Recalling those halcyon days when Reid's fiction, "translated and simplified, was tremendously popular with Russian children at the beginning of this [the 20th] century, long after his American fame had faded,"<sup>117</sup> Nabokov himself wrote:

Knowing English, I could savor his *Headless Horseman* in the unabridged original. Two friends swap clothes, hats, mounts, and the wrong man gets murdered — this is the main whorl of its intricate plot. The edition I had (possibly a British one) remains in the stacks of my memory as a puffy book bound in red cloth, with a watery-gray frontispiece, the gloss of which had been gauzed over when the book was new by a leaf of tissue paper. I see this leaf as it disintegrated — at first folded improperly, then torn off — but the frontispiece itself, which no doubt depicted Louis Pointdexter's unfortunate brother (and perhaps a coyote or two, unless I am thinking of *The Death Shot*, another Mayne Reid tale), ahs been so long exposed to the blaze of my imagination that it is now completely bleached (but miraculously replaced by the real thing, as I noted when translating this chapter into Russian in the spring of 1953, and namely, by the view of the ranch you and I rented that year: a cactus-and-yucca waste whence came the plaintive call of a quail — Gambel's Quail, I believe — overwhelming me with a sense of undeserved attainments and rewards.)<sup>118</sup>

The author of *Lolita* also recollected how during "the summer of 1909 or 1910" his cousin Yuri, "a thin, sallow-faced boy with a round cropped head and luminous gray eyes," had "enthusiastically initiated" him "into the dramatic possibilities of the Mayne Reid books."<sup>119</sup>

He had read them in Russian (being in everything save surname much more Russian than I) and, when looking for a playable plot, was prone to combine them with Fenimore Cooper and his own fiery inventions. I viewed our games with greater detachment and tried to keep to the script. The staging took place generally in the park of Batovo, where the trails were even more tortuous and trappy than those of Vyra. For

our mutual manhunts we used spring pistols that ejected, with considerable force, pencil-long sticks (from the brass tips of which we had manfully twisted off the protective rubber suction cups). Later came airguns of various types, which shot wax pellets or small tufted darts, with non lethal, but often quite painful consequences. In 1912, the impressive mother-of-pearl revolver he arrived with was taken away and locked up by my tutor Lenski, but not before we had blown to pieces a shoebox lid..., which we had been holding up by turns at a gentlemanly distance in a green avenue where a duel was rumored to have been fought many dim years ago.<sup>120</sup>

Nabokov confessed further, that at the time he wrote his autobiography, he had “lately reread *The Headless Horseman* (in a drab edition, without pictures),” commenting favorably: “It has its points.”<sup>121</sup> Admiring Reid’s ability to set a scene, he explained:

Take, for instance, that barroom in a log-walled Texan hotel, in the year of our Lord (as the captain would say) 1850, with its shirt-sleeved “saloon-clerk” — a fop in his own right, since the shirt was a ruffled one “of finest linen and lace.” The colored decanters (among which a Dutch clock “quaintly ticked”) were like “an iris sparkling behind his shoulders,” like “an aureole surrounding his perfumed head.” From glass to glass, the ice and the wine and the monongahela passed. An odor of musk, absinthe, and lemon peel filled the saloon. The glare of its camphene lamps brought out the dark asterisks produced on the white sand of its floor “by expectoration.”<sup>122</sup>

For some reason, recollecting this scene reminded Nabokov of a time in 1941 when he was traveling by car “between Dallas and Fort Worth” and “caught some very good moths at the neon lights of a gasoline station.”<sup>123</sup>

Nabokov also remembered a scene in *The Headless Horseman* that he and his cousin Yuri had frequently reenacted, so often in fact that years later he claimed to “know [it] by heart.” It involved a duel between two men: Cassius Calhoun, “the ‘slave-whipping Mississippian,’ ex-captain of Volunteers, handsome, swaggering, [and] scowling,” and “Maurice the Mustanger (scarlet scarf, slashed velvet trousers, hot Irish blood), a young horse trader who was really a baronet, *Sir* Maurice Gerald, as his thrilled bride was to discover at the end of the book.”<sup>124</sup>

The duel took place there and then, in the emptied barroom, the men using Colt's six-shooters. Despite my interest in the fight (...both were wounded...their blood spurted all over the sanded floor...), I could not prevent myself from leaving the saloon in my fancy to mingle with the hushed crowd in front of the hotel, so as to make out (in the "scented dark") certain señoritas "of questionable calling."<sup>125</sup>

But the bloody barroom duel was not the only part of the book that excited the young, impressionable Nabokov's sensibilities:

With still more excitement did I read of Louise Pointdexter, Calhoun's fair cousin, daughter of a sugar planter, "the highest and haughtiest of his class" (though why an old man who planted sugar should be high and haughty was a mystery to me). She is revealed in the throes of jealousy (which I used to feel so keenly at miserable parties when Mara Rzhhevuski, a pale child with a white silk bow in her black hair, suddenly and inexplicably stopped noticing me) standing upon the edge of her *azotea*, her white hand resting upon the copingstone of the parapet, which is "still wet with the dews of night,:" her twin breasts sinking and swelling in quick, spasmodic breathing, her twin breasts, let me reread, sinking and swelling, her lorgnette directed....<sup>126</sup>

The long-lasting influence of The Headless Horseman on Nabokov has also been remarked upon by D. Barton Johnson who observes in his article "Nabokov's Golliwogs," that as a young man, the future author of Lolita first looked to King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table as a model for manly behavior, but later looked to Reid.

The knight errant/damsel model is soon supplanted by that of the intrepid Texas mustanger (actually an Anglo-Irish baronet) and his fair Louise whom he saves from the wiles of the dastardly villain, Cassius Calhoun. This scenario is projected on to the young Nabokov's fantasy of rescuing a very real American beauty from the uncivil attentions of her boyfriend at a Berlin roller rink. Just as the earlier romantic model derives from the Arthurian knight-errant, the later one stems from "mustanger" Maurice Fitzgerald, hero of Captain Mayne Reid's 1866 The Headless Horseman. This incarnation of the knight-errant finds quite explicit echoes throughout the entire range of Nabokov's oeuvre from the early poetry through the late English novels. One of Nabokov's first literary ventures was a poetic recreation of the Headless Horseman in French alexandrines and Reid's novel figures as one of the subtexts in Ada 5.<sup>127</sup>

Reid's widespread popularity in the Soviet Union, particularly during the Cold War, is nothing short of remarkable. Even Communist leader Leon Trotsky was familiar with his



work. Referring to an “anecdote about Bukharin being almost prepared, at one time, to arrest the government of Lenin,” he compared it to “a bad Mayne Reid story.”<sup>128</sup>

In view of the Russians’ admiration for Mayne Reid, it somehow seems appropriate that one of the only two known motion pictures based on one of his books, Vsadnik Bez Golovy (The Headless Horseman), is a Russian language film that was made in Cuba, in 1973, by a Soviet film crew, using both Russian and Cuban actors. Here is a summary provided by the New York Times online film database:

Based on a novel by Mayne Reid, (a 19th century writer whose works were much read in the Easter bloc) this very popular (in the USSR) western was filmed in Cuba by a Soviet crew and includes many Cubans in the cast. Morris Gerrold (Oleg Vidov) is a poor Irish cowboy who falls in love with Louise (Ludmila Savelyeva), a girl from a rich Texas family. Not only does the family oppose this relationship, but Morris gets into trouble when he sees something which will identify a reputable local citizen as the leader of a notorious gang. After Louise’s brother disappears, people begin seeing a headless horseman, much to their terror. The horseman is in fact the missing brother, killed in a way which will incriminate the Irish cowboy. Accused of the murder, Morris is almost hanged by an angry crowd. He does not take these challenges lying down but seeks out and has a showdown with the gang. Ludmilla Savelyeva, who plays the love interest in this film, was partly responsible for the popularity of the film. She established her popularity with Soviet audiences shortly before, in a version of *War and Peace*.<sup>129</sup>

(The other Mayne Reid movie was an obscure Mexican film, “El Último Mexicano,” which was also based on The Headless Horseman. It was made in 1960.)

