

H

“ERIN’S HOPE: THE FENIAN BROTHERHOOD OF NEW YORK CITY, 1858-1886”

by

Timothy G. Lynch

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2004

UMI Number: 3144116

Copyright 2004 by
Lynch, Timothy G.

All rights reserved.

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3144116

Copyright 2004 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

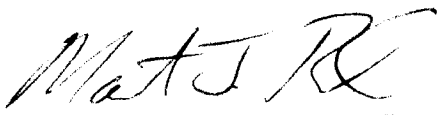
© 2004

Timothy G. Lynch

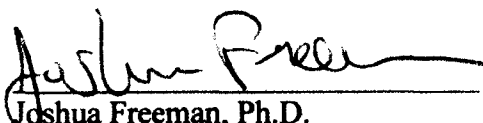
All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

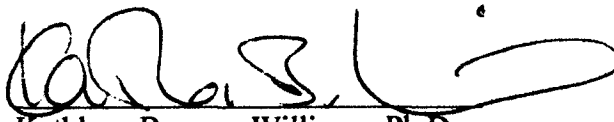
05/25/04
Date

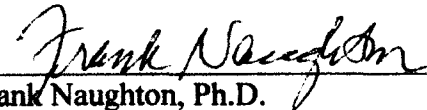

Martin J. Burke, Ph.D.
Chair of Examining Committee

05/25/04
Date


Joshua Freeman, Ph.D.
Executive Officer


Hans L. Trefousse, Ph.D.
Supervisory Committee


Kathleen Broome Williams, Ph.D.
Supervisory Committee


Frank Naughton, Ph.D.
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

ABSTRACT

“Erin’s Hope: The Fenian Brotherhood of New York City, 1858-1886”

by

Timothy G. Lynch

Adviser: Professor Martin J. Burke

This dissertation proposes an investigation of the Fenian Brotherhood in New York City from its inception in 1858 until its ultimate dissolution in 1886. The Fenian Brotherhood was an Irish nationalist organization that advocated the creation of an independent, republican Ireland through the forced removal of Great Britain from that island. Active in both Europe and the United States, the Brotherhood was among the first political exile groups in America’s history. It was particularly vocal and visible in New York City, which by 1860 counted one in every four residents as a native of Ireland. The city was home to a burgeoning immigrant population, a vibrant ethnic press, and the scene of some of the most vituperative battles in the tumultuous history of the movement. As such, a history of the Fenian Brotherhood in New York City will tell much of the movement and of the city that it called home.

To best gauge the historical importance of the Fenian Brotherhood in New York, I will trace the trajectory of the movement, analyzing why the Brotherhood was successful at the times it was, and why its influence waxed and waned over the quarter century under discussion. An analysis of the “rise and fall of New York’s Fenian Brotherhood” will enable me to reconstruct the internal history of the movement in New York, showing how those in the immigrant, Irish American, and native-born communities perceived the Brotherhood. In addition to depicting the strategies and tactics of the Brotherhood, I will correlate its successes and failures to its fluctuating levels of popularity and gauge the level of support it enjoyed over its nearly three decades of existence.

FOREWORD

In the early days of June 1866, a band of Irish militiamen stormed across the American-Canadian border and invaded British North America. Calling themselves the Fenian Brotherhood, these filibusters hoped to precipitate a conflict between the United States and Great Britain, believing that one result of such a battle would be Irish independence. Founded in New York City in March of 1858, the Fenians were an Irish nationalist organization whose expressed aim was to procure money, weapons, and military training that would be used to secure an independent, republican Ireland through the forced removal of Great Britain from that island. Together with its European counterpart, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), the Fenians actively solicited funds and openly recruited men to serve in their “army of liberation.” At its zenith, the American arm of this transatlantic movement established a “government in exile” and claimed some 40,000 members, with many times that number of open sympathizers. On several occasions, the Brotherhood successfully rescued Irish prisoners from English jails, and launched a number of invasions into Canada, attempting to hold that portion of the British Empire as ransom for Ireland. During its existence, the organization could count on the support of American politicians who sought the Irish vote by embracing the Brotherhood’s ideals. This was particularly true during the tumultuous years of Reconstruction, when both the Democrats and the Radical Republicans actively courted the Fenian vote. The *New York Times* acknowledged these political games, claiming that the beleaguered Fenians were harried on both sides of the Atlantic, “chased by British troops through the bogs and fens of Ireland, and by congressional demagogues through

the swamps of American politics.”¹ Following a series of fractious and bitter disputes, the movement splintered into smaller factions, all of which eventually dissolved.

Much work has been done on the Fenian movement: unfortunately, such treatments usually concentrate on the miserable failure of the raids, the constant internal bickering between various factions within the movement, and the diplomatic fallout from the raids. But there is more to the story of the Fenians than just burlesque bumbling and carnivalesque conspiracy, more than just the story of their political exploits and military maneuverings. To concentrate exclusively on the failure of the Fenians to achieve their stated objectives is an egregious oversight.

Until now, the Brotherhood has been judged by an overly simple standard of success and failure, but there are alternative, and perhaps better, ways to gauge their historical importance. Despite their lack of military success, the Fenians represented a formidable expression of Irish American nationalism. Rather than being treated with a measure of dismissiveness, the movement merits more attention: it was a potent embodiment of Irish American nationalism at a time when such sentiments were powerful and widespread. In addition, scholars have rarely examined local Fenian societies, nor have they fully determined the influence that the Brotherhood wielded within the nation’s Irish-American communities. As the most popular and influential ethnic organization in Irish American history, the Fenians made important ideological contributions to Irish America.

In challenging the baseline assumptions used to assess the success of the Fenian Brotherhood, I hope to reveal a level of complexity and subtlety not seen by previous treatments. As there have been no scholarly treatments of the Fenians in the last twenty-

¹ *New York Times* 12 March 1867.

five years, and as the standard volume on American Fenianism is now nearly sixty years old, the time is right for an archivally-based work of what was effectively the first political exile party in American history.

The earliest extant literature concerning Fenianism in America is composed of personal memoirs and accounts authored by the participants themselves. Not surprisingly, works such as John O’Leary’s Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, and John Devoy’s Reminiscences relate the story from a highly biased viewpoint. The authors tell of a heroic struggle that would have indubitably succeeded had it not been sabotaged by the duplicitous activities of spies and the United States government. Hagiographic treatments such as these can tell us much of the mindset and ideology of the actors but must be used cautiously. Still, they are valuable resources that cannot be dismissed out of hand.

Scholarly treatments of the Fenians have been equally flawed and only marginally illuminating. From different perspectives, and to varying degrees, the literature on the American Fenians attempts to trace the military, political, and diplomatic history of the movement. Beginning with William D’Arcy’s seminal Fenian Movement in the United States, and continuing through more nuanced works such as Brian Jenkins’ Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction William Niedhardt’s Fenianism in North America and Hereward Senior’s Fenianism in Canada, the standard interpretation has been one of the Fenians as ridiculous conspirators whose only accomplishment was in proving the futility of their plans. What is needed is a scholarly treatment that investigates and analyzes the rationale behind the Fenian Brotherhood. This dissertation addresses this lacuna and offers a new interpretation of a movement that has received a

rather myopic interpretation. In the process, I show how and why a sizable portion of the Irish American community responded to the movement in the way that it did. As such, this project will examine not just the rise and fall of the Fenians, but also of the fluctuating levels of support for the organization. By focusing on periods of florescence and decline, on continuities and innovations, and on phases of saliency and quiescence, this is an investigation of the behavioral patterns of Irish Americans responding to Fenianism as much as it is a treatment of Irish nationalism itself.

Moreover, while there exist treatments of the Fenians in almost every imaginable context, there is no such work on the Fenians of New York.² This is regrettable; New York was the birthplace of the movement, the home of its headquarters, the site of its most important meetings, and the scene of its most vituperative battles. By rooting my study in New York I was able to focus my research on several penetrating questions that allowed me to reassess this important group. By examining the relationship between the Fenians and the Irish American community, I have demonstrated the significance of the Brotherhood to the communities where they were most active. By investigating the origins, rise to prominence, and ultimate decline of the Fenian Brotherhood during a period of intense community development and consolidation, I was able to analyze the role that the organization played in the formation of Irish America. A preliminary view of the pertinent materials suggests that the Brotherhood was significant in the formation of Irish America by making important ideological contributions to its community.

