

fantastic

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By MAURICE WALSH

THE SWORD OF *Yung Lo*

*Nobody tells a story half so well as an articulate Irishman with the heart of a poet. Meaning, in this instance, Maurice Walsh, whose name you've been seeing lately on motion picture screens as the author of *The Quiet Man*, starring John Wayne. A lot of magazines have rewarded their audiences with the Walsh brand of magic for a good many years now, and it seems only fair that our readers share the wealth.*

Against the backdrop of Ireland today, is set the engrossing story of two brothers — twins — who had only one thing in common: their love for the same woman. It seemed no human agency could resolve their problem . . . which left it up to a hunk of cold steel!



BROTHERS they were, the two of them. And what is more, they were twin brothers; but not similar twins, or identical twins, or whatever the term is. That is in outward appearance; and whether they were sib or not below the surface we shall be seeing if the Lord spares me the use of my tongue.

Larry, the elder by a split minute, was a big, lean, swank lad, with a curly wave of black hair, a face of dark comeliness, and a pair of black eyes with the devil behind them when they set on a shapely woman — or a shapelier bottle of Irish 'whiskey; and

he'd choose the bottle most times. He was good with his hands, and good at games, and the best company in the world, drunk or sober, whether in a saloon bar or a lady's boudoir; a devil to tell a story on the far edge of decency, and with a mellow baritone voice to charm a bird off a bough. And look! he had brains to burn; and could extract the meat out of a text book same as you'd extract a periwinkle out of its shell on the point of a pin.

Timothy — Timmy for short — the other twin, was small by comparison: under middle height, slim and neat in build, fair in the

skin and fair in the hair, and grey eyes diffident when any woman at all turned head to look at him. As a student he was a steady worker, but slow, and in his leisure hours — not so many — he was given to day-dreaming and versification, save the mark, probably seeing himself a mile high and a mile wide playing the lute to his own song under his lady's window — or inside it.

Their father was a fairly strong farmer away down on the Kerry border, and the only fortune for them was the sort of education that would fit them for the Civil Service. And Civil Service it was.

At the age of eighteen, or it might be twenty, the two of them sat the entrance examination to a certain Department, and as luck would have it they were successful the first time of asking. Big Larry, after a two months' intensive grind, took the first place in all Ireland; and Timmy, after years of plodding, took the nineteenth, which was not the last successful place, but the second last.

In Dublin, they took their humble places in a big office among a score or two of their subhuman species. They went into digs on a quiet street off the Circular Road, and in their own opinion they were on top of the world, the ball at their feet, the field open before them, and the goal of a Secretaryship in the not-

too-far distance.

For a beginning, you could not see Larry for dust, with Timmy lost in it far behind. At the end of five or seven years Timmy had a desk of his own in the big office, and a fourth share of a lady typist; but by that time Larry had a room to himself, and a typist and a couple of clericals to jump to his beck and call.

Listen, now! Timmy had a fourth share of a typist, as I said, and, in process of time and propinquity, he wanted more, and then more, for she fitted his dreams to a nicety; and fine dreams he had: his own fire-corner and his slippers warming on the hob, a chess problem at hand, and his lady-of-the-house on the other side of the fire.

Her name was Emer, and she had her share of good looks, with green eyes alive under copper hair; and, besides, she was gay and gallant, with a bit of pleasant devilment at heart. And, mind you, she was liking Timmy, and warming a corner of her heart for him, and warming it a bit more, and a bit more, until —

Ay, until! Until big Larry set eyes on her, and approved of what he saw. By a bit of office maneuvering Larry shifted his own typist, and got Emer promoted into her place. There he had her under his hand and eye, and loosed all his charm on her.

To make a long story short, Emer fell for Larry good and hard, but not hard enough to suit him. For she was a girl of character and integrity, and the only invitation she would accept, and there were many, was an invitation to the marriage rails. This astounded Larry of the easy conquests, and nettled him too, and put him on his mettle, and made Emer all the more desirable, and finally blinded him into taking the plunge into matrimony.

So Larry and Emer were married. And Timmy, his face calm but desolate, was best man. And Timmy, under instructions, acquired a house for the young couple and, what is more, he went to live with them. He did not want to live with them, desperately he did not want that; and Emer did not want it either, for she knew how Timmy felt, and was sorry for him — and a bit ashamed of herself. But Larry was his usual dominant self, and had his own way — as usual.