Russian immigrants are astonished by the obscurity in which Reid languishes in the English-speaking world. Recently, one now living in the United States observed:

He [Mayne Reid] is quite [a] popular author in Russia. His books are included in a number of school lists. You could ask any Russian about him — at least they will recognize his name. The most recognizable book of him would be “THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN”. In 1973 a movie based on “THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN” was produced and was very-very popular and still among the favourites.<sup>130</sup>

Another remembered that during his youth he “read a great many books/stories by Mayne Reid, adding, “I still have the Russian...collected works which I read cover to cover many times.” Hoping to introduce his American friends to his favorite childhood author, he seemed frustrated that it was difficult to find any of Reid’s works that were still published in English.<sup>131</sup>

A Russian who lives in Australia was no less puzzled when he observed lately, “I was grown with Mayne Reid books in my hands, reading them even at school [during] the lessons under the desk and at night under the blanket,” adding, “I enjoyed them as much as Jack London and Mark Twain.” Mystified by Reid’s present-day obscurity in the English-speaking world, he asked: “Why his books are not printed in [the] USA? At the end of the day it is your country[‘s] history, your country [that should be] proud!”<sup>132</sup>

On one Internet website, a former Soviet citizen now living in the United States offers an explanation for the persistence of Reid’s popularity in Russia. During his Cold War childhood, he writes, “Reid’s books” were comparable to cane sugar in a country “where most sugar was made out of beet,” that is they were “something super exotic” that he “associated...with America and adventure.”<sup>133</sup> Boris Berdichevski, a Russian now residing in Israel, has gone even further, creating a website devoted largely to Mayne Reid. Written almost entirely in the Cyrillic alphabet, it includes a brief synopsis of all his books as well as a brief biography.<sup>134</sup>

In concluding this study of Mayne Reid’s life and work, an appraisal of his place in both history and literature by someone who knew him, or at the very least corresponded with him, seems fitting. No, not Charles Ollivant but rather, Charles Fletcher Lummis, a western

historian, who in 1925 lauded the “cocky, dapper little rover-poet-soldier from the North of Ireland as “the first popular writer to know and love and tell us about our American Southwest.”<sup>135</sup> Admiringly, he wrote:

...to this day, no man has made that wonderful land so fascinating as this fighting bantam Irishman made it seventy years ago. Since his time, story writing has become epidemic. We had the Oliver Optic print-factories to reel off calico stories by the yard; we have had many writers of juveniles of genuine merit. But not one of them that wrote for boys had ever such an audience as Mayne Reid had. Boys who were boys fifty or sixty years ago know that. If the boys of to-day know less of Mayne Reid, why, so much the worse for them! A too fluent writer, he was yet a companion whose enthusiasm was contagious and instructive. He had a very genius for accurate observation and logical deduction, a rare instinct for the truth, and a genuine love for nature. His adult romances were too sensational for our modern taste, though very true to life and invariably without suggestiveness; but his “boys’ novels” are far and away the best ever written about our own West. They teach love of nature as no others do; they are clean and magnificent, and so exciting that no sane boy could fail to kindle to them.<sup>136</sup>

And although Lummis erred in stating, “no one has ever been able to pick a serious flaw in Mayne Reid’s history, geography, ethnology, or zoölogy,” there are probably few who either then or now would argue with his final assessment: “He was a pioneer who opened to literature that vast new West of which so many have written since — and so few with his love, insight, accuracy and charm.”<sup>137</sup>

APPENDIX A

BOOKS AUTHORED OR EDITED BY CAPTAIN MAYNE REID

## U.K. First Editions

The Rifle Rangers: or, Adventures of an Officer in Southern Mexico, 2 vols. (London: W. Shoberl, 1850).

The Scalp Hunters: or, Romantic Adventures in Northern Mexico, 3 vols. (London: Charles J. Skeet, 1851).

The Desert Home: or, The Adventures of a Lost Family in the Wilderness (London: D. Bogue, 1852).

The Boy Hunters: or, Adventures in Search of a White Buffalo (London: D. Bogue, 1853).

The Young Voyageurs: or, The Boy Hunters in the North (London: D. Bogue, 1854).

The Forest Exiles: or, The Perils of a Peruvian Family Amid the Wilds of the Amazon (London: D. Bogue, 1854).

The White Chief: A Legend of Northern Mexico, 3 vols. (London: D. Bogue, 1855).

The Bush Boys: or, The History and Adventures of a Cape Farmer and His Family in the Wild Karoos of Southern Africa (London: D. Bogue, 1855).

The Young Yägers: or, A Narrative of Hunting Adventure in Southern Africa (London: D. Bogue, 1856).

The Hunter's Feast: or, Conversations Around the Camp Fire (London: n.p., n.d.).

The Quadroon: or, A Lover's Adventure in Louisiana, 3 vols. (London: Hyde, 1856); published in the United States under original title and also as Love's Vengeance.

The Plant Hunters: or, Adventures Among the Himalaya Mountains (London: Ward and Lock, 1857).

The War Trail: or, The Hunt of the Wild Horse (London: n. p., 1857).

Ran Away to Sea: An Autobiography for Boys (London: Brown, 1858).

Oceola, 3 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1859); republished as The Half Blood (London: Chapman and Hall, 1861); published in the United States as Osceola, the Seminole.

The Boy Tar: or, A Voyage in the Dark (London: W. Kent, 1859).

Odd People: Being a Popular Description of Singular Races of Man (London: Routledge, 1860); published in the United States as The Man Eaters and other Odd People.

The Wild Huntress: or, Love in the Wilderness, 3 vols. (London: R. Bentley, 1861); published in the United States under the original title and also as Wild Huntress: or, The Big Squatter's Vengeance.

Despard the Sportsman (London: H. Lea, 1861).

The Maroon: or, Planter Life in Jamaica 3 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862).

The Cliff Climbers: or, The Lone Home in the Himalayas (London: Ward and Lock, 1864).

Ocean Waifs (London: D. Bryce, 1864).

The White Gauntlet: A Romance, 3 vols. (London: Skeet, 1864).

Croquet (London: Skeet, 1864).

The Boy Slaves (London: C. H. Clarke, 1865).

The Headless Horseman: A Strange Tale of Texas, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall [vol. 1], R. Bentley [vol. 2], 1865).

The Bandolero: or, A Marriage Among the Mountains (London: R. Bentley, 1866); republished as The Mountain Marriage (Glasgow: Grand Colosseum Warehouse, n.d.).

The Giraffe Hunters, 3 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1867).

Quadrupeds: What They Are and Where Found (London: T. Nelson, 1867).

The Child Wife: A Tale of the Two Worlds (London: Ward and Lock, 1868).

The Fatal Cord: A Tale of Backwoods Retribution (London: C. Brown, 1869); published in the United States as The Helpless Hand: or, Backwoods Retribution.

The Castaways: A Story of Adventure in the Wilds of Borneo (London: T. Nelson, 1870).

The White Squaw and the Yellow Chief (London: C. H. Clarke, 1871); published in the United States as Yellow Chief and Blue Dick: or, The Yellow Chief's Vengeance.

The Lone Ranche: A Tale of the "Staked Plain," 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1871).

The Finger of Fate: A Romance, 2 vols. (London: Chapman, 1872); revised and republished as The Star of Empire: A Romance (London: Maxwell, 1888).

The Death Shot: A Romance of Forest and Prairie, 3 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1873); republished as The Death Shot: A Story Retold (London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1874).

The Flag of Distress: A Story of the South Sea, 3 vols. (London: W. Tinsley, 1876); abridged and published in the United States as The Spectre Barque.

Gwen Wynn: A Romance of the Wye, 3 vols. (London: Tinsley Bros., 1877).

Gaspar the Gaucho: A Tale of the Gran Chaco (London: Routledge, 1879).

The Queen of the Lakes: A Romance of the Mexican Valley (London: W. Mullan, 1880); published in the United States as The Captain of the Rifles: or, The Queen of the Lakes.

The Free Lances: A Romance of the Mexican Valley, 3 vols. (London: Remington, 1881); published in the United States as Cris Rock: or, A Lover in Chains.

The Land of Fire: A Tale of Adventure (London: Warne, 1884).

The Vee-Boers: A Tale of Adventure in Southern Africa (London: Routledge, 1885).

The Lost Mountain: A Tale of Sonora (London: Routledge, 1885); published in the United States as The Gold Seeker's Guide: or, The Lost Mountain.

The Chase of Leviathan: or, Adventures in the Ocean (London: Routledge, 1885); published in the United States as The Ocean Hunters: or, The Chase of Leviathan. A Romance of Perilous Adventure.

No Quarter!, 3 vols. (London: Sonnenschein and Co., 1888).

The Fatal Cord and the Falcon Rover (London: G. Routledge, n.d.).

The Grateful Negro (publication data unavailable). *The only source for this title is Reid's niece, Helen Cromie Mollan. No other record of it can be found.*

U.S. First Editions  
(All U.S. editions are single volume.)

War Life: or, The Adventures of a Light Infantry Officer (New York: A. J. Townsend, 1849).

The Scalp Hunters: or, Romantic Adventures in Northern Mexico (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, 1851).

The Boy Hunters: or, Adventures in Search of a White Buffalo (Boston: Ticknor, 1854).

The Forest Exiles: or, The Perils of a Peruvian Family Amid the Wilds of the Amazon (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1855).

The Rifle Rangers: or, Adventures of an Officer in Southern Mexico (New York: De Witt, 1855).

The Hunter's Feast: or, Conversations Around the Camp Fire (New York: De Witt & Davenport, 1856).

The Quadroon: or, A Lover's Adventure in Louisiana (New York: De Witt, 1856);  
republished as Love's Vengeance (New York: Carleton, 1880).

The Bush Boys: or, The History and Adventures of a Cape Farmer and His Family in the Wild Karoos of Southern Africa (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1856).

The Young Voyageurs: or, The Boy Hunters in the North (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1857).

The Young Yägers: or, A Narrative of Hunting Adventure in Southern Africa (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1857).

