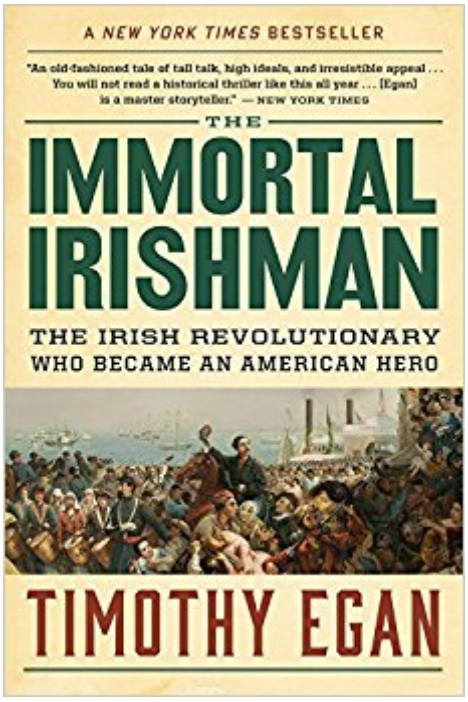
The Immortal Irishman: The Irish Revolutionary Who Became An American Hero



Synopsis

"An old-fashioned tale of tall talk, high ideals,and irresistible appeal . . . You will not read a historical thriller like this all year . . . [Egan] is aÂ master storyteller."Â â ”Boston Globe â œEgan has a gift for sweeping narrative . . . and he has a journalistâ ™s eye for the telltale detail . . . This is masterly work.â • â ” New York Times Book Review Â In this exciting and illuminating work, National Book Award winner Timothy Egan delivers a story, both rollicking and haunting, of one of the most famous Irish Americans of all time. A dashing young orator during the Great Hunger of the 1840s, Thomas Francis Meagher led a failed uprising against British rule, for which he was banished to a Tasmanian prison colony for life. But two years later he was â œback from the deadâ • and in New York, instantly the most famous Irishman in America. Meagherâ ™s rebirth included his leading the newly formed Irish Brigade in many of the fiercest battles of the Civil War. Afterward, he tried to build a new Ireland in the wild west of Montanaâ ”a quixotic adventure that ended in the Â great mystery of his disappearance, which Egan resolves convincingly at last. Â â œThis is marvelous stuff. Thomas F. Meagher strides onto Egan's beautifully wrought pages just as he livedâ ”powerfully larger than life. A fascinating account of an extraordinary life.â • â ” Daniel James Brown, author of The Boys in the Boat Â â œThomas Meagherâ ™s is an irresistible story, irresistibly retold by the virtuosic Timothy Egan . . . A gripping, novelistic page-turner.â • â ” Wall Street Journal Â

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Customer Reviews

â œWithout a shadow of doubt this is one of the finest Irish-American books ever writtenâ |.What Egan has done is restore the reputation and uncovered a host of details on a man I would venture to say had no peer in our history of Irish Americaâ |.Eganâ ™s take on Irish-American history gives this book a breadth and significance that would be very hard to match.â • â ”Niall Oâ ™Dowd,Â Irish America "This is marvelous stuff. Thomas F. Meagher strides onto Egan's beautifully wrought pages just as he livedâ ”powerfully larger than life. A fascinating account of an extraordinary life." â ”Daniel James Brown, author of The Boys in the Boat, Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Olympics "A fascinating, well-told story by an author fully committed to his subject. Egan's impeccable research, uncomplicated readability, and flowing narrative reflect his deep knowledge of a difficult and complex man."Â â ”Kirkus Reviews, starred review "As history, Eganâ ™s book is solid; as storytelling, itâ ™s captivating . . . An impressive biography." â ”Publishers Weekly "Meagher lived life full-tilt, with old-fashioned honor as well as courage and dash, so inspiring Egan that the prose flashes and flares . . . "Â â ”Booklist, starred review Â "Just in time for St. Paddy's Day comes this sensational bio."â ”AARP The Magazine â œThomas Meagherâ ™s is an irresistible story, irresistibly retold by the virtuosic Timothy Egan . . . The author tells Meagherâ ™s exhilarating story with an Irishmanâ ™s flair for the tragic, poetic and dramatic . . . A gripping, novelistic page-turnerâ |. Imperfect but irresistible, Meagher has long deserved a revival and reappraisal. For sure, he has a rousing one now.â • -- The Wall Street Journal â œStirring and magnificent . . . Egan combines deep reporting with masterful storytelling to chronicle this bigger-than-life figure.â • -- Dallas Morning News "Exhilarating . . . a rollicking, historical adventure story . . . You may not have heard the name Meagher, but after reading Eganâ ™s excellent biography, youâ ™ll never forget it." -- San Antonio Express News "AnÂ old-fashioned tale of tall talk, high ideals, and irresistible appeal . . .You will not read a historical thriller like this all yearâ | [Egan] is a master storyteller.â • -- The Boston Globe "Egan has a gift for sweeping narrative . . . and he has a journalistâ ™s eye for the telltale detail . . . This is masterly work.â • -- The New York Times Book Review --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