"Sure, Timmy boy," said he, "haven't we been together all our lives, sharing everything together, and why should we change now?" He slapped Timmy on the back. "Begod sir! there is nothing I would not share with you — nothing at all, and that's flat."

Emer had three children — two sons and a daughter — in ten years. And in the same ten years

her husband, big Larry, went all to hell — but eternal hell not yet.

He was a brilliant devil, and his superiors were slow in finding out his shortcomings, but they got round to them in time. Larry was a hard drinker on the road to dipsomania; he was a gambler prepared to cheat; he was a philanderer without morals. He made reckless mistakes that even his ability could not cover; he was demoted from his grade, pulled himself together, was promoted again, and again lapsed; and at the end of ten years he was ignominiously dismissed.

It did not worry Larry. His disgrace slipped off him like water off a duck's back, for he was become a depraved man, and morals no longer had any meaning for him — if they ever had. He lived unashamedly and shamelessly, smugly and boastingly, like — like a deposed monarch — on his brother and on his own wife.

There was nothing the two could do about it. Indeed, there was nothing they wanted to do; for, if the truth must be told, the sort of equilibrium that was achieved at the Sandymount villa suited Timmy and Emer well enough. The house was by no means unhappy, and don't think it was — apart from a natural frustration.

Big Larry was seldom at home, maybe twice in a month to replenish the exchequer, a thing

Timmy was ever ready to do to be rid of him. And once he was three months away, in Mountjoy Jail, for driving off and wrecking another man's car.

Timmy, who had taken charge of household affairs from the very beginning, merely went on with the job. He was fond of Emer in his own steadfast way, and he grew fond of Emer's children. He played about with them, took them to the zoo on a frequent Sunday in summer, took their mother to the pictures or a play at the Abbey once a week, and on an occasion stood her a slap-up dinner in Jaminet's Restaurant. Begod sir! it looked like an ordinary, unromantic married establishment in suburbia, with husband and wife living amicably together, and the black sheep of the family turning up occasionally with a hard-luck story.

No doubt certain scandalous tongues went awagging, but without reason.

Timmy's worth in his Department was slowly recognized, but then wholeheartedly. From nine to five, five days a week, he was the perfect administrator: exploring every avenue, reaching a conclusion slowly, altering a decision like a mountain in travail and then bringing forth the mouse like a clap o' thunder. He could devise, create and promulgate an official form to be signed three

times in triplicate, with a questionnaire that no taxpayer could fill in short of one brainstorm — maybe two. He could keep a file alive longer than any other official anywhere; and there was one famous file, pride of the service, that took four messengers and a wheelbarrow to get borne into the Presence on ceremonial occasions.

Timmy went on and on, and up and up: from Junior to Higher Executive, to Principal, with an Assistant Secretaryship within his grasp, and a Secretaryship in the offing.

Outside office hours, you would take him for a staid and law-abiding denizen of one of the deserts of suburbia. But you wouldn't be too sure if you knew the two little hobbies he was proclivated to. Ay! Two hobbies, but you might call one of them a vice.

That doubtful hobby was drink. And the king of all drinks for male men: ten-year-old Irish whiskey. Ah-ha! you will say, the twin in him! Maybe so. But where one twin was a profligate dipsomaniac, the other was a continent imbiber, regulating his drink as he regulated his work.

Once a month, no more and no less, on a certain Saturday evening after tea, Timmy depraved his neat little body by investing it in the shabbiest, shapelessest old suit o' tweeds ever handed

down from a secondhand shelf; twisted a blue bird's-eye muffler round his collarless neck; stuck a dirty-shiny peaked stevedore cap over one eye, and disappeared from respectable purlieus for thirty hours.

Where did he go? I'll tell you that too. He went into town, he crossed the Liffey, he went down by the Quays, he took two turns to the left and one to the right, and slipped in by the lounge door of a certain hotel and hostelry.