The Plant Hunters: or, Adventures Among the Himalaya Mountains (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1858).

The War Trail: or, The Hunt of the Wild Horse (New York: De Witt, 1858).

Ran Away to Sea: An Autobiography for Boys (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1858).

The Boy Tar: or, A Voyage in the Dark (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1859).

Odd People: Being a Popular Description of Singular Races of Man (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860); also published as The Man-Eaters and Other Odd People (New York: Miller, 1860).



The Wild Huntress: or, Love in the Wilderness (New York: De Witt, 1862); republished as Wild Huntress: or, The Big Squatter's Vengeance (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1882).

The Maroon: or, Planter Life in Jamaica (New York: De Witt, 1864).

The Desert Home: or, The Adventures of a Lost Family in the Wilderness (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1864).

The Cliff Climbers: or, The Lone Home in the Himalayas (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1864).

The Ocean Waifs: A Story of Adventure on Land and Sea (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1864).

The Boy Slaves (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1865).

Afloat in the Forest: or, A Voyage among the Tree-Tops (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1866).

The Giraffe Hunters (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1866).

The Headless Horseman: A Strange Tale of Texas (New York: De Witt, 1867).

The White Gauntlet: A Romance (New York: Carleton, 1868).

The Rival Captains (New York: Munro, 1868).

The Child Wife: A Tale of the Two Worlds (New York: Sheldon, 1869).

The Planter Pirate: A Souvenir of the Mississippi (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1868); republished as The Land Pirates: or, The League of Devil's Island (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1879).

The Creole Forger: A Tale of the Crescent City (New York: Munro, 1868).

The Helpless Hand: or, Backwoods Retribution (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1868); published in the United Kingdom as The Fatal Cord: A Tale of Backwoods Retribution.

The White Squaw (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1868); combined with The Yellow Chief and republished as Blue Dick: or, The Yellow Chief's Vengeance (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1879); The White Squaw and The Yellow Chief published together in the United Kingdom as The White Squaw and the Yellow Chief.

The Yellow Chief (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1869); combined with The White Squaw and republished as Blue Dick: or, The Yellow Chief's Vengeance (New York: Beadle

and Adams, 1879); The White Squaw and The Yellow Chief published together in the United Kingdom as The White Squaw and the Yellow Chief.

The Castaways: A Story of Adventure in the Wilds of Borneo (New York: Sheldon, 1870).

The Cuban Patriot: or, The Beautiful Creole. An Episode of the Cuban Revolution (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1873).

The Island Pirate: A Tale of the Mississippi (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1874).

Osceola, the Seminole: or The Red Fawn of the Flower Land, (New York: Carleton, 1875); published in the United Kingdom as Oceola and The Half Blood.

The Spectre Barque: A Tale of the Pacific (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1879); published in the United Kingdom as The Flag of Distress: A Story of the South Sea.

The Lone Rancho: A Tale of the "Staked Plain" (New York: Carleton, 1884).

The Queen of the Lakes: A Romance of the Mexican Valley (London: W. Mullan, 1880).

The Ocean Hunters: or, The Chase of Leviathan. A Romance of Perilous Adventure (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1881); published in the United Kingdom as The Chase of Leviathan: or, Adventures in the Ocean.

The Gold Seeker's Guide: or, The Lost Mountain (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1882); published in the United Kingdom as The Lost Mountain: A Tale of Sonora.

The Finger of Fate: A Romance (New York: Munro, 1888); published in the United Kingdom under original title and also as The Star of Empire.

No Quarter! (New York: Hurst, 1888).

Cris Rock: or, A Lover in Chains (New York: R. Bonner, 1889); published in the United Kingdom as The Free Lances.

The Naturalist in Siluria (Philadelphia: Gebbie, 1890).

The Fatal Cord and the Falcon Rover (New York: G. Routledge, n.d.).

Reid as Co-author, Editor, or Translator

Bruin: or, The Grand Bear Hunt (London: Routledge, 1861; Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1861). [With "an American author"]

The Wild-Horse Hunters (New York: Beadle and Adams 1877). [With Frederick Whittaker]

Frederick Whittaker, The Cadet Button: A Romance of American Army Life, edited by Captain Mayne Reid (New York: 1878).

The Black Mustang (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1885). [With Frederick Whittaker]

The Wood Rangers: or, The Trappers of Sonora (New York: De Witt, 1860). [A translation of Le Courer des Bois by Louis de Bellemare, a.k.a. Gabriel Ferry]

The Tiger Hunter (New York: De Witt, 1865); published in the United Kingdom as A Hero in Spite of Himself. [A translation of Costal l'Indien by Louis de Bellemare, a.k.a. Gabriel Ferry]

### Short Story Collections

Wild Life: or, Adventures on the Frontier. A Tale of the Early Days of the Texan Republic (New York: R. M. De Witt 1859; London: R. Bentley, 1873). The title story is from Charles Sealsfield's (Karl Anton Postl) Cabin Book (1841). Items by Reid include "Brothers and Sisters: A Parisian Sketch," "The Last Adventure of a Coquette," "A Husband's Ruse," "The Wounded Guerilla: A Sketch of the Late Campaign," "Scouting Near Vera Cruz," and "Mexican Jealousy."

The Guerilla Chief: And Other Tales (London: Darton, 1867); includes "The Guerilla Chief," "Despard the Sportsman," "A Case of Retaliation," "The Broken Bitt," "A Turkey Hunt in Texas," "Trapped in a Tree," and "The Black Jaguar."

Trapped in a Tree (London: Miles [Charterhouse Series, n.d.]); includes "Rosanna," "A Case of Retaliation," "The Broken Bitt," "A Turkey Hunt in Texas," "Trapped in a Tree," and "The Black Jaguar."

The Pierced Heart and Other Stories (London: J. R. Maxwell, 1885); includes "The Pierced Heart," "Brother Against Brother," "Ghost, or Grizzly?," "The Spectre at the Gate," "Among the Mangroves," "The Iguana Hunter," "A Twelve Miles' Wade," "Christmas in a Shooting Box," "The Love Test," "Jarocho Life," "Among the Palmettos," "Riding in Rodeo," and "Captured by Confeds."

### Anthologies

Popular Adventure Tales (London: Simpkin [1890]); consists of The Young Voyageurs, The Forest Exiles, and The Bush Boys.

By Charles Beach  
(Believed by some to be a *nom de plume* for Mayne Reid.)

Andrew Deverel: The History of an Adventure in New Guinea, 2 vols. (London: R. Bentley, 1863).

Lost Lenore: or, The Adventures of a Rolling Stone, edited by Captain Mayne Reid, 3 vols. (London: Skeet. 1864).

Left to the World, 3 vols. (London: J. Maxwell, 1865).

Never: The Trials and Perilous Adventures of Frederick Lonsdale. An Autobiography (London: Virtue & Co., 1868).

The Way to Win: A Story of Adventure Afloat and Ashore (London: Lockwood & Co., 1869).

Pitzmaroon: or, The Magic Hammer (Springfield, Mass.: Whitney and Adams, 1874).

Waifs of the World: or, Adventures Afloat and Ashore (London: F. Warne & Co., 1878).

#### Spurious Works

Rangers and Regulators (New York: Carleton, 1870).

#### Collections featuring Captain Mayne Reid and Others

Wonderful Adventures: A Series of Narratives of Personal Experiences Among the Native Tribes of America (London: Cassell 1872.)

Stories About Animals (New York: T. R. Knox, 1885). Chapters by Reid are "A Talk About Tigers," and "A Tiger Taken by Birdlime," from The Plant Hunters.

Stories of Bold Deeds and Brave Men, Beeton's Annual (London: 1893).

Tales of Adventure By Jules Verne, Capt. Mayne Reid and Others: The Adventures of Captain Hatteras; Ran Away to Sea; The Pathfinder or The Inland Sea; The Arctic Crusoe; Nick of the Woods or The Prairie Mystery; Wild Man of the West; The Coral Island (n.p.: E. Moritz, 1908). [Authors include Jules Verne, Mayne Reid, J. Fenimore Cooper, Percy B. St. John, Robert M. Bird, and R. M. Ballantyne.]

Adventures Afloat and Ashore (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, n.d.). Authors include James Fenimore Cooper, Theodore Roosevelt, Washington Irving, Herman Melville, E. S. Ellis, Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, Mayne Reid, R. M. Ballantyne "and others."]

#### Plays

Love's Martyr: A Tragedy (Philadelphia: Printed for the Author, 1849).

#### Sources:

In addition to microfilmed, digitized, or actual copies of some of these publications, the following named sources were referenced.

Gale Literary Databases, Dictionary of Literary Biography: Mayne Reid, "Writings by the Author

[<http://continuum.uta.edu:2575/servlet/GLD/hits?=d&origSearch=true&o=DataType&n=10...>; accessed February 11, 2005].

Ollivant, Charles. "Life of Mayne Reid," AMsS, Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Reid, Elizabeth. Captain Mayne Reid: His Life and Adventures (London: Greening and Co., 1900).