TIMOTHY EGANÂ is a Pulitzer Prizeâ “winning reporter, aÂ New York TimesÂ columnist, winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for excellence in nonfiction.Â His previous books includeÂ The Worst Hard Time,Â which won a National Book Award, and the national bestsellerÂ The Big Burn.Â He lives in Seattle, Washington.Â

There are some books that are so well written, that bring the people and the time in which they live

so brilliantly, that illumine so many events and issues, that help you, in short, to better understand our world and how it was formed, that you simply want to grab your friends and tell them in your most impassioned voice,"You must read this book." And while I have grabbed no friends, I have told several how absolutely splendid this book is. The response, in every case, has been disinterest. Thomas Francis Meagher? Who is he? Why haven't I heard of him before?This is a case where one needs to trust the author. Timothy Egan is one of our finest nonfiction writers, and while a couple of his books - especially his outstanding book on the Dust Bowl disaster of the 1930s - are on topics of broad interest, he sometimes has taken up subjects things we need to know about rather than think we want to know. And such is this book about Thomas Francis Meagher. Although he died relatively young, Meagher's live sweeps through some of the key events in Irish and American history. Born into a relatively well-to-do family in Ireland - something of a miracle given the extreme oppression of the Irish by the English, where extreme resistance to English rule could lead to death or being sold into slavery in either the Caribbean or the southern Colonies. The first chapter, on the history of the subjugation and cruel and systematic abuse of the Irish by the British, is a marvel of compressed history. There is not a paragraph that isn't fascinating, while the book lays out the world into which Meagher was born. While many of the priests who were his teachers and his parents cautioned patience in the face of British occupation - which meant lesser British lords living on lands that had previously belonged to the Irish who eked out lives in enforced poverty, Meagher constantly asked why the Irish put up with it. And it is his refusal to tolerate what he saw as injustice that drove his life.Every section of this book details a new chapter in Meagher's life, which also happens to be a chapter in the life of the place in which he lives. After first showing his resistance to English rule and his violent opposition to it, we see him in the United States, where the almost equally vexing treatment of the Irish by American immigrants who had established themselves in the country a bit earlier than these Irish newcomers. Egan's attempt to gain respect comes together with his repudiation of Southern slavery is the book's longest section - and the one that will be of the greatest general interest (if one of my other friends asks, I'll simply tell them that it is a book on one of the Civil War's most colorful military leaders) - tells of Meagher's not insubstantial role in the American Civil War, where he became commander of the famed Irish Brigade, which brought a degree of respect and acceptance they had not achieved before. Not that all Americans accepted the Irish overnight, but American's have always respected its war heroes, and now there were Irish ones.The final chapter of Meagher's life shows him and his wife going to North Dakota - which was far wilder and more rustic than when Teddy Roosevelt visited it a couple of decades later - as governor of the area. If one sees Meagher as a Quixote, always tilting against windmills, the