Maybe it was a fourth-rate hotel; maybe it was a low pub; but it was not a mean one. Good order was kept, as gentlemen to gentlemen, and the liquor was the best, and the best only. No woman, virtuous or spendthrift, was allowed inside the door of bar or lounge. Men only, and not every man either, had a right to put a foot on the brass rod or wallop an emphatic fist on a scarred table-top; sea-worthy men, writing Johnnies on the make, and those wonderful working men of Dublin who could out-talk Villon, and down pints of Guinness to the confoundment of biologists who hold that the capacity of the human stomach is only a quart-and-a-half. One of them, one time, on a bet, drank five pints in five minutes, a thing contrary to nature.

"You did it, Jerry," says his backer, "but it was a dam' close

thing." "It was so," agreed Jerry through the high tide in his thrapple, "but I knew I could do it. Sure, I tried it up at the Red Cow before coming along here. Yes, sir!"

Timmy would slip in quietly looking at no one, take the same chair in the same quiet corner, and lift one finger.

And to the lift of Timmy's finger a barman would bring across a ball o' malt, a glass of ten-year-old Irish, pale-straw in colour; and Timmy, slowly and meticulously, would add a modicum of ten drops of water, and toss the mixture straight down on the pit of his stomach; and again lift the one finger. He would do the same thing with the second ball o' malt, and the identical same thing with the third one. But not with the fourth — never with the fourth.

He would look at the fourth on the table-top, and smile at it in a friendly fashion, and sit up as if waking out of a day-dream. And after a while he'd rise slowly to his feet, move with slow dignity to the long bar where a place was waiting for him, put a foot on the brass rod and an elbow on the zinc, and in a voice resonant as a clarion enunciate something like this.

"Ned Keogh yonder, usually accurate, was holding forth last month that the mongoose fighting the king cobra owes its safety



Illustrator: Bill Ashman

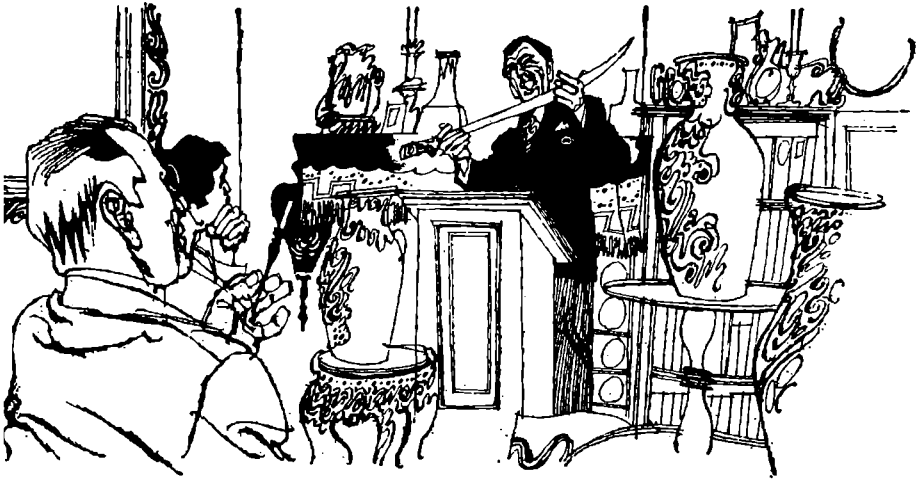
entirely to its activity. That is not so, Edward my friend. Mongooses — not mongeese you will note — mongooses in the death-struggle with their inveterate enemy are frequently wounded, but possess a large degree of immunity to the deadly venom. I recall an incident that I personally observed at Ahmednugger in the Province of Bombay . . .”

Ay, begad! And the furthest he ever was outside Ireland was the Kish Light off Dublin Bay — in a rowboat.

I'm telling you: when Timmy got to his fourth drink he began to be the grandest company within the four seas of Erin. He had an extraordinary volume of tone, and could shake the cobwebs off the ceiling with ballads like *Behold Phelim Broady* and the *Battle of*

Keimeneigh; he would stand a drink here and take a drink there, and propose a toast with humour and felicitation; he would enter into a learned discussion of any subject under the sun, listening to another man's points with impatient courtesy and producing his own with courteous authority. And, invariably, he illustrated his theses with some outrageous incidents that had befallen him in foreign parts: the Headwaters of the Nile, the Cordilleras of Patagonia, or any dam' place so long as it was far enough off. Ay faith! the finest company in all Dublin while the bout lasted. . . . But let a veil be drawn. . . .