Steele, Joan. "The Image of America in the Novels of Captain Mayne Reid: A Study of a Romantic Expatriate." Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1970.

Steele, Joan. Captain Mayne Reid (Boston: Twayne Publishers, a division of G. K. Hall & Co., 1978).

APPENDIX B

POETRY, SHORT STORIES, AND ARTICLES BY MAYNE REID

## Alphabetical List of Newspapers and Periodicals in the United Kingdom

*Note:* This list does not purport to be all-inclusive. Reid was such a prolific writer that there are almost certainly many more “lost” items awaiting re-discovery by some future researcher.

All bylines are “By Captain Mayne Reid” unless otherwise indicated in parentheses.

### Boys Magazine

“Gaspar the Gaucho” (previously titled “The Lost Sister”), serialized beginning late 1877.

### The Boys’ Journal

“The Ocean Waifs,” serialized 1863.

“The Boy Slaves,” serialized 1864.

“Afloat in the Forest,” serialized 1865.

### Boys’ Illustrated News (Reid was co-editor with John Latey, Jr.)

“The Lost Mountain” (illustrated by R. Caton Woodville), serialized beginning April 6, 1881.

“The Chase of Leviathan,” serialized beginning July 2, 1881.

“A Fight in Flood; or Kin Against Kin: A Romance of the Forest of Dean” (a version of No Quarter!) serialized beginning Sept. 21, 1881.

“The Scalp Hunters” (illustrated by Melton Prior), serialized beginning Jan. 4, 1882.

“Travel, Voyage and Adventure Among the Palmettos: An Adventure in the Swamps of Louisiana,” April 6 & 13, 1881.

Misc. short stories and notes on natural history, dates unknown.

### Boys of England

“The Fatal Cord,” serialized beginning no. 56, 1867?

“The Planter Pirate,” serialized 1867?

“The White Squaw,” serialized beginning no. 82, date unknown.

### Boys’ Own

“The Finger of Fate,” serialized beginning January 1868.

### Cassell’s Illustrated Family Paper

“The Maroon” (128 chapters, illustrated by J. Swain and C. Green) serialized beginning vol. 9, no. 217, January 25, 1862.

### Cassell’s Illustrated Travels

“A Zig-Zag Journey Through Mexico,” 1871 or 1872.

“A Flying Visit to Florida,” 1871 or 1872.

### Chambers’s Journal

“The War Trail,” serialized beginning January 3, 1857; finished June 27, 1857.

“Oceola,” serialized beginning Jan. 2, 1858; finished June 26, 1858.

“The Wild Huntress,” serialized beginning July 7, 1860; finished Dec. 29, 1860.

“The Flag of Distress,” serialized beginning Aug. 7, 1875; finished Dec. 25, 1875.

“Nursing Sisters” (unsigned), May 15, 1875.

“The Axolotl” (unsigned), Aug. 7, 1875.

#### Field

“A Tour of Texas,” 1871 or 1872.

#### Fun

“A Turkey Hunt in Texas,” December 1864.

#### Glasgow Herald

“A Brother’s Revenge” (originally titled “The Finger of Fate”), serialized beginning Sept. 11, 1875.

#### Hereford Times (and nine other provincial newspapers)

“The Flag of Distress,” serialized 1878.

#### Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News

“Yachting on Ice,” Feb. 1875.

“Our Home Natural History” (series), 1882.

Several short sketches, titles unknown, 1874 and/or 1875.

#### Land and Water

Article on Mexican axolotl, March 4, 1876.

#### Liverpool Weekly Courier (and other papers)

“Gwen Wynn,” serialized 1876.

#### London Journal

Title(s) and date(s) uncertain (1850s).

#### London Live Stock Journal

“The Merits of White and Black Colours for Clothing” or “Best Colours for Summer and Winter Clothing” (letter), Jan. 24, 1879.

“Potatoes, and How to Regenerate Them” (letter), March 5, 1880.

“Potatoes, How to Grow Them” (letter), March 19, 1880.

“Jacob’s Sheep” (letter), date unknown.

“The Naturalist on the Wye” series, dates unknown.

#### London Society

“The Maniac Skater,” 1871.

“Captured by Confeds,” May 1872.



“Ghost, or Grizzly,” June 1872.  
 “The Pierced Heart,” serialized 1874 or 1875.

Newcastle Weekly Chronicle (and several other papers including the Manchester Weekly Post, the Bristol Mercury, and the Leamington Labourers’ Chronicle)  
 “No Quarter,” serialized 1880.

Penny Illustrated Newspaper

“The Militia at Uxbridge” (unsigned), May 12, 1866.  
 “The Death Shot: A Tale of the Texan Prairie,” serialized beginning Dec. 23, 1871; finished June 1, 1872.  
 “Adela; or, Saved by an Angel” (a.k.a., “The Lone Rancho”), serialized beginning Oct. 18, 1873; finished April 4, 1874.  
 “The Spectre at the Gate: A Tale of the Mexican Table-Land” (illustrated by Charles Robinson), Dec. 14, 1878.  
 “The Iguana Hunter: A Tale of the Vera-Cruz Coastland,” December 13, 1879.  
 “Billet and Bullet,” December 11, 1880.  
 “The Mad Jackal: An East Indian Adventure,” December 17, 1881.  
 “The Fighting Days of Mayne Reid” (letter), January 27, 1883  
 “A Christmas in Kerguelan’s Land,” Dec. 16, 1883 (posthumous).

The Penny Miscellany

“The Forest Ranger,” serialized beginning September 11, 1865; finished November 18, 1865.  
 “The Headless Horseman” (100 chapters, illustrated by R. J. Hämerston and John Swain), serialized beginning no. 148, vol. 3, July 11, 1868; finished no. 168, November 28, 1868.  
 “The White Gauntlet” (illustrated by Webbe), serialized, dates unknown.

Touchstone

“Christmas in a Shooting Box,” early 1879.

The Young Englishman’s Journal

“The Wild Huntress” (illustrated by H. C. Maguire), serialized beginning no. 16, date unknown.  
 “The Hunters’ Feast,” serialized beginning no. 65, date unknown.

Young Ireland

“Dagger Nell,” no other information available.

The Young Men of Great Britain

“Christmas on a Whale,” serialized beginning no. 1, January 28, 1868.  
 “The Planter Pirate,” serialized beginning no. 15, date unknown.

## Alphabetical List of Newspapers and Periodicals in the United States

*Note:* This list does not purport to be all-inclusive. Reid was such a prolific writer that there are almost certainly many more “lost” items awaiting re-discovery by some future researcher.

All bylines are “By Captain Mayne Reid” unless otherwise indicated in parentheses.

### Arthur’s Magazine

“Spoiling a Painter” (by the Poor Scholar), September 1844.

“The Marquis, the Tutor, and Their Sisters: or, Combined to Kill a Coquette. A Story of Parisian Life” (by the Poor Scholar), December 1844.

“The Mysterious Lady,” March 1846.

“The Duel That Didn’t Come Off,” April 1846.

### The Casket

“The Death of Adele,” 1, 23, September 16, 1846.

### Detroit Free Press

“Tribute to Benjamin Moran” (letter), Dec. 1882.

### Fireside Companion

“The Finger of Fate” serialized 1867?

### Frank Leslie’s Boys’ and Girls’ Weekly

“The Red Gorilla” (later re-titled “The Castaways”), serialized 1870?

### Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper

“The Child Wife,” serialized beginning Feb. 22, 1868; finished July 18, 1868.

“Bear on the Banner” (a poem), March 28, 1868.

“Paddy From Cork,” July 11, 1868.

“Christmas Upon a Cachalot,” Aug. 1, 1868.

### The Galaxy. A Magazine of Entertaining Reading

“Jarocho Life,” vol. 5, issue 6, June 1868.

### Godey's Lady's Book

“The Clime of the Creole, The Isles of the Ind.” (by a Poor Scholar), August 1843.

“Ysla de Cuba (A Moonlight Panorama-Sketched from the Foretop Sail-Yard)” (by a Poor Scholar), September 1843.

“The Polacca Marque, A Romance of the Isles” (by a Poor Scholar), October 1843.

“Estrella del Norte” (by the Poor Scholar), May 1844.

“Oh Sing Me That Song” (by the Poor Scholar), June 1844.

“Tropic Land,” (by the Poor Scholar), August 1844.

“La Cubana: A Romance of the Isles, Scene I-The Cama” (by the Poor Scholar), February 1845.

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Society," June 11, 1882; XII. "County Society in Summer," June 18, 1882; XIII. "County Society in Winter," June 25, 1882; XIV. "Hunting and Hounds," July 2, 1882; XV. "Hunting with Harriers, Beagles, Otterhounds and Greyhounds," July 9, 1882; XVI. "The Representation in Parliament," July 16, 1882; XVII. "The Representation in Parliament," July 23, 1882; XVIII. "School Persecution," July 30, 1882; XIX. "The Sports of the People," Aug. 6, 1882; XX. "Associate Pastimes," Aug. 13, 1882; XXI. "Other Associate Pastimes," Aug. 20, 1882; XXII. "Markets, Fairs, and 'Mop' Fairs," Aug. 27, 1882; XXIII. "Public Dinners," Sept. 3, 1882; XXIV. "Farm Auction Sales," Sept. 10, 1882; XXV. "The Best Sort of Englishman for America," Sept. 17, 1882; XXVI. "Naturalists' Field Clubs and Archæological Societies," Sept. 24, 1882.