vigilantism in the territory was more than he could oppose, and it might possibly have led to his mysterious death only a couple of years after the end of the Civil War. The book begins with the event. Meagher on the deck of a paddle boat at the head waters of the Missouri. He falls off the deck of the boat ad drowns. It is a mystery that has never been solved, though Egan takes a gallant and fairly convincing stab at resolving it.But the sheer scope of the story of Meagher, who was renowned for his ability to sway his fellows and in a land where great oratory made people the equivalent of today's rock stars (albeit, without the sex, drugs, or rock and roll, though with all the fame, celebrity, and packed houses where they spoke), is truly epic. Meagher stood out as one of the great public speakers of the age, and his heroism on the battlefield makes him a major, if peripheral figure in that conflict. But the genius of this books is how much it makes us understand so many things. The Irish Question. Resistance to English rule. Migration to America. The abuse of the Irish in the United States. The reasons why many went to war against the South. The Question of Slavery. The Civil War itself, along with many of its greatest battles. The end of the War. Western expansion. And we finally learn just how wild the wild west could be. All these aspects of Irish and American life are masterfully told, in a prose that carries us easily from one page to the next.If you read this book, it is possible that you will read a better one in the coming year. Possible, but not likely. I doubt that the book will garner Mr. Egan another National Book Award. Members of the award committee are apt to react as I did when I first had the opportunity to read this: Thomas Francis who? But while the book most definitely tells the story of one of the great Irish and Irish-American political activists, it also tells the stories of Ireland and America itself, and reveals things about both countries that most readers - and certainly this reader - had not previously known or understood. This is very likely going to stand as one of my favorite books of 2016 and I could, I would rush up to you in person and say straight to your face, "You must read this book." So do it.

This is the story of Thomas Francis Meagher (Ã¢Â ÂœMarÃ¢Â Â•), an Irishman born into an affluent and privileged Irish Catholic family on August 3, 1823 in the ancient town of Waterford. In those times the very idea of an Ã¢Â Âœaffluent and privileged Irish Catholic familyÃ¢Â Â• was most extraordinary in a country where the natives were totally dominated by British overlords. However, ThomasÃ¢Â Â™ grandfather had emigrated to Newfoundland in the late 18th Century and made a relative fortune in business ventures there. He included his son- ThomasÃ¢Â Â™ father- in these businesses and the family returned to Ireland with substantial wealth. But their position was not typical.Over the years of English rule, the Irish people had been stripped of almost everything. As the author described the situation:Ã¢Â ÂœYou knew a town had been built by the hands of your

ancestors, the quarry of origin for the stones pressed into those streets, and you were forbidden from inhabiting it. You could not enter a court of law as anything but a criminal or a snitch. You could not worship your God, in a church open to the public, without risking prison or public flogging. You could not attend school, at any level, even at home. And if your parents sent you out of the country to be educated, you could not return. You could not marry, conduct trade or go into business with a Christian Protestant. You could not have a foster child. If orphaned, you were forced into a home full of people who rejected your faith. You could not play your favorite sportsÃ¢Â Â”hurling was specifically prohibited. You could not own land in more than 80 percent of your country; the bogs, barrens and highlands were your haunts. You could not own a horse worth more than Ã Â£5 sterling. If you married an Englishman, you would lose everything upon his death. You could not speak your language outside your home.Ã¢Â Â•One could also be imprisoned for expressions of Irish folklore or native art. Indeed, playing the harp was forbidden.A series of laws had brought Ireland to this state. Following an uprising in 1641 the English sent Oliver Cromwell to punish the Irish, which he did with great ferocity. Under the resulting Ã¢Â ÂœAct of SettlementÃ¢Â Â•, Cromwell and his supporters seized more than half of all the good land in Ireland. Later, under the Ã¢Â ÂœKilkenny statutes, the English stripped the Irish of their sports and culture; and with the Penal laws they took their religion. But Thomas grew up without experiencing such privation. He was well educated and in fact attended Stonyhurst College, a prestigious school in England. There he was given a decidedly English education by the attendant Jesuit priests. He thrived in many respects, finding a true talent for oratory. But he also noticed with displeasure the lack of teaching on any subjects Irish. He returned home to Waterford in 1843, when he was but twenty. He saw that things had changed. The harsh Penal laws had been ended some years before by the passage of the Roman Catholic Relief Laws in 1829, allowing urban land to be owned by Catholics. Voting rights were at least restored to the wealthy and this new freedom saw the election of a Catholic mayor of WaterfordÃ¢Â Â”ThomasÃ¢Â Â™ father. Thomas also found that young Irishmen and women recognized that real change would be more revolutionary. These leaders, particularly Thomas David and William Smith OÃ¢Â Â™Brien, both Protestants, had founded Ã¢Â ÂœThe NationÃ¢Â Â•, a journal publishing articles, but largely verse that was critical of the British. Thomas was drawn to this group, and, with his rising voice, found both an outlet and a following for his views. He knew that his life was not to be the one of privilege and affluence that awaited him, but one driven by a revolutionary sense of justice. His people were still personally oppressed and relegated to the roles of tenant famers tending small plots only fertile enough to grow potatoes. They were desperately poor, while the English, holding all the best land, grew large quantities of