Thirty hours was his dead limit. At midnight on Sunday he slipped away like the Arab of old, steady as a rock on his feet; took the



three turns on to the Quays wide and easy; crossed the Liffey by the Butt Bridge; perambulated the three miles out to Sandymount; and so to bed.

And on Monday morning he shaved and bathed, clothed himself in official buckram, and sedately proceeded to his devastating pursuit of useless ratiocination for another month.

But take note of this: from the time that he had reached his fourth drink on Saturday evening until he waked up on Monday morning he suffered a complete blackout: a blankness like a wall where no faintest shadow of memory was ever cast. Let it be.

Timmy's other little proclivity was a real hobby. He was a hopologist. Hopology! There is

a Society, with world-wide correspondents, called *The Right Worshipful Company of Hopologists*. The word hopologist is from the Greek, of course, and it means a collector of weapons — not firearms, but swords and similar instruments of evil: every class of weapon to slit a throat, cleave a head or pierce a wame.

Up in the double-attic of the house at Sandymount, Timmy had a sample of every blame weapon you could put a name to, and some you never heard of: broadsword, claymore, sabre, cutlass, rapier, small-sword, falchion, scimitar, yataghan, talwar, kukri, kvis, sumarai halberd, battle-axe, assegai, and I don't know how many more, arranged in patterns on the wall, catalogued and cross-indexed in Civil Service fashion,

and with a history attached, where possible.

He had a rust-eaten iron sword that Sigurd of Caithness bore at the battle of Clontarf in 1014 before Murrough slew him; he had a Dervish spear that had killed a 21st Lancer in the gorge at Omdurman, and had gone within an ace — Ochone, the day! — of killing Winston Churchill, who was a war correspondent at the time: he had an Andrea Ferrara that had flashed down the line at Fontenoy and fallen from the dead hand of a clansman on Culloden Moor; he had — I don't know all he had, but they were a blood-thirsty collection sure enough; and Timmy used to handle and gloat over them in blood-thirsty day-dreams.

There was, however, one notorious weapon that he had not got, and that he, or any hopologist the world over, would give half his collection to possess. That was the personal sword of one of the Chinese Emperors — the Doom Sword — the Blade of a Thousand Cuts — the sword that was never drawn except to destroy evil.

There is mention of thirteen of these all down history and tradition. Four of them have never been identified; eight of them are in museums or private collections; the thirteenth — the sword of Yung Lo, the son of Chu Yuan-Chang of the Ming Dynasty —

was looted from a palace in Peking that time Chinese Gordon set out to show the Oriental the benefits of opium and Western Civilization.

Timmy's notion was that the sword had been swiped by a British soldier and, ultimately, it might be found hanging about in some old manor house of military tradition anywhere in England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland — and Ireland for choice; for sure an Irish soldier would loot the cross off an ass's back in foreign parts.

That is why Timmy took a day off to visit every auction of old houses and old furnishings within reach of Dublin.

Now we are coming to the crux. On a certain Saturday, Timmy caught a bus that took him down to view an old house and furniture up for auction on the Wexford border. The forefathers of that old house had been with Cromwell at Clonnel, and William at Steenkirk, and Marlborough at Malplaquet — and, finally, with Chinese Gordon in the opium wars. And, of course, there was a bundle of old weapons tied with a piece of rope.

You know well what happened. Dambut! the Sword of Doom was in that careless bundle of old iron.

The bundle was propped in a corner of the big hall amongst a lot of old junk. At the back of the

bundle a tall hilt stood up from the other hilts: a two-handed hilt without a guard, and it was that hilt-without-a-guard that gave Timmy his first flaming hint of the prize. He couldn't believe his eyes.

Was it too good to be true? But true it was, and in two minutes Timmy made sure, his heart beating hard and high.

He knew all there was to be known about Yung Lo's sword: the guardless hilt, with the two little ivory household gods of the Emperor caught under the guilt wrapping, the Emperor's sign-writing bitten deep on the back of the blade just below the hilt, the shallow channel at each side of the heavy back, the half-inch of curvature on the lower half of the blade, the square-cut tip: they were all there.