An analysis of the specific personal ideologies and economic factors that drew

² Despite their prominence as an Irish nationalist organization, the Fenians in New York have received little attention. In their 1200-page opus, Mike Wallace and Ed Burrows make only a half dozen oblique references to the group, despite claiming “while their numbers were small, they were to play a prominent role in New York City politics.” Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 752.

individuals to Fenianism offers additional perspective to another unresolved historiographical debate. In Irish American Nationalism: 1870-1890, Thomas Brown posits that Irish American nationalism was forged in the crucible of the expatriate enclave experience and that middle class aspirants embraced these movements so as to prove themselves to be a coherent community. Poverty and discrimination fostered a profound desire to boost collective Irish social stature in the United States. By supporting efforts in the homeland to end centuries of subjugation to Great Britain, individuals assumed that Know-Nothings and other nativists would realize that Irish Americans were not brutish “sub-humans” who threatened Protestant social and economic livelihood. Irish independence was perceived as both a catalyst to middle class ascension and a blow to Old World aristocracy. Alternatively, Eric Foner has argued that Irish American nationalism encouraged New World working class solidarity by serving as a place where the otherwise class conscious energies of America’s first urban proletarians could find an outlet.³ Kerby Miller, on the other hand, asserts that Irish American nationalism is deeply rooted in an Anglophobic sense of collective exile, and that Irishmen joined these organizations for the opportunity to avenge the horrors of the Famine. The Great Hunger was interpreted as a concerted effort to exterminate the Irish; the gross British mishandling of a largely manageable disaster condemned millions more to emigrate. In my opinion, the Fenians were influenced by several factors; thus, my conclusion bridges these competing schools of thought.

An investigation and analysis of memoirs, reminiscences, and the nationalist press

³ Eric Foner, “Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League in Irish America,” in Eric Foner, ed., Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 150-200. Arguing against Brown’s thesis that ethnic nationalism became a means of assimilation into middle-class respectability, Foner unearthed radical working class dimensions of nationalism that could not fit the model.

allowed me the opportunity to reconstruct the mindset of individuals who joined the Brotherhood. R.V. Comerford, in his path-breaking The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society, 1848-1882 argues that the members of the IRB joined out of boredom and were seeking socialization and confraternity; Comerford contends that the “abstract” Fenianism of socialization and confraternity rivaled the “concrete” Fenianism of guns and republicanism. According to this interpretation, Fenianism flourished in Ireland not because there were tens of thousands of young men eager to take up the gun to defend Ireland, but because there were tens of thousands of young men in search of appropriate social outlets in the face of mounting clerical influence. No such treatment of “patriotism as pastime” exists for the American arm of the movement. One possible reason may be, in part, due to criticisms Comerford received from nationalist-oriented scholars who were reluctant to accept his revisionist conclusion that typical Fenians were “pragmatic patriots” rather than deeply committed revolutionaries.⁴

Much as Comerford has done for the Irish situation, I analyzed the appeal that American Fenianism held for its members. I examined not only the “official documents” which reveal Fenian ideology and strategy, but also the mass media, personal memoirs, and reminiscences that exposed the social contributions of the movement. While members wrote effusively about wanting to exact revenge against the Saxon oppressor, and of wanting to prove themselves in the eyes of Celtophobic Americans, evidence of the diversionary attractions of the American Fenian movement— picnics, fairs, and mass meetings— occurred so frequently, that one cannot dismiss them out of hand. Surely,

⁴ See: R.V. Comerford, “Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the mid-1860s,” Irish Historical Studies 22 (1981): 239-250; and, R.V. Comerford, “Comprehending the Fenians,” Saothar 17 (1992): 52-56. For criticism of Comerford, see: John Newsinger, “Fenianism Revisited: Pastime or Revolutionary Movement?” Saothar 17 (1992): 46-52; and, John Newsinger, Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain (London: Pluto Press, 1994).

members took psychological comfort from such an association.

Reports of myriad Fenian functions provide an important window into the Brotherhood. Such an investigation reveals that Irish men and women living in America joined the Fenian Brotherhood for a variety of reason. For much of its existence, the Brotherhood played a vital role for its members: in the absence of an established network of social and church institutions, the Fenians filled a pivotal void, serving as a pillar of the community around which many Irishmen could rally. Membership also provided something that activity in other organizations did not: a sense that members were working towards the achievement of Irish independence which would advance republicanism in the Old World while also facilitating acceptance in the New. While the leaders of the movement cited this as the only contributing factor to membership, I have found that it was rarely the only motivation. Apparently, as evidenced by newspaper accounts and personal recollections, members of the Brotherhood had a more detached and more pragmatic rationale for joining the Fenians than either their leaders or earlier historians have acknowledged.

My research has been predicated upon several distinct lines of inquiry and investigation that I believe will better illuminate the Fenian Brotherhood of New York City:

- A scholarly review of American Fenianism, with attention paid to its historical antecedents, and development as an institution clarifies why individuals chose to join this particular group.

- An analysis of the way in which the Brotherhood was perceived and portrayed demonstrates why this group was subject to vagaries and vicissitudes, peaks and valleys, prominence and ridicule. While some in the Irish American community saw an affirmation of nationalism as an obstacle to assimilation, others viewed it as an opportunity.
- A discussion of the impact and legacy of Fenianism, and a look at the contributions Fenianism made to the maturation and maintenance of Irish America, shows what the movement meant to its members, the city of New York, and Irish American nationalism.

At times embraced, often chastised, the Brotherhood played an ambivalent role in New York. During those periods when it enjoyed considerable support, it appears that the Fenians provided an important outlet for disaffected Irish Americans. In its early years, the movement can be seen as a response to nativism and an inhospitable environment. The Brotherhood gave the Irish American community a chance to show that they were not the disorganized, brutish drunkards that Anglo-America imagined them to be. Steady, if unspectacular, growth was a feature of the infant organization as dyed-in-the-wool revolutionaries were joined by those in search of fraternity and socialization. By allowing for a demonstration of cohesion as an ethnic community, the Fenians offered unity and respectability in the face of hostility.

In the immediate post-Civil War years, the Brotherhood provided important psychological support in the face of economic dislocation and an uncertain future;

membership skyrocketed, and hundreds of thousands attended Fenian events despite protests from Church leaders. By meeting the needs of their members at these junctures, the Fenian Brotherhood served as a standard of the community around which others could rally.

Moreover, the Fenians were consistently, if not conspicuously, assertive in claiming national self-determination and ethnic autonomy. By mobilizing immigrant masses and giving them a language of nationalism, the Brotherhood made a bedraggled mass of immigrants into a community. They mobilized their members into a powerful voting constituency, one that demanded that the major American political parties listen to their demands, and act in a favorable way. In so doing the Fenians became a powerful lobby and voice for Irish nationalists, and by extension, for all Irish Americans.

When the movement was wracked by internal dissension, and when it became increasingly violent, membership and support tailed off. The Fenians had alienated many by their tactics, and many Irish Americans felt that continued association with the group would damage their own reputations. Only committed Irish nationalists remained (and many of these joined rival groups such as the Clan-na-Gael), as the majority of Irish Americans found more appropriate venues for their concerns. Chief among these would be the Democratic-controlled municipal government: where the Irish had once been unwanted, they were now firmly entrenched and playing a major role. Increasingly, the Brotherhood came to symbolize what the larger Irish American community was not.⁵ In an effort to distance themselves from a group that reinforced negative stereotypes, Irish

⁵ Acculturation and rising expatriate social mobility severely undermined the Fenian movement. Demographic treatments of the Fenians reveal or suggest that most members were semi-skilled laborers in their early twenties. Many of these individuals experienced rising social mobility as the movement declined; their increased acceptance by the host society came at the literal expense of the Irish nationalist movement.