grains, and also raised cattle and pigs. The contrast was insufferable, and became more so as the year 1845 dawned. That summer was hot and dry and it suddenly became evident that many of the potato plants were turning black. They had developed a blight, perhaps imported on foodstuffs brought in from America. The infamous Irish Potato Famine had begun. The crops were decimated not only in 1845, but into the following years at least to 1848. Potatoes were almost the sole source of food for most poor Irish, and the failure of the crop was devastating. First, thousands, then tens of thousands, and finally, probably millions perished in one of the worst human disasters in Western history. And yet, while scores were dying, Ireland was an exporter of food- the corn, grains and meats grown and raised by the English who controlled the best lands. Indeed, famine ravaged Ireland exported more beef than any other part of the Empire. There was literally starvation within the midst of plenty. But England chose to let the Irish starve rather than provide free relief. This was not only a result of the English view of the Irish as almost subhuman creatures, but also due to an almost religious belief in the free market. It was just such a free market adherent, Charles Trevelyan, who was appointed to address the Irish situation. He was at least convinced that the Irish needed food- there were many in England who thought, despite horrendous reports to the contrary, that the Irish were simply exaggerating to get a handout- , but also convinced that they would have to pay for it, Ã¢Â Âœso as not to upset the hand of private enterpriseÃ¢Â Â•. Of course the Irish, already poor, and now starving and bereft of the crop that could supply them from their own labors, had no money. The Ã¢Â ÂœreliefÃ¢Â Â• efforts were a failure, and the starvation continued until the blight had run its course. Thomas and his young counterparts could not abide the gross injustice of the British and the threatened destruction of the Irish culture. They railed against the British, called for a cessation of the export of food, and encouraged the people to rise up if relief were not granted. Meagher in particular had a large and growing following, and planned a huge uprising in 1848. However, the British were neither ignorant of the threats nor idle in their response. In the midst of the growing furor they passed new laws making it a crime to be an Irish nationalist. The penalty was Ã¢Â ÂœtransportationÃ¢Â Â•- banishing the offender to the distant colonies, never to be seen again. Meagher was convicted for his revolutionary actions and sent from his native land. His time in a distant penal colony was the next chapter in his turbulent life.BEING IRISH IN A PENAL COLONYMany of MaegherÃ¢Â Â™s revolutionary partners were also convicted and subject to Ã¢Â ÂœtransportationÃ¢Â Â•. They found their way to Van DiemenÃ¢Â Â™s Land, the territory now known as Tasmania. This was the worst of the penal colonies in the Australian territory, populated by a large percentage of criminals and few untainted settlers. Conditions here were extremely harsh for the convicts, but the young Irishmen, having gained a measure of celebrity in their homeland and