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#### Saturday Courier

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#### Saturday Evening Post

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“Tailing the Bull,” December 13, 1856

“The War Trail,” serialized beginning April 18, 1857; finished August 15, 1857.

“The Planter Pirate,” serialized beginning June 13, 1868; finished July 18, 1868.

“The Spectral Condor: A Story of the South Sea” (a.k.a. “The Spectre Barque”), serialized beginning Oct. 30, 1875; finished March 4, 1876.

#### Saturday Journal

“The Death Shot” serialized 1872.

#### St. Nicholas

“The Land of Fire,” serialized beginning Dec. 1883; finished May 1884.

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“The Great Battle of Mexico,” by “Ecolier,” Dec. 18, 1847

“The Taking of Contreras,” by “Ecolier,” Dec. 18, 1847

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“To the United States” (poem), about 1867

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APPENDIX C

REID'S WORK PUBLISHED BY BEADLE AND ADAMS

## Reid's Work Published by Beadle &amp; Adams

Dime Novels

- No. 141: "The Helpless Hand," Jan. 14, 1868.  
 No. 150: "The Scalp Hunters," May 19, 1868.  
 No. 152: "The Planter Pirate," June 9, 1868.  
 No. 155: "The White Squaw," July 24, 1868.  
 No. 189: "The Yellow Chief," Oct. 26, 1869.

New Dime Novels

- No. 373: "The Helpless Hand," Nov. 14, 1876.  
 No. 554: "Blue Dick, or the Yellow Chief's Vengeance," Oct. 23, 1883.  
 No. 559: "The Island Pirates," Jan. 1, 1884.  
 No. 624: "The Helpless Hand," Sept. 15, 1885.

Saturday Journal

- No. 10: NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE  
 "The Mustangers" (with Frederick Whittaker), serialized beginning vol. II, No. 91, Dec. 9, 1871; finished vol. II, No. 97, Jan. 20, 1872.  
 "Tracked to Death; or, The Last Shot," serialized beginning vol. II, No. 97, Jan. 20, 1872; finished vol. III, No. 127, Aug. 17, 1872.  
 "The Spectre Barque," serialized beginning vol. IV, No. 172, June 28, 1873; finished vol. IV, No. 192, Nov. 15, 1873.  
 "The Headless Horseman," serialized beginning vol. IV, No. 205, Feb. 14, 1874; finished vol. V, No. 235, Sept. 12, 1874.  
 "The Helpless Hand," vol. VIII, No. 405, Dec. 15, 1877.  
 "The Lamb and the Wolf," serialized beginning vol. IX, No. 446, Sept. 28, 1878; finished vol. X, No. 469, March 8, 1879.  
 "El Capitan, or the Queen of the Lakes," serialized beginning vol. IX, No. 466, Feb. 15, 1879; finished vol. X, No. 473, April 5, 1879.  
 "The Queen of the Fandango," vol. X, No. 513, Jan. 10, 1880.  
 "The Gold Seeker's Guide," serialized beginning vol. XII, No. 590, July 2, 1881; finished vol. XII, No. 599, Sept. 3, 1881.  
 "The Chase of the Leviathan," serialized beginning vol. XII, No. 600, Sept. 10, 1881; finished vol. XII, No. 610, Nov. 19, 1881.  
 "Gaspar the Gaucho," serialized beginning vol. XIII, No. 640, June 17, 1882; finished vol. XIII, No. 652, Sept. 9, 1882.

Beadle's Weekly

- "The Chase in Assam," serialized beginning vol. I, No. 1, Nov. 18, 1882; finished vol. I, No. 7, Dec. 30, 1882.  
 No. 61: NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE  
 "The Fandango Queen," serialized beginning vol. III, No. 105, Nov. 15, 1884; finished vol. III, No. 106, Nov. 22, 1884.



Banner Weekly

No. 582: NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE

New and Old Friends, New Series

No. 1: "The Cuban Patriot," 1873.

No. 2: "The Helpless Hand," 1874.

Pocket Novels

No. 4: "Blue Dick, or the Yellow Chief's Vengeance," Aug. 18, 1874.

No. 10: "The Island Pirate," Nov. 10, 1874.

Twenty-Cent Novels

No. 5: "The Scalp Hunters," Nov. 15, 1875.

No. 12: "The White Squaw," April 10, 1876.

Starr's New York Library

No. 8: "The Headless Horseman," Aug. 16, 1877.

No. 12: "The Dead Shot," Sept. 13, 1877.

Dime Library

No. 8: "The Headless Horseman" (reissue of Starr's title).

No. 12: "The Dead Shot" (reissue of Starr's title).

No. 55: "The Scalp Hunters," Nov. 20, 1878.

No. 66: "The Spectre Barque," 1879.

No. 74: "The Captain of the Rifles, or the Queen of the Lakes," Aug. 13, 1879.

No. 200: "The Rifle Rangers," Aug. 23, 1882.

No. 208: "The White Chief," Oct. 18, 1882.

No. 213: "The War Trail," Nov. 22, 1882.

No. 218: "The Wild Huntress," Dec. 27, 1882.

No. 228: "The Maroon," March 7, 1883.

No. 234: "The Hunter's Feast," April 18, 1883.

No. 267: "The White Squaw," Dec. 5, 1883.

No. 1026: "The Ocean Hunters," July 1899.

No. 1072: "The White Chief," May 1903.

No. 1080: "The Maroon," Jan. 1904.

Half-Dime Library

No. 4: "The Wild Horse Hunters," Oct. 26, 1877 (with Frederick Whittaker).

No. 78: "Blue Dick, or the Yellow Chief's Vengeance," Jan. 21, 1879.

No. 87: "The Land Pirates," March 25, 1879.

No. 137: "The Helpless Hand," March 9, 1880.

No. 239: "The Gold-Seeker's Guide," Feb. 21, 1882.

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"The Specter Rider," serialized beginning vol. I, No. 22, April 19, 1879; finished vol. I, No. 23, April 26, 1879.

Boy's Library (quarto edition)

No. 2: "The Ocean Hunter," Dec. 21, 1881.

No. 89: "Gaspar the Gaucho," Aug. 24, 1883.

Pocket Library

No. 79: "The Black Mustanger; or the Wild Horse Hunters," July 15, 1885 (with Frederick Whittaker).

No. 102: "The Yellow Chief," Dec. 23, 1885.

No. 112: "The Helpless Hand," March 3, 1886.

No. 125: "The Land Pirates," June 2, 1886.

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3. Michael Winship, American Literary Publishing in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Business of Ticknor and Fields (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 56.
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16. *Ibid.*, 44; Steele, Captain Mayne Reid, 24; Ollivant, "Life," 302.
17. Steele, Captain Mayne Reid, 21.
18. Steele, "The Image of America," 41; Ollivant, "Life," 182-6 & 301; Illustrated London News, October 15, 1853, 332-3.
19. Steele, Captain Mayne Reid, 17.

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102. Ibid., 20.



103. Ibid., 20-1.
104. Ibid., 21-2.
105. Ibid., 23-4.

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1. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 80.
2. Ollivant, "Life," 35.
3. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 15.
4. Annie Cole Cady, A History of Ohio in Words of One Syllable (1888), 137-141).
5. S. G. Goodrich, A Pictorial Geography of the World (Boston: Otis, Broaders & Company, 1840), 266.
6. Elizabeth Reid, 16.
7. Ollivant, "Life," 36.
8. Goodrich, 265-6.; Ollivant, "Life," 35.
9. Leland D. Baldwin, Pittsburgh: The Story of a City, 1750-1865 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1937; paperback reissue, 1970), 203.
10. Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle, November 10, 1842.
11. Ibid.
12. New York Daily Times, October 23, 1883.
13. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 16.
14. Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle, November 18, 1842.
15. Ibid., November 28, 1842.
16. Ibid., January 3, 1843; Ollivant, "Life," 36.
17. Ibid., January 17, 18 & 19, February 4 & 17, and March 7 & 21, 1843.
18. Ollivant, "Life," 36.
19. Ibid., 39; Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 16 & 79.
20. Goodrich, 263.
21. Ibid., 264.
22. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 16.
23. Mayne Reid, "A Dead Man Defended," Onward, April 1869, 306.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., 306-7.
26. Ibid., 307.
27. Ibid., 308.
28. Howard Paul, "Recollections of Edgar Allen Poe," Munsey's Magazine, August 1892, 555.
29. Ibid., 555-6.
30. Ibid., 556.
31. Ibid.
32. Steele, 21.
33. This information comes from the introductory frame of a reel of microfilmed copies of Godey's Lady's Book for the period 1840 to 1858.