Americans increasingly spoke out against the Fenians. This change in outlook was not arbitrary; it paralleled and reflected changing economic, political, and social situations for Irishmen in New York City. It was determinants such as these, and not solely a concern for Ireland, that accounted for the changing frequency and intensity of ethnic identification with the Fenian Brotherhood.

This dissertation, then, proposes a new investigation of the Fenian Brotherhood and its relationship to the Irish American community of New York City. A response to the economic and psychological trauma that accompanied emigration, nativism, and the American Civil War, the movement had the potential to serve as a vehicle for ethnic expression in a new, often hostile environment. Eventually, internal bickering, ecclesiastical condemnation, and a membership increasingly detached from the expressed aim of the movement doomed the organization and resulted in its collapse. Despite its failure, the Brotherhood represents a movement of considerable historical significance, playing an instrumental role in the development of Irish America and helping to reconcile what Thomas Brown called “the trouble with being Irish.”

Specifically, this dissertation broadens our understanding of the impact that the Fenians had on Irish America by revealing another level of meaning and salience to the movement. By articulating more fully key subjects that are central to Fenianism, I hope to direct other scholars to better understand the historical significance of this movement. By demonstrating the profound influence of Fenianism, this dissertation expands our understanding of their contributions to both Irish America and the period under discussion. In a more general sense, this study expands our understanding of how ethnic groups grappled with issues of acceptance and identity. By focusing less on the political

and military aspects of the movement, I show that the Fenians were not “carnavalesque conspirators,” but a group that provided important and tangible services to its members.

The Fenians are often dismissed— with some justification— as fools, knaves, and dreamers, and it is true that their plans rarely came to fruition, but this does not mean that they were a historically insignificant group. By expanding the parameters of Irish American nationalism, this dissertation illuminates the true nature of the Fenians in America and brings to light transcendent themes which were manifested in public perceptions and performance. In so doing, it addresses unresolved questions concerning ethnicity, nationality, and democracy in the middle years of the nineteenth century. As such, a history of the Fenian Brotherhood in New York City will tell much of the movement and of the city that it called home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A doctoral dissertation may seem like the most individual of academic accomplishments, but nothing could be further from the truth. After years of researching, writing, and revising I realize that this project could not have been completed without the advice, criticism, and help of many whose names do not appear on the title page. While any errors in fact or interpretation are solely my own, I owe a debt of gratitude to all those listed here, and to those whose names I forgot, or never bothered to learn.

This project was originally conceived during a seminar taught by Professor Philip Dawson at the City University of New York, Graduate School and University Center. It was he who first encouraged me to tell the story of the Fenian Brotherhood; subsequent advice from CUNY-GSUC scholars Abraham Ascher, David Berger, and Barbara Welter moved the project from a seminar paper to dissertation proposal. Advice and mentoring from Thomas Kessner, James Oakes, and Mike Wallace were indispensable in moving this project from its germinal stages to completion.

During my research, I was aided by countless scholars from institutions across the nation. Kerby Miller (University of Missouri at Columbia), Marion Casey (New York University) and Tim Meagher (Catholic University) directed me to resource collections that I otherwise would have missed, as did Terry Golway of the *New York Observer*; Tim O'Neill (Central Michigan University) and Danny Cassidy (New College of California) read and commented on drafts on earlier versions, as did Ed O'Donnell (Holy Cross), and Jerry Henig (Cal State, Hayward). Lawrence McCaffrey (Loyola University), James Rogers (University of St. Thomas), Ben Novick (University of Michigan), and John Waters (New York University) offered insightful commentary on versions of this paper

that were presented at various conferences. Reviewers at *The Recorder: The Journal of the American Irish Historical Society* and for the New York Irish History Roundtable offered valuable advice and constructive criticism. Archivist Shawn Weldon at the Philadelphia Archdiocesan and Historical Research Center (located at the Theological Seminary of St. Charles Borromeo in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania) provided immeasurable assistance, as did my old friend—and Little League baseball coach—Billy Cobert at the American Irish Historical Society. The staff of the Cal Maritime library—particularly Lisa Carroll and Carl Phillips—was wonderful in granting me unfettered access and in fulfilling all of my many requests. The world's best administrative assistant, Betty Einerman, handled all of my picayune requests and made sure all my paperwork was in order. To the unnamed assistants at the New York Public Library, the Museum of the City of New York, and the University of California at Berkeley, Boston College, University of Notre Dame, and Stanford University facilities, thank you.

While writing, I was supported by generous financial and institutional support from the California Maritime Academy, California State University. I am especially grateful to Dr. Bill Eisenhardt, Dr. Jay Christofferson, Dean Steve Kreta, and Rene Viargues for their unwavering faith and dedication. Members of the larger Cal Maritime community—from Graham Benton, Donna Nincic and Tom Nordenholz, to Jim Wheeler, David McCuan and Lou McDermott—were always supportive and always ready with words of encouragement. I shall always remember their support and empathy.

Members of my defense examining committee—Josh Freeman, Frank Naughton (Kean College), and Kathy Williams—offered cogent analysis and much-needed editorial assistance. This project is the better for their input. While all the aforementioned were

wonderful, two individuals, in particular, deserve special recognition. The project was begun under the supervision of Hans Trefousse, a scholar from whom I learned much more than the art of history. I shall never forget the lessons he taught me and can only hope that I can serve the profession, my institution, and my students in the way that Hans has impacted so many. He is truly an inspiration. This project was ultimately completed under the direction of Martin Burke, who rescued me when it seemed as if all was lost when Hans retired. I will always remember the support and dedication he showed to me, and his confidence that I would complete the dissertation. I thank him for never asking if the dissertation was finished, and for never doubting that it would be. His patience, reassurance, trust, good humor, and direction made this project a possibility, and I hope that I was able to meet the high standards that he sets for himself and his students.

Sadly, my parents, who first nurtured within me an appreciation for the past and taught me the value of education, did not survive to see this project completed. But without their support—and that of my entire family—this would not have been possible. I thank them for all they gave me, and for giving me the ability to get for myself those things that they could not themselves provide.

Lastly, this dissertation could not have been completed but for the gentle guidance of my wife, Sharon Maureen, who made leaving for the office each day so difficult, and without the love of our daughter, Rachel Ellen, who made coming home each evening so enjoyable. I love you both beyond words. Tá tú i mo chroí gan críoch.

1994-2004

Yorkville-Brooklyn-Oakland-Vallejo

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Nationalist Sentiment in Pre-Famine Ireland	1
2. An Gorta Mor and the Transformation of Irish Nationalism	32
3. The American Migration and Diasporic Nationalism	56
4. The American Civil War and Irish Nationalism	86
5. The Bold Fenian Men	126
6. The Reasons Why	211
7. American Interpretations of Fenian Activities	248
8. Gaelic Gotham: The Legacy of Fenianism in New York	296
9. Bibliography	321

CHAPTER ONE

“It is easy to seek the origin of nearly all things, and especially of all things Irish, in remote causes and in distant times.”

John O’Leary¹

It has been said that any good piece of history— whether it is social, cultural, or political— uses the particular to illustrate the general. From a close investigation of certain historical events we can extrapolate much concerning the larger issues of the day. This is as true of the genesis, evolution, and development of New York’s Irish nationalist communities as it is of any other historic movement. Through careful scrutiny of the actors and actions of groups such as the Fenian Brotherhood, we can see many of the forces ubiquitous to the mid-nineteenth century: immigration, nativism, republicanism, and nationalism are all well represented here. By analyzing this organization we can come to a new appreciation of the hold that these forces had on contemporary society, and the extent to which they molded the actions of men and women. Before focusing on the American embodiment of Irish nationalism, we should first delineate the ideological, social, political, and cultural origins of the movement as it developed in Ireland.

Nationalist agitation has been commonplace throughout modern Irish history. A continuous undercurrent of discontent would periodically manifest itself in sporadic violence or outright rebellion. From resistance against the earliest attempts at colonization and settlement, there have been movements that were closely linked to Irish nationalism. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in particular saw the proliferation of nationalist organizations, and it is not surprising that Irish vexation would surface so frequently during these times. The years from 1691 to 1774 are rightly termed the “Penal

¹ John O’Leary, Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, 2 vols. (London: Downey and Company, 1896), 1: 77.