elsewhere, were treated much less harshly than their less privileged counterparts. Most significantly, they were given the option of spending their exile in jail cells, or allowed to settle in designated territories so long as they gave their words not to try to escape. Maegher opted for the latter and ended up settled in the small town of Ross.Although his compatriots were in similar situations, none of them were allowed to leave their districts to have contact with one another. Maegher thwarted this restriction to some degree by meeting his neighbor, Kevin OÃ¢Â Â™Doherty, on a small bridge that formed the boundary of their adjoining districts. Thus, they could set up a table and lunch together while still remaining in their own designated space. But except for such rare occasions, Maegher was essentially alone, only coming in contact with a few settlers who barely spoke to him. He received some monetary support from home and was able to build a small house and buy both a horse and a dog. He found much of the land beautiful, and enjoyed his trips into nature with his four legged friends, but such stimulation was not enough. He had no purpose, and he was clearly unable to continue his fight for a free Ireland. He was physically robust form his activities, but his soul was failing.Then he had a chance encounter with a landowner who employed a governess for his children. Her name was Catherine Bennett, herself the daughter of a convicted felon. She was 18years old with striking good looks, although not his intellectual equal. But he fell in love and his loneliness was relieved by her presence. His preoccupation with her uplifted his downtrodden soul and made his heretofore dull existence more exciting. They married on February 22, 1851. He then began a new life as a farmer and husband. His small cottage took on CatherineÃ¢Â Â™s warmer, softer touches. Thomas worked his land with a convict, Tom Egan, who was essentially a hired hand. But married life only provided a short diversion from ThomasÃ¢Â Â™ underlying passion to do something of meaning. Under a pen name he began writing pieces critical of the English governance of the island, which were published in a local paper. He and many of his Ã¢Â ÂœYoung IrelandÃ¢Â Â• comrades won over many of the local residents and, despite their status of felons under the Crown, gained some celebrity among the free settlers.Despite his marriage, and against his given word of not escaping, Maegher ultimately decided to attempt to flee the island and find his way to America. Such a journey took elaborate planning, which Maegher plotted with help from others on the island and his family back in Ireland. After formally dispatching a note to the Governor that he was disavowing his promise not to escape, he took off from his home, leaving his now pregnant wife, with plans for their reunion in America. After a perilous ride to the coast, he was transferred by a small boat to a barren island where he hoped to link up quickly with a sailing vessel that had been enlisted to aid his journey. He ended up spending 10 days before the ship- the Elizabeth Thompson- appeared on the horizon and picked up its passenger. A new chapter had

begun.BEING IRISH IN AMERICAMeagher arrived in New York after many months at sea. He was quickly struck by at least three stark realities. First were the miserable conditions that thousands of Irish were subjected to in the Five Points slum of New York. Perhaps nothing in London was as desperate as this crowded filthy slum. Yet the people did have some hope springing from their new land. Second, Maegher learned that his son, born during his absence, died only a few weeks after his birth. Third, he had to find a way to make a living.The last was dealt with quickly. Maegher arrived in the new world with a great deal of celebrity. He was known as the great orator of his generation and found that he was sought out for speaking engagements which both enhanced his status and his pocketbook. In addition, many of the young revolutionaries he knew in Ireland were also in New York and offered opportunities as well. These educated young men were not submerged in the slums of Five Points, but instead esconched in more prosperous locations, with jobs as lawyers, writers, etc. But Maegher not only wanted to attain some financial security, he also wished to pursue his dream of both a free Ireland, and a better place for his countrymen in their adopted land. He became the one whom others looked upon to unite the Irish and finally gain freedom for their homeland. He wanted to also be an American, and applied for citizenship in August of 1852. His rousing speeches energized many. Not surprisingly, they also generated backlash from anti-immigrant, and virulently anti-Irish, anti-Catholic groups, particularly those affiliated with the growing Ã¢Â ÂœKnow NothingÃ¢Â Â• party. As in the past, he would be up to the task of weathering such opposition.Meanwhile, his wife Catherine sailed off for Ireland, arriving in June of 1853. She stayed with MaegherÃ¢Â Â™s father, who treated her like a lost daughter. The two of them set sail for America and a visit with Thomas. When they arrived it had been four years since Thomas had seen his father and 19 months since he had kissed his wife. Catherine was not enamored by New York, and much preferred the simple cottage in Tasmania. By the end of the sweltering New York summer she decided to return to Ireland with her father-in-law, to be reunited with her husband in the Spring. She was again pregnant when she left New York, and the child was born in May of 1854. Unfortunately, complications of the birth were more than Catherine could bear. She died on May 9, 1854 at the age of 22, and was buried in the Maegher plot in a cemetery in Waterford. Maegher, still a fugitive in his own country, was now unable to either visit his wifeÃ¢Â Â™s grave or see his newborn son- Thomas Bennett Maegher.In the coming months Maegher would be tormented by events. The last three of Young IrelandÃ¢Â Â™s prominent convicts- MaegherÃ¢Â Â™s colleagues, William Smith OÃ¢Â Â™Brien, John Martin, and Kevin OÃ¢Â Â™Doherty, who had stayed in Tasmania- were pardoned by the Crown. Now Maegher found himself still banished from Ireland while his compatriots were free to return. Anti-Irish