34. Godey's Lady's Book, August 1843, 86-7; Ibid., September 1843, 134; and Ibid., October 1843, 165-9.
35. Steele, Captain Mayne Reid, 21.
36. Graham's Magazine, November 1843, 254.
37. "My Star-Browed Steed," Graham's Magazine, November 1843; "Song of the Avenger," Graham's Magazine, August 1844; "The Death of Cordova: A South American Story," Graham's Magazine, February 1846; "The Husband's Ruse," Graham's Magazine, September 1846.
38. "Havanna de Cuba," Ladies' National Magazine, June 1844; "The Flower Girl. A Tale of the Crescent City," Ladies' National Magazine, August 1844; "My Own Dark-Eyed Adele," Ladies' National Magazine, September 1844; "The Cousins. A Tale of the Crescent City," Ladies' National Magazine, October 1844; "The Lover's Trial. An Incident of the West Indies," Ladies' National Magazine, March 1845; "The Cobra di Capello. A South American Sketch," Ladies' National Magazine, January 1846; "The Guajiro's Courtship," Ladies' National Magazine, March 1846; and "Fight with the Zamboes," Ladies' National Magazine, May 1846.
39. Godey's Lady's Book, May & June 1844; Ladies' National Magazine, June 1844; and Ladies' Magazine of Literature, Fashion and Fine Arts, June 1844.
40. Godey's Lady's Book, August 1844; Graham's Magazine, August, 1844, and Ladies' National Magazine, August 1844.
41. Graham's Magazine, January – June 1844, January 1845, and April 1845, 168.
42. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 80.
43. Ollivant, "Life," 44.
44. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 19.

## Chapter Five

1. Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers (Glasgow: Blackie and Son Limited, n.d.), 9.
2. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 79-81.
3. Steven R. Butler, "Texas As the Cause of the War with Mexico: The Myth of the Boundary Dispute," Mexican War Journal, Vol. 9, Nos. 3 & 4, Spring & Summer 2000, 5-8.
4. George Ballentine, An Englishman in the United States Army (New York: Stringer & Townsend, 1853; reprint, Chicago: R. R. Donnelly & Sons Company, 1986), 40.
5. Mayne Reid, The Child Wife (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1869), 3.
6. The New York Herald, August 15, 1846.
7. Spirit of the Times (New York), December 4, 1847. Additionally, a poem that Reid wrote, which appeared in the September 16, 1846 issue of The Casket, a Cincinnati, Ohio publication, is dated "New York City, September 1, 1846.
8. Ibid. This article reports that during his first years in the United States Reid was "connected with the press, either as associate editor and correspondent."
9. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 19 & 29.
10. Ibid., 29. Another organization, also known as the First Regiment of New York Volunteers, was mustered into service for twelve months under the command of Col.

Jonathan D. Stevenson. Formed during the summer of 1846, Stevenson's men were then serving in California.

11. Pension Application Files, Mexican War, Death or Disability: Mayne Reid. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 583 & 636.

12. Edward D. Mansfield, The Mexican War (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1849), 112-5; John S. Jenkins, History of the War Between the United States and Mexico (Auburn, New York: Derby & Miller, 1850), 211-2.

13. Peter F. Stevens, The Rogue's March: John Riley and the St. Patrick's Battalion, 1846-48 (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1999), 80.

14. "Corporal of the Guard," The "High Private," with a Full and Exciting history of the New York Volunteers and the "Mysteries and Miseries of the Mexican War, in three parts, Part First," (New York: n.p., 1848), 9 & 10.

15. Cormac Ó Gráda, Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 116; Burrows and Wallace, 391-2, 543, 555, 624, 636, & 689.

16. "Corporal of the Guard," 7 & 25.

17. *Ibid.*, 8, 25, & 28-30.

18. New York Herald, December 6, 1846, 2.

19. *Ibid.*, December 7, 1846, 2.

20. "Corporal of the Guard," 9.

21. Burrows and Wallace, 688-9.

22. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, between 76 & 77.

23. "Corporal of the Guard," 26-7 & 31-2.

24. T. Mayne Reid, "A 'Love's Sacrifice,'" New York Illustrated Magazine of Literature and Art, January 1, 1847, 3-6.

25. "Corporal of the Guard," 31-2, 39, 48, & 54; New York Herald, March 4, 1847. The "Corporal of the Guard" gives January 31 as the date of arrival at Tampico; a report in the Herald says February 1; The History of New York State, Book XI, Chapter IV, Part II [<http://www.usgennet.org/usa/ny/state/his/bk11/ch4/pt2.html>; accessed August 5, 2006].

26. Robert Selph Henry, The Story of the Mexican War (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1950), 170-1.

27. *Ibid.*, 54; New York Herald, March 3, 1847.

28. Allen Peskin, ed., Volunteers: The Mexican War Journals of Private Richard Coulter and Sergeant Thomas Barclay, Company E, Second Pennsylvania Infantry (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), 25 & 30.

29. *Ibid.*, 32-33.

30. *Ibid.*, 33.

31. Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers or, Adventures in South Mexico (London: Blackie and Son, Ltd., n.d) 29.

32. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 34.

33. Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers, 30.

34. Ibid.; John S. D. Eisenhower, Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 237; Peskin, 33; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Message from the President of the United States..., H. Doc. 56, 30th Cong., 1st sess., 1848, 92-3.
35. Ibid.; Henry, 262-3.
36. Peskin, 34.
37. Reid, The Rifle Rangers, 30.
38. Peskin, 35.
39. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 34 & 36; Peskin, 37.
40. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 38.
41. Jenkins, 246; Mansfield, 163; Eisenhower, 238; K. Jack Bauer, The Mexican War, 1846-1848 (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1974), 241.
42. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 36-7; Bauer, 242.
43. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 37
44. Ibid., 34-35.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 38-9.
47. Reid, The Rifle Rangers, 41-3.
48. Bauer, 246-9.
49. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 42.
50. Ollivant, "Life," 956-7. Actually, Gallagher held the rank of captain.
51. Ibid., 957-8; Henry, 292; Bauer, 259-60.
52. Ollivant, "Life," 958-9.
53. Ibid., 959-60.
54. Ibid., 960.
55. Ibid., 960-1.
56. Ibid., 961-2.
57. Ibid., 963-4.
58. Ibid., 75 & 964-6.
59. The Spirit of the Times (New York), May 1, 1847.
60. Ibid.
61. Mayne Reid, "Sketches by a Skirmisher," The Spirit of the Times (New York), May 1, 1847.
62. Ibid.
63. Mayne Reid, "A Zig-Zag Journey Through Mexico," Wonderful Adventures: A Series of Narratives of Personal Experiences Among the Native Tribes of America (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, n.d.), 247-8.
64. Ibid., 248.
65. Ibid.
66. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 44-5.
67. Ibid., 43; Mayne Reid, "The Ranger's Grave," Onward, February 1869, 148-9; Wonderful Adventures, 267-8.
68. Peskin, 69.

69. Mary Lou LeCompte, "The First American Rodeo Never Happened," Journal of Sport History, vol. 9, no. 2, Summer 1982, 89-96.
70. *Ibid.*, 89 & 94.
71. Mayne Reid, The White Chief: A Legend of Northern Mexico (New York: Robert De Witt, 1860), 14-36; Mayne Reid, "Tailing the Bull," Saturday Evening Post, December 13, 1856, 5.
72. Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers, 90-3.
73. *Ibid.*, 142-3.
74. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 53.
75. *Ibid.*, 45.
76. Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers, 49.
77. *Ibid.*, 223-4.
78. Mayne Reid, The Guerilla Chief and Other Tales (Manchester, England: G. W. Goodwin & Co., n.d.), 1-2.
79. Mayne Reid, "Original Sketch. The Entry of the American Army into Puebla," The Saturday Evening Post, February 25, 1849, 1.
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*
83. *Ibid.*
84. *Ibid.*
85. *Ibid.*
86. Ballentine, 253 & 255.
87. Peskin, 124.
88. Mayne Reid, The Mountain Marriage; or, The Bandolero (Port Sunlight, near Birkenhead, England: Lever Brothers, Ltd., n.d.), 1-2.
89. *Ibid.*, 2.
90. *Ibid.*
91. Steven R. Butler, "Heroes or Villains? The Image of U.S. Volunteers in the War with Mexico," Mexican War Journal, Vol. 7, No. 4, Summer 1998, 14.
92. EE-514: "Proceedings of the Court of Inquiry in the case of Lt. Reid, N.Y. Volunteers," Puebla, Mexico, July 24, 1847. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
93. *Ibid.*
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Ibid.*
96. *Ibid.*
97. *Ibid.*
98. *Ibid.*
99. *Ibid.*
100. *Ibid.*
101. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 46.
102. *Ibid.*
103. *Ibid.*, 47
104. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 47.