Era” by Irish historians; the period was one of Protestant political and economic domination, accompanied by Catholic subjugation. The era was marked by religious, economic, educational, professional, and property restrictions which can rightly be viewed as attempts to eradicate Catholicism, secure the Protestant ascendancy and land settlement, and seize the basis of political power.²

The repressive legislation of the Penal Era was a direct result of the massive transfer of Catholic landholdings to Protestant settlers under the direction of Oliver Cromwell. Following the Restoration, Charles II made no pretense of reversing this trend. Indeed, it was under Charles that the mercantilist policies whereby all Irish trade would flow through England began. The subsequent ascension of James II to the throne was worrisome to Protestants; it was feared that James, a Catholic, would return the seized holdings to his Irish co-religionists. The resulting Glorious Revolution of William and Mary was greeted by sectarian warfare in Ireland, where James II sought refuge. At the Battle of the Boyne on 12 July 1690 William of Orange defeated the Catholics and laid siege to the City of Limerick. This led to the final defeat of the Catholic insurgents, the flight of James II to France, and an increasingly English exertion of power over Ireland. The fear that Catholics would again rise up in insurrection surely played an important role in determining the subsequent Penal Laws.

In 1695 an act of Parliament deemed that Catholics could no longer send their children to Catholic schools, nor abroad for their education; all schooling now had to take place in state run, non-dissenting institutions. Likewise, Catholics could no longer serve as guardians of orphaned children; such unfortunates now had to be placed in Protestant

² For a classic overview of the period, see S.J. Connolly, Religion, Law, and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

homes. Catholics were barred from the legal professions, and they were prohibited from becoming officers in the army and navy. In theory, they were barred from even enlisting in the military. That same year, restrictions were placed on the right of Catholics to bear arms. Two years later, with the passage of the Banishment Act, Catholic clergy were removed from the island on pain of death; conversion to Catholicism by Protestants also became illegal.³

In 1699 Parliament passed the Wool Act, restricting exports of manufactured and raw wool from Ireland. A series of similar laws barred exports of live cattle to England. Navigation Acts placed general restrictions on trade; all of which now had to pass through English ports en route to their final destination, thereby raising costs. Such mercantilist policies were aimed at protecting English industry and agriculture, but the effects on the Irish economy were telling. Forbidden to export wool, and with no market for their beef, Irish agriculture became less diversified and more stagnant; a reliance on subsistence farming and the staple potato crops became the norm, with dire consequences.⁴

In 1704 Parliament secured passage of a series of laws aimed at property restrictions. The Act to Prevent the Further Growth of Popery deemed that Catholics were prohibited from buying land, inheriting land from Protestants, or taking leases for a period longer than 31 years. Younger Catholic sons converting to Protestantism immediately inherited the family estate; at this time, primogeniture was also made illegal

³ The Banishment Act applied only to regular, and not to secular, clergy.

⁴ While both the Wool Act (1662) and the Cattle Act (1663) did affect trade, they also led to a thriving eighteenth century commercial agriculture based on grain. For more on this phenomenon, consult Louis Cullen, The Emergence of Modern Ireland, 1600-1900 (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1981).

for Catholics.⁵ Other legislation prohibited Catholics from holding office in central or local government, from membership on grand juries or municipal corporations, or from owning horses valued at greater than five pounds. More odious still, Catholics and other dissenters were made liable for tithes to the Church of Ireland. Deprived of the opportunity to extend their estates by marriage or purchase, excluded from local and national politics, and threatened with the progressive fragmentation of their properties, many Catholic noble families emigrated or converted to Protestantism. As a result, Catholic land ownership fell from 14% in 1690 to less than 5% by 1770.

The effects of such laws on the Irish poor were severe. Food shortages and even famines were common. The Famine of 1741 was among the most notable: proportionately speaking, the 200,000 victims rivaled the million who perished during the Great Hunger of 1845-1849. Tithes and increasing rents—pushed up by an increasing population—became a major problem.⁶ Rural poverty remained widespread and the plight of the lowest laborers and cottiers soon engendered agrarian unrest. The relatively peaceful situation that had existed since the 1690's was soon tested, particularly in Munster, in the Southwest of the island.

Here, the competition for land and the increasing levels of rural poverty led to the proliferation of oath-bound, secret societies. The most notorious of these “modern rebels” were the Whiteboys, small landowners who fought for the defense or maintenance of traditional rural rights.⁷ Their main grievances were rent increases,

⁵ Protestant heiresses marrying Catholics had already been disinherited by an act of 1699.

⁶ Despite the mortality associated with the 1741 famine, the Irish population increased steadily after the introduction of the potato in the sixteenth century.

⁷ The Whiteboy oath: “To be true to each other and our friends, to attend all meetings when warned, to keep all secrets, to suffer death rather than betray each other or our cause, and to stand by each

tithes, and the enclosing of common lands. Their initial protests came following the Famine of 1741, but agrarian unrest reached a peak in the years after 1760.⁸ Preaching “moral economy,” they sought to enforce their customary rights through violence and intimidation. The Whiteboys were attempting to protect the poor by espousing the replacement of the free market with wider social objectives, particularly guaranteed land and food for the indigent.⁹ Seeking to compel obedience to stipulated rates, the Whiteboys opposed inflationary market prices by attacking farmers and retailers who hoarded food so as to artificially force prices up, as well as those who brought food to resell at a profit, or who exported it from the local area. Occasionally, they simply compelled farmers to give food to their needy neighbors. More often, the objects of their ire were middle class farmers who benefited from the failings of others. Those who evicted tenants for nonpayment of rent, or who were guilty of “land grabbing,” that is, taking land over the heads of the occupying tenants at the end of their term, were set aside for special retribution. Indeed, many of the Whiteboy atrocities were directed against middle class Catholics who had hoped for concessions from Great Britain based on loyalty to the Crown. In 1756 John Curry, Charles O’Connor, and Thomas Wyse had formed the Catholic Committee. While this attempt to prove Catholic fidelity to the

other.” Paul E.W. Roberts, “Cravats and Shanavests: Whiteboyism and Faction Fighting in East Munster, 1802-1811,” in Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly, Jr. eds., Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 70.

⁸ Recent interpretations, which point out that it was in the wealthier farming areas that Whiteboyism thrived, have stressed the nationalist aspects of the movement. See, for example: Tom Bartlett, Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question, 1690-1830 (Dublin: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992); Gerard O’Brien, Parliament, Politics, and People: Essays in Eighteenth Century Irish History (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989); and S.J. Connolly, Political Ideas in Eighteenth Century Ireland (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000).

⁹ Most contemporary pundits espoused the concepts of political economy: a fundamental belief in the free market as the solution to all economic ills. Laissez faire reinforced respect for the rights of property, which was sacrosanct.

Crown was successful in eventually getting the Penal Laws rescinded, it was such obsequious gesturing that rankled many throughout the 1760's.

Preaching shared poverty and shared grievances, the Whiteboys engaged in agrarian terrorism; disguised in blackface, or women's clothing, they donned white nightshirts and engaged in nocturnal raids. Their modus operandi rarely changed: raids generally took place on Sundays or Holidays in winter, and offenders were given three warnings. A grave would first be dug on the property of an offending farmer; on a second visit an animal would be slaughtered or hobbled (a favorite tactic was cutting the hamstrings of draft animals, thereby rendering them useless); should the offending party not heed these warnings, he could expect to have a building burned, his possessions looted, or his own ears cut off. On a few occasions, the victim was murdered; usually, he had to suffer the indignity of being "pitch capped" with hot tar being poured atop his head, resulting in the loss of his hair. Although localized and motivated largely by economic distress and a shared sense of injustice, the movement had the ability to be converted into a more national organization, and the activities of the Whiteboys were interpreted by British observers as proof of the riotous tendencies of the Irish. Recognizing the revolutionary potential of the agrarian protesters, and encouraged by a sense of paranoia, Parliament passed the Whiteboy Act of 1776, which mandated severe punishment for rioting and oath taking. Still, later nationalist agitators would take the lessons of surreptitious activity and terrorism to heart.