sentiment was also being further flamed by the Know-Nothings, now the second largest political party in the nation, and the arch enemy of Maegher. Thomas also had to still deal with criticism from the Catholic Church, which he had criticized for its interference with European campaigns for democracy. He became despondent and started to drink. But, just as he was continuing his slide, a new light entered his life- Elizabeth Townsend.Ã¢Â ÂœShe was twenty-four, self-confident, bright, witty, with trellises of raven-black hair and the kind of smile that could prompt a grin from the grumpyÃ¢Â Â”dimples, implying something more.Ã¢Â Â• They could not be more unalike in a cultural sense. He was an Irish Catholic revolutionary and a convicted felon, banned from his homeland. She was an Anglo-Saxon Protestant, the progeny of refined Yankee bloodlines. ElizabethÃ¢Â Â™s father was no fan of Maegher or the Irish in general. He had brought up his daughters to be among their Ã¢Â Âœown kindÃ¢Â Â•. For him, a Townsend could never be a Catholic; the family was a pillar of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Despite these differences, they became inseparable by the end of 1954, and were married on November 14, 1855. Maegher set out to be the type of man his father-in-law could be proud of. He studied for and passed the bar, becoming a successful criminal lawyer, his oratorical skills now of value in moving the hearts and minds of jurors. He also became a citizen under a process that allowed immigrants to naturalize after five years. He was poised to become a respected member of the New York community, but soon, more ominous events would alter that trajectoryÃ¢Â Â”the country was splitting apart, and Americans would soon be fighting one another.As the division in the country became more clear, Maegher began to speak out in support of preserving the union. However, he did not speak out, at least initially, against slavery. He was a Democrat, and, of course, first and foremost an Irishman. Although he, and the Irish at home, sympathized with the oppressed, the Irish in America saw free blacks as competition for the lowly jobs that both groups were forced into. The inexorable rush to secession and division was assured by the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. By March of the next year more than half of the South had deserted the Union, and the war formally began with the shelling of Ft. Sumpter on April 12, 1861. Maegher felt a need to not only serve his new country, but also saw in such service the opportunity for the Irish to be better appreciated in America, and be a subsequent force for liberation of their homeland.Ã¢Â ÂœHis rallying cry was consistent: rarely a mention of slavery or Lincoln, but a fight for America coupled with the promise of an eventual fight for Ireland, using a battle-seasoned force to sail across the Atlantic.Ã¢Â Â• He would finally be able to do what he had failed to do in 1848. He recruited his fellow Irishmen to enlist in the nascent Union Army and form an Irish Brigade-the Irish 69th. He joined forces with Michael Corcoran, another recent immigrant who had already formed an Irish Militia. The larger force of Irish soldiers would first

prove their loyalty to the Union, as well as their bravery, and then move on to liberate Ireland. MeagherÃ¢Â Â™s fame and oratory skills enabled him to assemble a sizable force that would participate in what all in the Union thought would be a short battle against the rebellious states. The progression of the Civil War was tragically other than expected.Rather than the quick glory envisioned, Maegher witnessed a bloodletting unparalleled in American history. His Irish Brigade did fight valiantly, but much of its efforts were in virtual slaughters. From Bull Run to Chickahominy, the Peninsula, Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, the Irish Brigade exhibited renowned bravery, but suffered some of the largest casualty rates of any unit in the Union Army- more than 50%. Maegher had seen the horrors of war, without any lyric glory or poetic bravery. He had led his men, his countrymen, largely to their deaths. He at times turned to drink and his ebullience turned to despondency. The Irish had turned largely against the war. He resigned as the commander of what was left of the Irish Brigade in May of 1863. As the war bore on, and the slaves were freed, Maegher became vocal in his abolitionist views, something he had not done in the past. His people turned against him, and he was castigated in the Irish American press. He felt the need for a new environment and a new challenge. He found it in the Montana territory of the American West.He hoped that this move would provide Elizabeth and him with a new beginning, and perhaps lead to riches that would allow them to travel to France, where Maegher might meet with his father and his still unseen son. Not only were there stories of gold in Montana, he would also be able to take advantage of the 160 acres available to settlers under the Homestead Act. Now 41, Meagher left alone for Montana in preparation for Elizabeth joining him in the future. When he reached the Territory he discovered that President Johnson had appointed him the Ã¢Â ÂœSecretary of MontanaÃ¢Â Â•, the second highest office to the governor. He was met by the Governor, Sidney Edgerton. After a perfunctory greeting, Edgerton informed Maegher that he was returning East, and the Meagher would himself assume the title of Acting Governor. Along with this shocking information, Edgerton also informed Maegher that much of the Ã¢Â Âœjustice Ã¢Â Â• in Montana was meted out by a secret Ã¢Â ÂœVigilante CommitteeÃ¢Â Â•, strongly supported by Thomas Dinsdale, the editor of the Montana Post. He was a humorless Oxford Educated Englishman, probably of the sort Maegher was familiar with. The Committee operated under unwritten Ã¢Â Âœlaws of rightÃ¢Â Â• that were essentially what the Committee decided them to be. Numerous people were summarily arrested and executed when they violated these standards. Another member of the CommitteeÃ¢Â Â™s leadership was EdgertonÃ¢Â Â™s nephew, Wilbur Sanders. The Committee was also closely tied to the Masonic order.Maegher went to Virginia City, a dilapidated and isolated town that served as the capital of the territory. His