Timmy drew eighteen inches of the blade from its sheath, gave the hilt a little jerk, and listened for a dulled tinkle. He heard it. That was the final proof, for the tinkle came from a sealed, longitudinal chamber in the back of the blade below the point of balance, where steel pellets ran free in a ball-race, so as to add power to the slash.

As usual, the junk was kept for the end, and the bundle of swords was the final item put up for sale. The auctioneer would have put up the bundle at any time if Timmy had approached him, but

Timmy did not, for he was afraid of attracting attention to his find.

About dusk the auctioneer made a washing motion with his hands. Devil the thing he knew about hoplology, but he would be facetious after the manner of his tribe.

"The final item, ladies and gents, and someone is due for a bargain." His voice rang clear but hoarse, and no wonder. "Here now is a historic set of bone-breakers: the sword of Brian Boru, who knows! or the slasher of our noble Sarsfield, or Wolfe Tone's stainless blade! Who'll bid me twenty pounds the lot?"

Some dealer chuckled.

"Come on! I'm not waiting. Start the ball rolling with fifteen quid? Ten? Five then? No! Very well then! I'll not waste any more time. Who'll bid me a pound?"

Timmy lifted a quiet forefinger.

"A pound, sir!" The auctioneer smashed down his mallet. "A bargain I said, and a bargain it is. They are yours for a pound. Take them away, sir — and kill your man with any of them."

Timmy paid his pound, and wrestled the bundle of swords. They weighed like the very devil too, but the bus stop was at the lodge gates only a hundred yards away. However, before he got there he came on a thick clump of shrubbery. Without hesitation he dodged round to the back of it, extracted his royal sword care-

fully, and carelessly tossed its humble companions under the overhang of a bush. Then he fitted his sword of doom under the wing of his overcoat, with the long hilt standing up by his ear, and away with him back to Dublin, exultation bubbling in him.

It was six o'clock on a rainy October evening when he got there, but the high spirit in him did not mind the rain. The occasion surely called for a bit of a celebration, and for a start he treated himself to a slap-up meal in Jaminet's: milk-fed chicken and Limerick ham, washed down by a tall bottle of Liebfraumilch 1934, a good year and a heady wine.

At first he had intended to ring up Emer to join him; and then he decided not to; and after a while he was glad he hadn't. And I'll tell you why.

It had been his intention, also, to go straight home after his meal, and bestow his precious sword in a safe place. But, as I said, Liebfraumilch is a heady wine and, already, the revived little maggots of desire were wriggling in Timmy's brain and spinal column. And as is the way with men in the early stages of thirst, he made excuses to himself. He wanted the boys to see and admire his find, and he'd stay only one hour anyway.

So he went down to the wash-room in Jaminet's, removed his gent's collar, twisted a silk hand-

kerchief loosely about his neck, knocked a dent in his respectable bowler hat; and hied himself down by the Quays, his sword under coat and the hilt by his cheek. And begged, sir! already the little idol gods under the lacing were beginning to whisper: queer, guttural little mutterings right into the drum of his ear.

Timmy took his three turns as usual, slipped through a lounge door and, took his seat in his usual quiet corner. He laid his sword on the scarred board, and lifted one finger.

Timmy did not reach his fourth ball o' malt tonight. At the third he rose majestically to his feet, reached for the two-handed hilt. The rich voice resounded.

"Gentlemen, behold the Doom Sword of Yung Lo, son of Chu Yuan-Chang, Emperor of China! Let me demonstrate."

The great sword came swooping out of its broken sheath, and every man there got out from under.

One thing is certain: that night will not be soon forgotten in that low pub. By a miracle, no blood was shed. There was harangue that went back and forth over ten centuries; there were recountings of strange and bloody incidents, and there were demonstrations to the risk of life and limb. The only neck that suffered was the neck of a Gold Label whiskey bottle, and that went clean as a whistle through a mirror at a cost to

Timmy of thirty bob. Bedad sir! it was an ignoble performance for a sword that had never been wielded but for the extirpation of evil.

The pledged hour went by, and ten more with it. Indeed, the usual time went by, and at midnight Timmy slipped away as usual, still biled as an owl, but as steady as an archbishop on his feet.