The Penal Laws are only the best-known aspect of a corrupt and decadent political system that controlled Ireland at this time. From local magistrates to the Viceroy, every level of Irish government was subject to graft and patronage. Local

power tended to be exercised by Justices of the Peace and Grand Juries, composed wholly of notable Protestant locals. Similarly, the Irish Parliament was elected by, and consisted exclusively of, Protestants. It was more a colonial assembly than a genuine parliament, as it was subjected to a wide range of formal and informal influences emanating from England.¹⁰ The British Cabinet appointed the Viceroy, who, with the aid of the Irish cabinet, controlled the Irish Parliament. A powerful Anglo-Irish elite effectively managed this body, using its wealth and influence to secure blocs of votes for the Crown's preferred policy. The increasing levels of Viceregal control, especially that of Lord Townshend from 1767 to 1772, engendered the growth of an Irish Patriot party in parliament.¹¹

Informal British influence, while more insidious, was more routine and more effective. These tactics included the massive use of Irish taxes to pay members of parliament to vote in accordance with the wishes of the Crown. Pensions for impertinent members could be "withdrawn" at pleasure, while largely ceremonial but nonetheless lucrative jobs were secured for the more compliant MPs. Likewise, the electorate was limited to only a small minority of Protestants; even in more "open" districts only 4-10% of male inhabitants could vote. Furthermore, most Irish MPs were elected by boroughs, some of which had as few as twelve electors, and large landowners could easily dictate how their tenants would vote through coercive economic measures.

According to the traditional historiographical view, Ireland was now completely

¹⁰ Among the formal strings was Poynings Law of 1494 that stated, "Irish legislation could be vetoed or amended by the Privy Council." Similarly, the Declaratory Act of 1720, although rarely exercised, claimed the right of the British Parliament to legislate for Ireland.

¹¹ This admittedly nationalist interpretation has been challenged in recent years by historians who stress the complicated economic, ideological, and political give and take between Ireland and England.

subjugated to the British government and its interests.¹² The British Cabinet and Parliament dictated policy and laws in Britain's interest, while the Irish elite acquiesced in return for security, local power, and patronage. Ireland became a poor, underdeveloped, and exploited country— laws restricting Irish trade kept Ireland in poverty and an exploitative land system (made worse by absenteeism) drained Irish wealth. Deep religious tensions caused antagonism and division between a “hidden” Catholic Ireland and a Protestant Ascendancy that passed legislation designed to completely suppress Catholicism.

All of these abuses soon drew the ire of Protestant Anglo-Irish patriots, who were keen to remove corruption and patronage from the seat of power. The Irish Patriot movement sought to secure greater parliamentary independence by reducing corruption and executive control through patronage and pension bills. The revisionist view of Irish history argues that a growing sense of Protestant (or “colonial”) nationalism allowed the Irish political elite to grow more independent, becoming less subservient to Great Britain. The Irish parliament increasingly used its power to block or modify British policy, causing conflict and consternation for the Crown. Its first success came in 1768 with the passage of the Octennial Act, which mandated parliamentary elections every eight years. While this was encouraging, it was just the start; the people of Ireland increasingly sought political and civil rights as well.

The Protestant, Anglo-Irish patriots were a progressive group in an increasingly liberal world, but they were not revolutionists. Unlike the Whiteboys, who were animated primarily by economic imperatives, the patriots were motivated by many

¹² For a historiographical look at Irish History, see Ciaran Brady, ed., Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994).

factors. Certainly they sought an end to the prevailing trade restrictions, but they also looked for legislative independence and the reform of a corrupt government. Political theorists, they desired greater independence and political control, but not separation from England. Born out of the British “country” party and the Whig tradition of opposition to the court and executive, they sought a balanced government of King, Lords, and Commons as opposed to tyranny. They worshipped liberty over slavery, and virtue over vice, while advocating vigilance against corruption and arbitrary authority. To achieve this, a free press was necessary, as was an informed public, able to take up arms in a citizen militia if need be. Public virtue would be the foundation of their classically inspired politics, and would serve as a safeguard against autocracy. Theirs was an internal, reformist agenda; citizen involvement was vital to protect and preserve liberty.¹³

The patriots were inspired by Lockean concepts of natural rights and a social contract, whereby the people willingly cede power in trust to their rulers. The people have a natural right to choose governors and representatives in the legislature, a body formed to protect life, liberty, and property. A second inspiration was the ancient constitutional rights of the English in Ireland: parliamentary and judicial independence, rule of law, habeas corpus, and trial by jury. Aside from these political issues, there was deep and widespread resentment at commercial restrictions on Ireland, and a strong call for “improvement” in both agriculture and manufactures.

The leaders of the Irish Protestant patriotism included William Molyneux, a close friend of John Locke whose influential tract The Case of Ireland... Stated (1698)

¹³ A concise analysis of patriot ideals can be seen in James Kelly, Henry Flood (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998). For a recent interpretation, consult Stephen Small, Political Thought in Ireland, 1776-1798: Republicanism, Patriotism, and Radicalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Many of these themes would later be espoused by the Fenian Brotherhood.

combined the philosophies of natural and constitutional rights; Jonathan Swift, the famous satirist whose patriotic treatises included The Story of the Injured Lady (1709) and Drapier's Letters (1720s); and George Berkeley, whose The Querist (1735) posed an analytical response to the causes and results of corruption. These writers paved the way for men like Charles Lucas, a Dubliner and the first true activist; Henry Flood, the leader of the Parliamentary patriots in the 1760's and 1770's; and Henry Grattan, whose influential rhetoric was credited with winning both free trade and legislative independence. Perhaps more important than any of these theorists in securing such victories, however, were the events of the American Revolution.

The impact of the American Revolution on Irish patriotism was tremendous.¹⁴ The ideology of the Americans closely mirrored patriot ideas and encouraged their radicalization. The themes of "no taxation without representation" and the right to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness were heard as often in Ireland as in America. There were considerable constitutional similarities as well, as both had "colonial" style subordinate assemblies. The economic and commercial side effects of the war mobilized considerable support for the Americans among the Irish patriots. In particular, the Embargo Act of 1776 was interpreted as British interference in Irish trade, and was deeply resented. Opposition to Irish involvement in the American war was based on these shared feelings of identity between fellow Protestant subjects of a decadent monarchy, as well as the kinship bonds of Ulster dissidents and the Scots-Irish in America. Irish Protestant support for the war was further undermined by the Quebec Act of 1774, legislation interpreted by many as being pro-Catholic. As a result, the

¹⁴ The canonical work on this subject remains Maurice O'Connell, Irish Politics and Social Conflict in the Age of the American Revolution (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965).

conflict gave Ireland an opportunity to pressure Britain, resulting in both free trade and legislative independence.

Irish pressure on Great Britain came first from a curious sector: the Volunteers. This was a primarily Protestant organization that had originally been founded as a home defense force to protect Ireland from Catholic France and Spain, both of which had recently entered the American War. Numbering some forty thousand members in 1779, they could claim twice as many by 1782. Soon these quasi-military units composed of citizens in arms beyond the control of the government became political clubs as well. A Volunteer parade in Dublin in 1779 pressured the Government for free trade— at that meeting, there was a cannon festooned with the slogan “Free Trade or this!” across its muzzle. Faced with this sort of pressure in Ireland, and with defeat looming in America, the administration of Lord North harmonized tariffs between England and Ireland, giving Irish merchants the same access to British and colonial markets as their English counterparts. Further victories included a substantial reform that allowed Catholics to inherit land and take 999 year leases— tantamount to purchase. In 1782, the last formal restrictions on Catholic worship, education, and guardianship were removed.