Ã¢Â Âœgovernor Ã¢Â Â™s mansion Ã¢Â Â• was a 500 square foot log cabin of Ã¢Â Âœpine patched with mud and clay, slightly off plumb, dark inside but for a few small windows***Ã¢Â Â• and a block from the main street. It was formerly a butcher Ã¢Â Â™s shop. Still without Elizabeth Ã¢Â Â™s company, and feeling both isolated and lonely, he threw himself into governing. In doing so he aggravated the territorial elites, and the members of the Committee, by opposing granting monopolies to a handful of businessmen for steamboat navigation and ownership of wagon trails. He further annoyed the same group by advocating for public schools that did not teach religion, a view buttressed by the history of his homeland. He also developed growing sympathy with the Native Americans, making the logical and emotional connection between their treatment and the long history of oppression of the Irish by the English. All of these views only further enraged his powerful opponents in the Committee, who began making subtle, and not so subtle, threats on Maegher Ã¢Â Â™s life. After all that he had faced, his resolve was steeled against such efforts at intimidation. Maegher then set up a citizen Legislature in the Territory, made up largely of populist Democrats, and saw that they passed many progressive pieces of legislation. Such work Ã¢Â Âœsent the vigilantes into fits Ã¢Â Â•. Despite Maegher Ã¢Â Â™s place as Ã¢Â Âœacting Governor Ã¢Â Â•, the vigilantes continued their arbitrary acts of execution.After a separation of almost a year, Elizabeth arrived in Montana on June 5, 1866. Their reunion brought joy to them both, but also conflict, as Maegher was essentially penniless. He had refused any pay from the Territory, demanding that any recompense come from the Federal Government, as was required. Any income was only from his speaking, which was much less frequent since his energies were thrown into governance. He still longed to be a man who brought honor to his people, and advanced the cause of the Irish whenever he could. He had been exhausted by his time as acting governor, was in bad health, and was anxious for the arrival of the new Ã¢Â Âœofficial governor Ã¢Â Â•, Green Clay Smith. However, Smith, like his predecessor, left the Territory three months after his arrival, and left Maegher once again as the Ã¢Â Âœacting Governor Ã¢Â Â•. Maegher was again burdened with governing, and also faced increased pressure from members of the Committee.His longtime nemesis, Wilbur Sanders, was gaining in political influence, He abhorred the legislation that Maegher had sponsored and passed, and, in an extraordinary and perhaps unprecedented step, lobbied the US Congress to overturn all of such laws, claiming that Maegher was a fraud. In one sweeping act the Congress nullified the legislative session of Montana, holding all the laws passed in the 1866 assembly to be null and void. By the summer of 1867 Maegher had grown weak from his travels through the Territory, and was so sick he could not keep his food down. Governor Smith was due to arrive soon, and Maegher longed for his return. He missed Ireland and longed to