The rain was coming down heavens-hard; and Timmy pulled his coat collar about his ears and snuggled his cheek against the sword hilt. And again he heard little guttural murmurings in his ear.

You will not believe this. It might only have been the drink talking in Timmy but, as sure as death, the mutterings of the idol-gods were no longer indistinct; he could pick out words and phrases.

Chang in one blow — Kuo-Sing, and a thousand cuts — still I thirst — all knots I cut — give me air and a neck of evil — air and a neck of evil. Over and over again. And it might be possible, if only dimly, that there came to Timmy the thought of a neck of evil. . . .

He came round by the long façade of the Custom House, where the tall lamps glistened on the pavements and glistened on the roily waters of the turbid and turgid Liffey. One of Guinness' steamboats, piled high with porter

barrels, was moored close to the quay wall ready to go out with the morning tide. The rain was still pouring, and no one, not even a cat, moved on the glaring asphalt.

Wrong. Two men moved. Timmy was one, and another man also. As Timmy faced towards the parapet, another man came round it from the bridge. And that man was his twin brother, Larry.

Larry was bareheaded, and his black hair gleamed wetly under the lamp. However drink had besotted his mind, it had never coarsened his body. He was a lean limb of Satan, with gleaming black eyes and a strangely austere mouth: a distinguished-looking devil, as many devils are.

The two brothers, the big and the little, stopped and faced each other. The only sounds were the quiet sough of the falling rain, and a thin, cold tinkle of raindrops from the railway bridge high overhead. And in that waiting hush, Timmy heard an urgent whisper in his ear: *The evil neck only! Give me the air.* That was the whisper.

Then Larry spoke, throwing up his hands in pleased surprise, and there was pleasure and surprise in his voice too: "Well, oh well! My lucky night, and no doubt about it—brother Tim on the loose, and myself in need of him."

Ay, his lucky night! Timmy said nothing, for he was trying to

draw his mind away from the alluring whisper in his ear: *For the neck of evil I take the air.*

"Sure I ought to have known you were my twin under the skin," said Larry. "Mandear, have you anything good in mind?"

"Good or evil—I do not know," said Timmy deeply.

"A matter of outlook, the same good or evil," said Larry agreeably, and his hand moved invitingly. "There's a place I know not far from here, and you can make your own choice. Come along with me, you gay devil!"

"I will not come with you." Timmy's voice was strong and definite, and then low and urgent. "Go your own road, you blind fool — and go now."

"Ah-ha! You're on a trail of your own, are you? Very well so!" Larry was still agreeable, but now came promptly to his own need, one hand out confidently. "Would you have the loan of a fiver for me, Timmy boy?"

"I have not," said Timmy, shaking his head against the insidious murmur that would not be silent.

"Murder alive!" cried Larry. "But surely you'll have a quid or two to help me over the night?"

"I have no money on me," said Timmy, and that was true. And some small, sane inner self was crying desperately: *Oh God! if I only had a pound for him he would go away.*

"You're a bloody liar!" said Larry warmly. "You were never short of a fiver in all your born days."

"Tonight I am," said Timmy, and his voice lifted. "Get out of my road!"

Quickly he took two paces aside, but alas! Larry was just as quick; and again the two brothers faced each other, almost breast to breast.

Timmy drew in his breath hissing, and his hands came up towards the long hilt. But at the last moment sanity flashed again; his hands dropped, and he took two paces backwards. Behind him was the Liffey, and the edge of the quay not three yards away.

Larry thrust his head forward, and put his hands on his hips. Here was threat of rebellion. Poor Timeen! All the times he had threatened revolt, and all the times he had caved in — as he would cave in now.

"You haven't drink taken, Timeen?" he inquired half-mockingly.

"Buckets," said Timmy. And buckets was right.

Larry laughed unbelievably. He had never seen Timmy under the influence, in that queer, insanely sober state beyond the far edge of mere drunkenness.

"Wherever you got the courage," said Larry, "you will not deny your brother for the first

time in your life."

"Ten years ago I should have denied you," said Timmy. And in a flash he realized what a desolation those ten years had been, a desolation where two frustrated lives had moved forlornly on broken wings, and where he himself had been driven to drinking for the surcease of misery.