England’s American troubles even allowed for the Irish parliament to propose and achieve legislative independence.¹⁵ The Ulster Volunteer convention at Dungannon in 1782 posed the threat of armed resistance and helped to force the issue of legislative independence to the forefront. Subsequently, Henry Grattan coordinated the activities of

¹⁵ Legislative independence, a term used to describe the changes in the constitutional relationship between Great Britain and Ireland, was secured through Yelverton’s Act. This repealed the British Declaratory Act, modified Poyning’s Law, secured the independence of judges, and declared the Irish House of Lords a court of final appeal. The term is somewhat misleading, as the English Privy Council could still veto Irish bills. The Irish executive continued to be headed by British politicians— the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary— who were accountable to the British cabinet rather than to the Irish parliament.

blocs of patriot MPs in the Irish Commons and secured majorities there for a resolution demanding legislative independence. This would be achieved following the final British defeat at Yorktown and the resulting fall of North's ministry. The new Whig administration, led by the Marquis of Rockingham, was more sympathetic to the Irish patriots, and conceded the issue in 1782.

Heartened by these victories, democratic reformers agitated for even more liberal accommodations. At a 1783 convention in Dublin, the Volunteers called for moderate advancements, including a reform of decayed and rotten boroughs and the introduction of triennial parliamentary elections. Tellingly, the Volunteers made no mention of Catholic political rights; still, the resolutions were obvious attempts to democratize the electoral process. Despite the appeal to many liberals, the plan was defeated by 157 to 77 votes. When radicals founded the Repeal Congress, this too failed to influence the government; in the long run there was simply not enough support in parliament or among the Protestant elite for these measures. Many patriots were satisfied with free trade and legislative independence, and they did not wish to weaken their power by reforming parliament. Furthermore, the lingering Catholic issue— whether some or all Catholics should be given political rights— led to heightened tensions in Anglo-Irish and Catholic-Protestant relations as the century drew to a close. A series of unresolved economic and constitutional arrangements further clouded the horizon.¹⁶

While the patriot victories of 1779-1782 seemed to represent a shift from the Era of Penal Laws and Protestant ascendancy to a commercial, semi-independent, and even tolerant Ireland, this was not to be. By 1798 the French Revolution and demands for

¹⁶ These issues included the Tithe Dispute of 1785 and the Regency Dispute of 1788. The first dealt with the ongoing tension in the land and tax systems, the second with the idea that there should be different heads of state in Ireland and Britain.

further reform on Catholic relief and political rights had led to repression, rebellion, and social chaos in Ireland. The result was an Act of Union with Great Britain and renewed sectarian division.

The influence of the French Revolution on Irish history was as dramatic as that of the American Revolution.¹⁷ From its very beginnings, the ideology of liberty, equality, and fraternity swept across Europe; during its early stages the revolution was especially well received in the British Isles. Reformers saw a general trend toward liberty and rational government, and they were inspired by France, a tyrannical, Catholic, country gaining freedom. As the revolution progressed, however, the implications for social and political upheaval increasingly worried the elite. This attitude could best be seen in Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), which called for the defense of tradition, hierarchy, and stability. Among the first to really speak out against the revolution, Burke immediately disliked what he saw, and he correctly prophesized many of the impending excesses. Thomas Paine's Rights of Man (1791), meanwhile, represented a common sense attack on heredity and hierarchy, and argued for equal political rights, radical reform, and the replacement of aristocratic with democratic government. Theobald Wolfe Tone's Argument on Behalf of Catholics in Ireland (1791) drew on Paineite and patriot ideas to call for parliamentary reform and a union of all Irishmen. This seminal Irish political pamphlet was the founding document of Irish radicalism, urging that all faiths should be subsumed in the name of "Mother Ireland." Tone's work was among the most influential in the development of perhaps the most important nationalist movement in Irish history: the United Irishmen.

¹⁷ For more on this relationship, consult Hugh Gough and David Dickson, eds., Ireland and the French Revolution (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990).

The Society of United Irishmen was founded in the fall of 1791.¹⁸ A club of radical political reformers, they hoped to bring together Irishmen of all creeds in an ecumenical approach to Irish nationalism. Their distinctive political philosophy centered on strikingly nonsectarian, egalitarian, and inclusive goals— indeed, theirs was the first modern political theory of Irish republican nationalism. Their aims included not only parliamentary reform, but Catholic emancipation and independence as well. Formed from the radical Protestant patriots and Volunteers of the 1780s, they enjoyed considerable Catholic support as well. This endorsement came from two distinct sources: the “Defenders,” who drew on rural Catholic agrarian traditions and grievances, and a newly assertive, non-sycophantic Catholic Committee, which eschewed its older, aristocratic demeanor. The former mixed radical and revolutionary rhetoric with calls for renewed Catholic power; drawing on the Whiteboy traditions while echoing the rhetoric of the French revolution, they represented a combination of old and new. The Committee, headed by John Keogh, sent a number of petitions directly to the King; by creating an alternative, representative body, they had the potential to be extremely threatening to the government. Their close collaboration with the United Irishmen (Tone, although a Protestant, served as Secretary to the Committee) showed the links between the groups, which did not sit well with the Crown.

The Ascendancy response can be characterized as one of unwilling concession and severe reaction. The winter of 1793 saw the execution of King Louis XVI and the start of a long military struggle between Britain and France. This prolonged period of economic, military, political, and ideological struggle renewed the old strategic concerns

¹⁸ The best treatments of the United Irishmen remain Nancy J. Curtin, The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); and Marianne Elliott, Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

of a French mission to Ireland. In an effort to placate Catholic Ireland, Britain passed a series of Catholic Relief Bills. Although a major concession, they proved disappointing to radicals who had been encouraged by the activities of the Catholic Committee. Restrictions on “mixed” marriages and Catholic lawyers were removed, but full Catholic emancipation was voted down. At the same time, the government stepped up its presence in Ireland. The Convention Act of 1793 restricted representative assemblies, and the Gunpowder Act of that same year severely limited the use, possession, and transport of arms. A Militia Act raised a mainly Catholic militia, generally by impressment (or, as it was termed “forced conscription for policing duties”). The final nail in the coffin of reform came with the Fitzwilliam Affair of 1795, when a reform minded Whig Viceroy was summarily recalled to Britain after trying to pass Catholic emancipation in Ireland. Meanwhile, the Volunteers were suppressed amid a campaign to demonize radicals and ridicule lower class political activity. Prior to this, the United Irishmen had been an open organization, interested mainly in disseminating pamphlets; now, forced underground, they became an increasingly radicalized group.

Official suppression of the United Irishmen began in May 1795 following the Jackson Affair.¹⁹ Tone himself would be forced to leave Ireland for America, before continuing on to France to seek military aid. Soon, the United Irishmen reemerged as a secret, oath-bound military body. They were increasingly radical, espousing a republican, separatist ideology that hinted at social reforms. Shortly, a swelling “Orange” reaction to the UI/Defender threat would lead to widespread violence, complete

¹⁹ William Jackson was a Protestant minister who returned to Ireland from France in April 1795 to sound out responses to a possible invasion, unaware that his traveling companion, John Cockayne, was a government spy. His conversations with leading Irish radicals proved sufficient to help justify the suppression of the United Irishmen. Arrested and tried for treason, Jackson committed suicide by poison while in the dock.

with entire villages being burned to the ground. Escalating fear and violence followed the failed landing of 14,000 French troops at Bantry Bay in December of 1796. A brutal suppression of the United Irishmen followed: habeas corpus was suspended, and under the auspices of General Gerard Lake and the Insurrection Act, suspected revolutionaries were routinely tortured: arbitrary arrests, floggings, and half-hangings were common. Despite this crackdown, plans for a rebellion continued.