see his son. He and Elizabeth had gained an appreciation for Montana, but looked forward to returning East and perhaps traveling to Europe for a speaking tour and explore any chance to return to Ireland. But he still had affairs to settle. One of them was the pay that he was due. On July 1st he arrived at Ft. Benton, at the junction of the Sun River and the Missouri. Still feeling ill, he had a light meal and then retired to a stateroom in a riverboat docked at the quay. The Missouri was still in full flow form the Spring melts. At about 10:00 PM there was a cry that someone had fallen overboardÃ¢Â Â”the only passenger being Maegher. His body was never found and the Ã¢Â Âœofficial accountÃ¢Â Â• of his death was a suicide. However, many never accepted that fact, and it was instead suspected that his enemies on the Committee had finally added him to their list of executions. The mystery was never resolved, although more recent investigation supports the claim that he was murdered.Elizabeth left the Territory in late summer, and never learned with certainty what fate had befallen Thomas. She returned East and, having been cut out of her fatherÃ¢Â Â™s will for marrying Thomas, spent her last years living modestly on a widowÃ¢Â Â™s Civil War pension. After the death of ThomasÃ¢Â Â™s father in 1874, she encouraged ThomasÃ¢Â Â™ son to come to the United States. He lived with her for a short time prior to her death in 1906. He eventually wandered west, and ended up living in the Philippines, where he died in 1909.This is a rather remarkable book about a remarkable life. What is ironic is that Maegher, by his own ambitions, failed at attaining his principle goal- seeing a free Ireland. Yet he remained a hero to not only his native Irish people but to many in his adopted land. What he did achieve, and maintain, was a consistency of character that was steadfast under the most challenging circumstances. The account of his life is well written and worth a thorough exploration of the authorÃ¢Â Â™s work.

This is an excellent biography by a terrific writer, a regular NY Times columnist who often covers issues related to US politics and culture, particularly in the West. His previous book Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher, is one of the best biographies I have ever read. This one is not up Shadow Catcher. I found some elements of the style here to be off putting - the book sometimes breaks into a contemporary conversational tone that I think puts one at a distance from the 19th century events. I felt a little like I was being pandered to. If you’re like me and never heard of Thomas Meagher before, you will wonder how you could have missed him. Meagher rose to fame as an orator during Ireland’s Great Famine, leading an uprising against British rule. Sentenced to "Transportation" he was shipped off, first to Australia and then to Tasmania. But he was able to escape, to the United States, since there was a price on his head in Ireland. During the Civil War, Meagher was a "political general" recruiting many Irishmen to serve in the Union Army. Following the war, he went west to

Montana and met his death under mysterious circumstances. Egan can’t really solve the mystery, but brings new evidence to the final chapter of the hero’s life. Really a rip roaring good read.

The Immortal Irishman: The Irish Revolutionary Who Became an American Hero Easy Irish Cookbook (Irish Cookbook, Irish Recipes, Irish Cooking, Scottish Recipes, Scottish Cooking, Scottish Cookbook 1) An Irish Country Cookbook: More Than 140 Family Recipes from Soda Bread to Irish Stew, Paired with Ten New, Charming Short Stories from the Beloved Irish Country Series (Irish Country Books) Irish 3 in 1 Bundle: How To Be Irish + Funny Feckin Irish Jokes + Filthy Feckin Irish Jokes DC Super Hero Girls: Past Times at Super Hero High (DC Super Hero Girls Graphic Novels) Irish Potato Cookbook: Traditional Irish Recipes (Traditional Irish Cooking) Irish Baking Book: Traditional Irish Recipes (Traditional Irish Cooking) Irish:: How To Be Irish + The Big Irish Cookbook The Business of America is Lobbying: How Corporations Became Politicized and Politics Became More Corporate (Studies in Postwar American Political Development) Was Gabo an Irishman?: Tales from Gabriel GarcÃ- a MÃ¡rquez’s Colombia "I Heard You Paint Houses", Updated Edition: Frank "The Irishman" Sheeran & Closing the Case on Jimmy Hoffa It’s a Long Way to Malta: An Irishman’s ’Gem in the Med’ There’s An Egg in my Soup: ... and other adventures of an Irishman in Poland How I Became A Ghost â ” A Choctaw Trail of Tears Story (Book 1 in the How I Became A Ghost Series) How March Became Madness: How the NCAA Tournament Became the Greatest Sporting Event in America How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything: Tales from the Pentagon Sergeant Reckless: The True Story of the Little Horse Who Became a Hero Reckless: The Racehorse Who Became a Marine Corps Hero Simon Ships Out. How One Brave, Stray Cat Became a Worldwide Hero: Based on a true story (Animal heroes Book 1) The Shadows of Elisa Lynch: How a Nineteenth-century Irish Courtesan Became the Most Powerful Woman in Paraguay