105. Ibid.
106. Ibid., 47-48.
107. Ibid., 48.
108. Ibid., 48-51.
109. Ibid., 53.
110. Ibid., 51-52; The Spirit of the Times (New York), January 22, 1848.
111. Ollivant, "Life," 148.
112. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 53.
113. Ibid., 53-4.
114. Ibid., 54.
115. The Spirit of the Times (New York), December 18, 1847.
116. Ibid.
117. Bauer, 311-3; Henry, 358.
118. Bauer, 311-3.
119. The Spirit of the Times (New York), December 11, 1847.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 62-3.
125. Ibid., 64.
126. Jenkins, 416-7.
127. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 64.
128. Stevens, 273-6.
129. New York Herald, November 18, 1847.
130. Ibid., November 5, November 17, November 18, & November 21, 1847.
131. Mayne Reid, The Mountain Marriage, 164-5.
132. Spirit of the Times (New York), December 11, 1847.
133. Mayne Reid, The Scalp Hunters, 49.
134. Mayne Reid, "Mexican Jealousy," Graham's Magazine, September 1848, 172.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid.
138. Spirit of the Times (New York), December 4, 1847.
139. New York Herald, November 25, 1847.
140. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 73-4; "Gone! Gone! Gone! A Dirge For One Believed Dead," Onward, January 1869, 29-30.
141. Ibid., 30.
142. Ibid.
143. Ollivant, "Life," 151-2.
144. Ibid., December 11, 1847.
145. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 70.
146. C. F. Hoffman, "Miscellany," The Literary World, Dec. 25, 1847, 515.

147. The text of Capt. Grayson's letter can be found on page 105 of Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid. Dated December 19, 1847, it reads: "Sir, - Captain McKinstry has received your note of yesterday, and has requested me, as his friend, to inform you that he has not made any remarks reflecting upon you as a gentleman and a man of honour."
148. Peskin, 222-3, 239, 252 & 261.
149. Ollivant, "Life," 170-1.
150. Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers, 238-9.
151. Elizabeth Reid, Mayne Reid: A Memoir of His Life (London: Ward & Downey, 1890), 109-10.
152. Ibid, 110.
153. Mayne Reid, "The Mysterious Lady," The Green Mountain Gem: A Monthly Journal of Literature, Science and the Arts, January 1, 1848, 129-133.
154. Pittsburgh Daily Dispatch, March 7, 1848.
155. Ollivant, "Life," 169.
156. "Olla Podrida," Spirit of the Times, New York, New York, April 1, 1848.
157. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 76 & 101.
158. Ollivant, "Life," 169.
159. Ibid., 171-2.
160. Ollivant, "Life," 169.
161. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 78-9.
162. Mayne Reid, "Memories of Mexico," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, September 1851, 461-3.
163. Ibid., 463-4.
164. Ibid., 464.
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid.
167. Ibid., 465-66.
168. William M. Sweeny, "Mayne Reid," New York Daily Times Book Review, February 18, 1905, 106. Interestingly, the man who Mrs. Reid selected to help her revised her biography of her late husband, Charles H. Coe, read Sweeny's letter and wrote one himself, which was published in the New York Daily Times Book Review on March 4, 1905. In it, he pointed out the error about Reid allegedly claiming to be first over the wall at Chapultepec and, because he did not read Sweeny's story with a careful eye, took him to task for supposedly claiming that Reid had been the one whose arm was amputated. Coe acknowledged his own error in a later letter.
169. Samuel Chamberlain, My Confession (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), 237-8.
170. New York Daily Times, July 18, 1905.
171. Sweeny, 106.
172. Ibid.
173. Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1903; reprint, Urbana Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 65.

174. Elizabeth Reid, 82; Pension Application Files, Mexican War, Death or Disability: Mayne Reid. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
175. New York Daily Times, July 30, 1853, 8 & January 28, 1857, 6.
176. Niles' National Register (Baltimore), July 12, 1848, 17-8.
177. *Ibid.*, July 5, 1848, 4.
178. Report of the Special Committees... (New York: McSpedon & Baker, Printers, 1851), 9-22, 53-66, 77 & 99.
179. *Ibid.*, 99 & 120.
180. New York Daily Times, January 21 & January 28, 1857.
181. *Ibid.*, September 20, 1851 & July 30, 1853.

## Chapter Six

1. Mayne Reid, The Scalp Hunters; or, Romantic Adventures in Northern Mexico (London: Simms and McIntyre, 1852), v.
2. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 82-3.
3. Mayne Reid, "Francisco and Inez," Godey's Lady's Book, May 1848, 254.
4. Mayne Reid, "To Guadalupe" and "Mexican Jealousy," Graham's Magazine, September 1848, 172-4.
5. Mayne Reid, "To Guadalupe," Graham's Magazine, September 1848, 174.
6. Mayne Reid, "Mexican Jealousy," Graham's Magazine, September 1848, 172-3.
7. Mayne Reid, "Scouting Near Vera Cruz," Graham's Magazine, 211-13.
8. Mayne Reid, "To Her Who Can Understand It," Graham's Magazine, October 1848, 228.
9. Mayne Reid, "The Wounded Guerilla," Graham's Magazine, January 1849, 50-2.
10. Mayne Reid, "The Wife: A Tale of Mexico," Ladies' National Magazine, 169-172; "Original Sketch," 1.
11. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 19; Lester Wallack, Memories of Fifty Years (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1889), 2-3; Arthur Herman Wilson, A History of the Philadelphia Theatre, 1835-1855 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935), 77 & 386.
12. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 82-3; Ollivant, "Life," 173.
13. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 83.
14. *Ibid.*, 84.
15. Ollivant, "Life," 176.
16. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 105.
17. The Literary Union; A Journal of Progress, in Literature and Education, Religion..., June 9, 1849, 159.
18. *Ibid.*, May 19, 1849, 106.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Joan Steele, Captain Mayne Reid, 136-7n4. When I visited the library at the University of Texas at Austin in the summer of 2005, I was surprised to find War Life, which



is probably one of the rarest books in the world, on a shelf where it could be handled and checked out without any regard to its age and scarcity!

21. New York Daily Times, June 25, 1884.
22. "The Flag of the Palmetto Regiment," 427.
23. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 86.
24. Ollivant, "Life," 137-44.
25. *Ibid.*, 145-48.
26. *Ibid.*, 135-37.
27. *Ibid.*, 127-31.
28. "The Flag of the Palmetto Regiment," 427.
29. Ollivant, "Life," 97-100.
30. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 93.
31. New York Daily Times, June 25, 1884.
32. *Ibid.*, 97.
33. German-American Corner: Hecker, Friedrich Karl Franz (1811-1881)  
[<http://www.germanheritage.com/biographies/atoll/hecker.html>; accessed November 18, 2004].
34. Ollivant, "Life," 177.
35. "Our Exchange Miscellany," The Literary Union, a Journal of Progress, in Literature and Education, Religion..., July 14, 1849, 234.
36. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 98.
37. *Ibid.*, 98-9.
38. Handbook of Texas Online: Moore, Edwin Ward  
[<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/print/MM/fmo24.html>; accessed November 18, 2004].
39. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 97; Ollivant, "Life," 177.
40. "Domestic Intelligence," The Literary Union; A Journal of Progress, in Literature and Education, Religion..., July 28, 1849, 269.
41. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 99.
42. *Ibid.* 99-100; Ollivant, "Life," 178.
43. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 100.
44. *Ibid.*, 101.
45. Reid, The Rifle Rangers, 62.
46. Mayne Reid, The Headless Horseman: A Strange Tale of Texas (New York: Robert M. De Witt, 1867), 205.
47. Ollivant, "Life," 180.
48. *Ibid.*, 182-3; Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 102.
49. "Clippings," Saturday Evening Post, September 8, 1849, 2.
50. Chester Paul Higby, History of Modern Europe (New York & London: The Century Co., 1932), 102-3.
51. *Ibid.*, 103-4, 118-9, & 130.
52. *Ibid.*

## Chapter Seven

1. Mayne Reid, The Scalp Hunters, v.
2. S. Augustus Mitchell, A General View of the World (Richmond, Virginia: Harrold & Murray, 1845), 368.
3. Joan Steele, "The Image of America," 41-2.
4. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 105; Mayne Reid to William Shoberl, n.d. (probably early 1850), autograph letter attached to the inside fly leaf of a copy of The Rifle Rangers, DeGolyer Library Special Collections, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.
5. Ollivant, "Life," 193.
6. *Ibid.*, 193 & 202-3.
7. Mayne Reid to William Shoberl, autograph letter.
8. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 106. In "Life," Charles Ollivant claimed the amount was only £20.
9. Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers; or, Adventures in South Mexico (London: Shoberl, 1850), preface.
10. The Observer (London), April 7, 1850; Bell's Messenger (London), April 6, 1850; The Morning Advertiser (London), April 12, 1850; The Weekly Dispatch (London), April 21, 1850, quoted in Ollivant, "Life," 194-9.
11. Bentley's Miscellany, 1850, cited in Steele, "The Image of America," 43.
12. The International Magazine of Literature, Art, and Science, July 1, 1850, 13.
13. Steele, Captain Mayne Reid, 56-7.
14. Mayne Reid to M. Parker, Jr., August 16, 1850, autograph letter in the hand of Mayne Reid, David J. Holmes, Hamilton, New York.
15. Ollivant, Life, 187-8.
16. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 107-8.
17. *Ibid.*, 107; Ollivant, "Life," 192-3 & 202-3; The New York Daily Times, October 23, 1883.
18. Charles Ollivant, "Life," 205.
19. Harper's New Monthly Magazine, November 1851, 855-6.
20. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 111.
21. Steele, Captain Mayne Reid, 25.
22. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 110.
23. *Ibid.*
24. "Critical Notices," The American Whig Review, June 1852, 566.
25. Mayne Reid to R. H. Mason., January 29, 1852, autograph letter in the hand of Mayne Reid, Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut.
26. *Ibid.*, 111.
27. "Mayne Reid: An Appreciation. Part XII: The Augean Stables of England," Uses: A New Church Journal, vol. iv, no. 48, March 1900, 186.

28. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 114-5; Istvan Deak, The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849 (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 344-5.
29. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 122.
30. In The Child Wife, the most biographical of Reid's novels, the main character falls in love with a young girl whose aunt resides in Kensington Gore. Because so much of the book is known to mirror actual people, places, and events, Elizabeth Reid's aunt almost certainly had a home in this part of London.
31. *Ibid.*, 123 & 127.
32. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 128-9.
33. A. N. Wilson, The Victorians (London: Hutchinson, 2002), 324.
34. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 123.
35. *Ibid.*, 124.
36. *Ibid.*, 125.
37. *Ibid.*, 126.
38. *Ibid.*, 126-7.
39. *Ibid.*, 128; Ollivant, "Life," 307.
40. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 128.
41. Mayne Reid to Allyre Bureau, February 20, 1854, autograph letter in the hand of Mayne Reid, Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut.
42. *Ibid.*, 111-2.
43. Henry Vizatelly, Glances Back Through Seventy Years, vol. I (London: Kegan Paul, 1893), 383-4.
44. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 115; Charles Ollivant, "Mayne Reid: An Appreciation. Part XV: The Defence of Kossuth," vol. v, no. 55, November 1900, 105.
45. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 115; Ollivant, "Mayne Reid: An Appreciation. Part XV: The Defence of Kossuth," 105.
46. Ollivant, "Mayne Reid: An Appreciation. Part XV: The Defence of Kossuth," 105.
47. The Times (London), February 10, 1853.
48. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 115-6.
49. The Times (London), February 16, 1853.
50. Elizabeth Reid, Captain Mayne Reid, 117-8; Ollivant, "Mayne Reid: An Appreciation. Part XV: The Defence of Kossuth," 106.
51. Charles Ollivant, "Mayne Reid: An Appreciation. Part XVI: The Defence of Kossuth (Continued)," Uses: A New Church Journal, vol. v, no. 56, December 1900, 121-2.
52. Marx-Engels Correspondence 1853  
[[http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/letters/53\\_02\\_23.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/letters/53_02_23.htm), accessed 6 Feb. 2004]; Deak, 322.
53. Deak, 344-6.
54. Charles Ollivant, "Mayne Reid: An Appreciation. Part XVII: The Defence of Kossuth (Continued)," Uses: A New Church Journal, vol. v, no. 56, December 1900," 177-9.

55. In 1899 most of this street was obliterated from the map by the coming of the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire Railway (later renamed the Great Central Railway) and the building of its London terminus, Marylebone Station. Today, only a short section, a cul-de-sac called Alpha Close, survives.

56. Mayne Reid, "The Child Wife," Chapter LIV, "A Desirable Neighbourhood," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 16, 1868, 135.

57. Ibid.

58. "Editor's Drawer," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, April 1853, 711.

59. The Times (London), April 15, 1853.

60. Ibid; April 18, 1853.

61. Ibid; April 16, 1853.

62. Ibid; Matthew Lee, "Duncombe, Thomas Slingsby (1796-1861)," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://continuum.uta.edu:3784/view/article/8239>, accessed 7 May 2005]; Miles Taylor, "Bright, John (1811-1889)," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://continuum.uta.edu:3784/view/article/3421>, accessed 7 May 2005]; Krzysttof Marchlewicz, "Stuart, Lord Dudley Coufts (1803-1854)," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://continuum.uta.edu:3784/view/article/26701>, accessed 7 May 2005].

63. The Times (London), April 16, 1853.

64. The Times (London), April 18, 1853; Charles Ollivant, "Mayne Reid: An Appreciation. Part XVI: The Defence of Kossuth (Continued)," 122-3.

65. The Times (London), April 18, 1853.

66. Ibid; April 25, 1853.

67. Ibid; April 26, 1853.

68. Mayne Reid to Charles Kent, undated (probably 1853), autograph letter in the hand of Mayne Reid, Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

69. Ibid.

70. The Times (London), May 6, 1853.

71. Ibid; May 7, 1853.

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287. Ibid., May 2, 1866.
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289. Ollivant, "Personal Reminiscences," 572.
290. Ibid., 573.
291. Ibid.
292. Ollivant, "Life," 416-18.
293. Ibid., 419-20.

294. Ibid., 420.
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296. Ibid.
297. Ollivant, "Life," 421-5. For Captain Mayne Reid, Elizabeth Reid purloined this description, editing it somewhat. I have chosen to use Ollivant's unedited version, although it differs only slightly (and was difficult to transcribe from his manuscripts due to his own editing made in between the lines. It is as true to the original as I could make it out to be. I did, however, exclude most of one paragraph, which Ollivant marked out with a large "X."
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299. Ibid., 426-7.
300. Ibid., 427. During a visit to Gerrard's Cross in March 2005, I attempted to locate these cottages, hoping they would be easily recognizable. Unfortunately, owing to a tight schedule, I was unable to ascertain whether they are still standing or not. Chances are, they have been demolished or remodeled, a flat roof being impractical in England's damp climate.
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307. Ollivant, "Life," 428.
308. Ibid., 429.
309. Mayne Reid to Charles Ollivant, October 29, 1866, autograph letter in the hand of Mayne Reid, Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
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312. Ibid.
313. Mayne Reid to Charles Ollivant, November 21, 1866, autograph letter in the hand of Mayne Reid, Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
314. Ollivant, "Personal Reminiscences," 594.
315. The Times (London), November 30, 1866.
316. Ibid., November 14, 1866.
317. Ibid., November 29, 1866.
318. Ollivant, "Personal Reminiscences," 594
319. Ibid., 594-5.
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321. New York Daily Times, December 27, 1866.
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327. Ollivant, "Life," 430; The Times (London), November 29, 1866.
328. Stephen Inwood, A History of London (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 2000), 487.
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337. *Ibid.*, 436-8.
338. *Ibid.*, 437-8.
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349. Mayne Reid, "Things Worth Thinking Of," Onward, January 1869, 73.
350. Ollivant, "Life," 463; New York Times, November 5, 1867.

## Chapter Eight

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4. Ollivant, "Life," 463.
5. Mayne Reid, "Trifles," Onward, May 1869, 446.
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7. *Ibid.*, 470.
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25. Johannsen, The House of Beadle and Adams, vol. 1, 54.
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31. Mayne Reid to Charles Ollivant, May 21, 1868, autograph letter in the hand of Mayne Reid, Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
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39. Ibid.
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48. Ibid., 476.
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61. Ibid.
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63. Ollivant, "Life," 478.
64. "Onward," New York Daily Times, January 22, 1869.

65. Johannsen, The House of Beadle and Adams, vol. 1, 89; Joan Steele, Captain Mayne Reid, 143-4.
66. Mayne Reid, "Things Worth Thinking Of," Onward, January 1869, 70.
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102. Ibid.
103. Mayne Reid, "The Mormon Monsters. What shall be done with them?," Onward, November 1869, 425.
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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Steven R. Butler was born on June 5, 1949 in Dallas, Texas. Following graduation from R. L. Turner High School in Carrollton, Texas, he served in the U.S. Navy from 1968 to 1971. Between 1972 and 1973 he was a student at Richland College in Dallas. In 1973 he enrolled at Rhode Island Junior College (now Community College of Rhode Island), from which he was graduated in June 1974 with an Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Arts. From 1973 to 1974 he worked at the Old Slater Mill Historic Site, Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

In the fall of 1974 Butler enrolled at Rhode Island College in Providence, where he majored in History. He was graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in August 1976.

Between 1985 and 1990, Butler was a volunteer for the Dallas Historical Society's "Lone Star Adventure" public history program, portraying Texas hero Davy Crockett.

In 1989 he initiated the founding of The Descendants of Mexican War Veterans, a national lineage society based in Texas, serving for twelve years as its president. From 1991 to 2001 he edited the quarterly publication, MEXICAN WAR Journal. Butler is also a contributor to the U.S. and Mexico at War, an encyclopedic work published by Macmillan and Company in 1998.

In May 1999, Butler was graduated from The University of Texas at Arlington with a Master of Arts degree in History. In December 2006 he earned a PhD in Transatlantic History, also from The University of Texas at Arlington. He is presently an Associate Professor of History at the Spring Creek Campus of Collin County Community College in Plano, Texas and an Adjunct Professor of History at Richland College in Dallas.

Butler was married in 1970 to Anita Wilson of London, England. They have two sons: Benjamin and Nathan.