The United Irish rebellion was originally planned for Dublin in May of 1798. This was disrupted by the arrest of several leading confederates; the rising was subsequently to be centered in Wexford, where a largely Catholic yeomanry was able to wrest control of Oulart Hill and other strategic areas from the resident Protestants. These initial successes proved fleeting, and they were soon avenged at the Battles of Vinegar Hill and Ballynahinch. Not even the belated arrival of a small French garrison under General Jean Joseph Humbert could reverse the trend; following an initial victory at the “races of Castlebar” on 27 August, he was forced to surrender just two weeks later. While the French troops were imprisoned, government forces massacred some 2000 Irish supporters.²⁰ Tone himself was captured aboard a French ship and convicted of treason. He would slit his own throat while awaiting sentencing in November of 1798.²¹

The failure of the rebellion can be attributed to many factors. The lack of both internal and French support against the overwhelming opposition of more powerful forces cannot be understated. Perhaps more importantly, however, the United Irishmen, while certainly laudable and idealistic, severely miscalculated the depth of religious

²⁰ Such outrages were by no means reserved to the British, as the United Irishmen’s massacre of scores of loyalists at Scullabogue can attest.

²¹ On Tone, see Marianne Elliott, Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

divisions in Ireland. By glossing over sectarian issues, the United Irishmen were denying the realities of the situation as it existed. There was also considerable discord between the nonsectarian United Irishmen and the staunchly Catholic, anti-Orange Defenders. Once considered to be pawns of the United Irishmen, there was actually a much more sophisticated relationship, one that involved a good deal of conflict and tension.²² Regardless of the reasons for the failing, the revolt had serious ramifications for the development of Anglo-Irish relations.

The rebellion of 1798 had made clear the need for a radical solution to Ireland's problems. With this in mind, in September of 1799, William Pitt called for Union, to be accompanied by Catholic emancipation. The first attempt was defeated in the Irish Commons by five votes; after an intense campaign of propaganda, persuasion, and patronage, the bill finally succeeded in August of 1800. When the Act of Union took effect on January 1, 1801, the Irish parliament was abolished. Although the Viceroy and a separate Irish administration would be maintained in Dublin, the seat of decision making on Irish affairs had been transferred from that city to London. Ireland was now to be represented in the British parliament by 100 MPs in the House of Commons and 32 members in the House of Lords.²³ The fact that the King and senior cabinet members refused to support Catholic emancipation meant that this provision would be shelved until a more propitious time. The refusal of immediate emancipation led to intensified sectarian animosity between disgruntled Catholics and the Protestant ascendancy.

²² See Jim Smyth, The Men of No Property: Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the late Eighteenth Century (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1992).

²³ This represented roughly one-sixth the total. The delegation to the Lords was to consist of 4 Protestant Bishops and 28 nobles. Other terms of the Union stipulated that Ireland would now be responsible for providing funds equal to fifteen percent of the total expenditures of the United Kingdom.

Perhaps more importantly, the aggrieved now had a focus for their discontent: Irishmen began to view the dual goals of Catholic emancipation and repeal of the Act of Union as a panacea for all their ills.²⁴

To best understand the importance of Catholic emancipation, one needs to be familiar with its historical background and with its most ardent proponent, Daniel O'Connell.²⁵ As a result of the military and ideological struggles with America and France, Britain had issued increasingly liberal statutes concerning Catholics. The events of the 1790's underscored the need to split the Catholic-radical political alliance and pacify Ireland in the face of a mounting French threat. Gardiner's Acts of 1778 and 1782 had effectively removed restrictions on Catholic land ownership; the Relief Act of 1792 allowed for Catholic education, and for Catholics to become lawyers. A 1793 provision allowed the vote to those owning land valued at 40 shillings, as well as the right to bear arms, to earn degrees at Dublin's Trinity College, and to hold local and minor government offices. Similarly, Catholics could now become army officers (with the exception of the rank of general); in 1795 the Crown even established an endowment for a Catholic seminary at Maynooth. These concessions were signs of a growing but limited toleration, although there was still a distinction between civil and political liberties. Hence, by the time of the Act of Union, Catholics could vote, own and buy land, possess arms, hold government, legal, and army posts, train to be priests, and worship freely; however, they still could not be MPs, sit in the House of Lords, or hold the highest

²⁴ See W.J. McCormack, The Pamphlet Debate on the Union Between Great Britain and Ireland (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996).

²⁵ For the psychological impact of emancipation, consult Wendy Hinde, Catholic Emancipation: A Shake to Men's Minds (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992). For O'Connell's role, see Fergus O'Ferrall, Catholic Emancipation: Daniel O'Connell and the Birth of Irish Democracy (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1985).

offices of state.²⁶

Into this situation stepped Daniel O'Connell. Born to a wealthy Catholic family in Kerry in 1775, O'Connell was the pivotal figure in Irish history during the first half of the nineteenth century. Having studied law from 1794, he was called to the Irish bar four years later. His beliefs were a curious amalgam of political liberalism and social conservatism. He opposed the Union from the start, but sought no revision of the existing land settlement.²⁷ Influenced by the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham, the radicalism of Thomas Paine, and the laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith, O'Connell was an ardent constitutionalist. He had been present in Paris when the French revolution broke out, and he was horrified by what he witnessed there; he detested violence in all its forms, and he was confident that some redress could be made through legal means.²⁸

The early campaign for Catholic emancipation faced many problems. Perhaps most daunting was the traditional British opposition and Protestant hostility to this scheme. The Monarch, most ministers, and many peers ardently opposed the measure, and there was strong lower class anti-Catholicism in Britain. Moreover, at this time the British identity was becoming increasingly tied up with Protestantism. Catholics were seen as disloyal, superstitious, ignorant, and slavish; Ireland itself was viewed as being socially, morally, and economically inferior. A strong sense of providentialism could be seen in Victorian Britain—it was believed that Irish poverty and English prosperity were

²⁶ Catholics could technically sit as MPs, but to do so, they had to recite an Oath of Abjuration and Allegiance, which required an open denunciation of many of the tenets of their faith.

²⁷ O'Connell's family were landowners with extensive holdings in Derrynane.

²⁸ Biographies of O'Connell are numerous. Most noteworthy is the two-volume work by Oliver MacDonagh, Daniel O'Connell: The Hereditary Bondsman, 1775-1829 (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1988), and Daniel O'Connell: The Emancipist, 1830-1847 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989). For O'Connell's pacifism, see Raymond Moley, Daniel O'Connell: Nationalism Without Violence (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974).

a reflection of religious belief, and it was a commonly held tenet that “God was an Englishman.”²⁹ Likewise, the British government of the time was preoccupied with the Napoleonic wars until 1815, and the postwar economic slump for some time afterwards. Ireland was but one of many imperial concerns for the Tory dominated administrations. As a result, a series of bills seeking Catholic emancipation were summarily defeated during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. This failed campaign for emancipation led to the development of new strategies.³⁰

The most successful of these new strategies was the formation of the Catholic Association in April of 1823. This organization converted an ineffective pressure group, the Catholic Committee, into a crusading mass movement. A fundamentally peaceful and constitutional movement, this organization was unlike any before seen in the British Isles. Their aim was to elect MPs who were favorable to Catholic emancipation; the Association charged a nominal membership fee (one shilling per month, to be collected by parish priests) that would be used to bankroll certain candidates. By March of 1825, over £19000 had been raised; some weeks saw collections approach £1000. The Association was so successful that it was ordered dissolved by the Unlawful Societies Act of 1825; still, it continued covert activities.

The Association could count on broad based Catholic support: the impoverished, the Church, and the middle class all endorsed its expressed aims. To the average Catholic, emancipation took on a nearly mystical meaning; it promised deliverance not

²⁹ See Desmond Bowen, The Protestant Crusade in Ireland, 1800-1860 (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1978).

³⁰ Campaigns for emancipation went down to defeat in 1805, 1808 (by 281 votes to 128), 1813, 1814, 1817, 1819 (by two votes in the Commons), and 1821 (when it passed the Commons but not the Lords).

only from ancient grievances such as the tithe and high rents, but from new disturbances caused by a rising population and a postwar slump in agricultural prices. Their discontent and hope for a cataclysmic reversal of the Protestant land settlement could now be channeled into this singular cause.³¹ The Catholic middle class, consisting of lawyers, journalists, professionals, businessmen, merchants, large farmers, and landowners, were all penalized by the existing situation. Their support of the Association is by no means surprising; the role of the Church in organizing the activity is more intriguing and most important.