Is he going to be troublesome — I don't want to manhandle the little tomcat, said Larry to himself. He took a quick glance up and down the quays to see if the coast was clear, and it was. Unluckily for someone, the coast was clear. Then he turned to Timmy and took a stride forward.

"Take one other step," said Timmy warningly. He braced his legs, and his hands came up chin

high. And the whisper in his ear: "*The air now — now — now!*"

"You and your foolish old gut-sticker!" sneered Larry, anger rising in him. "Very well then! You go your way, and I go mine, a fiver in my pocket." His voice snarled. "Out with it!"

"Go your own road, you doomed fool!" said Timmy throatily.

And then, a flame of insane rage leaped in Larry, as it will leap in a man long soaked in alcohol. His hands and his voice lifted, and the power of words came to him.

"You ungrateful pup dog, that I cherished in my bosom all your useless days! You destroyer of house and home, that set me wandering the streets, a damn'd soul! You hanger-on to the apron

strings of another man's wife!
You twin-brother to a cuckold!
Do you know what I am going to
do to you now? Shake the last
farthing out of you, and pitch
your miserable carcass into the
Liffey tide."

"You foul-mouthed liar —"

That is all that Timmy had
time to say, for Larry launched
forward, his hands out to clutch
and wrench.

But Timmy was not there.
Timmy side-stepped lithe as an
eel, and Larry stopped himself a
stride from the edge of the quay,
unbalanced for a moment, head
and hands thrown forward.

Something flashed in the air;
something gave an exultant dou-
ble-cry; something, of its own
volition, swooped and checked -



"Anything wild?"

and swooped on. The force of that
terrific swoop whirled Timmy
round, and round again. He stag-
gered, balanced precariously, and
steadied himself on the very edge
of the quay. He was looking down
into the water. The water flowed
sternly, turbidly, and heaved it-
self sullenly against the stern of
the steamer moored against the
quay wall. And the only thing
that moved was the water.

Timmy straightened up and
turned round. He was alone. Up
and down the wide quay nothing
moved.

"My God! what mad vision was
that?" he said aloud.

On Monday morning Timmy
awoke out of a dreamless sleep;
and, as usual, his mind was a
blank wall where no faintest
shadow was cast of anything that
had befallen since his third whis-
key on Saturday; nor did any
weight of gloom press on him
from the unconscious.

But he remembered his Sword
of Doom all right. There it was,
laid carefully along the top of his
dressing table. He got out of bed,
and examined it with growing
satisfaction. The veritable article,
as he could prove to any envious
hopologist who dared to chal-
lenge. And no damn'd Communist
government could claim the sword
either.

The hilt and the devilish little
gods were still damp from the

night's rain; so was the broken sheath; so was the blade when he drew it; and one faint, pinkish-orange stain was drying in one of the grooves. Timmy did not even speculate as to what that stain might be. He went to the bathroom, cleaned and polished the sword, and hung it in the hot-press so that it would dry out thoroughly.

Thereafter he shaved and bathed, attired himself in official buckram, ate a hearty breakfast, told Emer of his find, glanced at the morning paper, and proceeded decorously to his devastating, many-branched, but fruitless labours.

Listen now, you remember that Guinness boat by the quay wall. It cast off that morning to take Dublin stout to thirsty Anglo-Saxons. The propellor blades threshed for two seconds, checked and stuck, and stayed stuck. So they sent an investigator down to see what the trouble was. Within an hour a diver discovered

the gruesome cause of the stoppage. Within another hour the poor mangled remains were on the quay wall. The threshing scoop of a propellor blade was not merciful to frail humanity. An arm was torn away, so was a foot. *The head was also missing.*

A nameless body? No. A few sodden papers and an envelope or two gave name and address. And so, early that afternoon Emer and Timmy identified the remains. That was not so difficult. There was a broken finger badly set, and there was a characteristic mole below the left shoulder blade. Timmy, the twin, had a similar mole in the same place. And Timmy, the twin, had no inkling as to how his brother had died.

He had no inkling then. And he has no inkling now. And he has not taken a single ball o' malt since that fateful week-end. He no longer feels the craving for one. But if ever he downs four balls o' malt one on top of the other . . . ? I wonder!