The Catholic Church in early nineteenth century Ireland was an expanding and increasingly efficient body. It was staffed by younger, lower class, and increasingly home educated priests who were more politically and socially radical. As the church slowly became more modernized, it became more formalized and standardized. The semi-pagan folk traditions of earlier times (an emphasis on sacred geography, complete with adoration of holy wells and mountains; the importance of seasonal festivals, such as the harvest ritual at Lughnasa; a reliance on informal, part-time clergy; an impoverished infrastructure due to the legacy of the Penal Era) began to give way to a more disciplined, centrally directed, and more respectable religion. The massive program of church building, where stone and slate cathedrals replaced the thatched chapel in an attempt to increase the surprisingly low levels of church attendance, was only the most visible sign of the increased presence of the Church. The Victorian values of moderation and self-improvement could be witnessed in the startling success of Father Theobald Mathew's

³¹ Such millennial hopes had been encouraged by Signor Pastorini's prophecy. Pastorini was the pseudonym of Charles Wellesley (1722-1797), an English Catholic bishop whose General History of the Catholic Church (1771) predicted the end of Protestantism in 1825. This led to a dramatic outbreak of millenarian excitement in the 1820's.

Temperance Movement.³² Vast numbers took the pledge of total abstinence from alcohol, leading many to surmise that urban and middle-class Catholics were adopting peculiarly Protestant attitudes and mores.³³

The role of the “new” church in supporting O’Connell’s campaign is telling. In 1825, Francis Burdett’s bill for emancipation again passed the Commons but not the Lords. The following year, the mass mobilization of Catholic voters resulted in the election of a pro-emancipation Protestant, Villiers Stuart, for MP from Waterford; this represented the first defeat of the powerful Beresford landed interests.³⁴ Organized local committees, orchestrated by parish priests, enabled similar victories in such pivotal districts as Louth, Monaghan, and Westmeath. While an important shift in voting patterns had occurred, the key turning point was to take place in 1828.

During January of that year, 1600 parish meetings were held, with over £20000 collected for the impending candidacy of Daniel O’Connell. O’Connell would be

³² One report states that Father Mathew enjoyed more support than any other figure in early nineteenth century Ireland, with some four to five million followers. The standard volumes on this topic remain: Colm Kerigan, Father Mathew and the Irish Temperance Movement (Cork: Cork University Press, 1992); and, Elizabeth Malcolm, “Ireland Sober, Ireland Free”: Drink and Temperance in Nineteenth Century Ireland (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1988).

³³ There were, likewise, important changes in Protestantism at this time. A period of religious revival and evangelicalism ushered in a time of intensity of belief, and Protestantism became more conservative. These orthodox believers distanced themselves from those who were considered doctrinally unsound. Many of these “born again” organized into groups such as the Orange Order and proudly displayed their beliefs. Such “popular Protestantism” served as political lobby, social club, and agent of enforcement; their aggressive defense of the Union was often marked by bigotry, vulgarity, and violence. Sectarian rioting in Irish cities became common, and a kind of de facto “mental” separation between Protestant Ulster and the rest of the island could be discerned by the time of the Famine. See David Hempton, Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society, 1740-1890 (Myrtle Hill: Routledge Press, 1992).

³⁴ Stuart’s convictions can best be seen in this address to his constituents: “To the British constitution, which is the basis of our liberties and our glory, I feel an ardent attachment; and as Catholic emancipation is that measure which in my mind is best calculated to uphold and strengthen it, my constant and strenuous exertions shall be directed towards its accomplishment. I am influenced by a strong sense of the justice of the claims of my Catholic fellow-subjects, and by an entire confidence in the honesty of their views and principles.” Alan O’Day and John Stevenson, eds., Irish Historical Documents Since 1800 (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1992), 32.

challenging Vesey Fitzgerald, a popular pro-emancipation Protestant for the Parliamentary seat from County Clare.³⁵ O'Connell defeated the incumbent handily (2057 votes to 982), and the election created such a fever pitch of excitement that the government feared rebellion. Would the Catholic landowner be denied his seat in parliament? What would be the result of the government's actions? In March of 1829, fearing rebellion should O'Connell be denied, a reluctant Wellington-Peel ministry pushed through the Act for the Relief of His Majesty's Roman Catholic Subjects.

Emancipation allowed for Roman Catholics to sit in parliament and hold all offices except Monarch, regent, Lord Chancellor of England or Ireland, or Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The Oath of Abjuration and Allegiance, so odious to Catholics, was replaced by a more palatable version, requiring only a denial of the pope's civil authority in the kingdom, and a denial of "any intention to subvert the current property settlement or the present church establishment as settled by law." There were, however, important strings attached to the new legislation.

The Further Act of 1829 effectively destroyed the very power base that had elected O'Connell. The Catholic Association was banned, and the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was given sweeping powers to outlaw similar societies. The franchise was likewise curtailed. The vote was now restricted to those holding £10 worth of property;

³⁵ Catholics could technically sit as MPs but they would have to recite an oath of abjuration and allegiance, denying many of the tenets of their faith, to do so. Hence, few had even attempted to run for election. On 28 June, O'Connell challenged this tradition, stating to the electors of County Clare that "as a Catholic I cannot, and of course never will, take the oaths at present prescribed to members of parliament; but the authority which created those oaths— parliament— can abrogate them: and I entertain a confident hope that, if you elect me, the most bigoted of our enemies will see the necessity of removing from the chosen representative of the people an obstacle which would prevent him from doing his duty to his king and country." Ibid., 33.

this reduced the electorate in county elections from 100,000 to 16,000.³⁶ This step disenfranchised huge numbers of poorer voters; apparently the British elite would rather give votes to middle class Catholics than regularly face an organized, hostile “mob” at the polls. Despite this restriction (which O’Connell opposed but was resigned to accept) emancipation was perceived to be an important national and psychological victory. The example of brinkmanship and the threat of violence by a “peasant” Catholic democracy would not be lost on future nationalists.

At about this time, agrarian unrest again manifested itself. The outbreaks took two distinct forms: ribbonism and faction fighting. The Ribbonmen were the heirs of the Whiteboy legacy; motivated by economic imperatives, there were political and nationalistic undertones to their discontent. An oath-bound group, the Ribbonmen engaged in nocturnal raids against Protestant landlords, thus leading to increased sectarian violence. Recruited from among farmers, tradesmen, and shopkeepers, the movement espoused an egalitarian and independent Ireland to be achieved by force of arms if necessary. Their activities led to the formation of rival, state-sponsored Protestant groups such as the Orange Order, committed to preserving the ascendancy and the Union. While the Ribbonmen seem to have devoted most of their energies to the maintenance and elaboration of rituals of secrecy, the sectarian nature of the movement allows it to be seen as a transitional stage in the development of a popular nationalist politics.³⁷

Faction fights were feuds between rival groups who met at fairs or other public

³⁶ Previously, one could vote if he possessed as little as forty shillings worth of property.

³⁷ For the maintenance of a tradition of violence among lower class Irish, see K.H. Connell, Irish Peasant Society (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

venues to engage in pitched battles. Generally the combatants came from different socio-economic, and hence religious, backgrounds. The class and religious components of these faction fights at least partially contributed to the growing sectarian animosity of the early and mid nineteenth century. The feuds, sometimes extending over several years, may be attributed to increasing social tension; traditionally, they have been interpreted as “recreational violence,” comparable to that of rival groups of soccer hooligans today.³⁸

Once emancipation had been achieved, O’Connell took up a second crusade, that of repeal of the Act of Union. There were two distinct phases of repeal activity: 1830-1835 and 1840-1845, with cooperation from the Whigs throughout. While emancipation had enjoyed support in parliament (particularly in the Commons), there was little tangible evidence to suggest the same for repeal. O’Connell would have to use all his powers of persuasion to convince the British to rescind the Union.³⁹

The Whig party came to power for the first time in a generation in 1830. Often kept in power by O’Connell and his supporters in parliament, they governed for nearly the entire decade, passing a number of important reforms. Stressing their traditional belief in the rights of parliament and its role as a check on the executive, the Whigs were a direct contrast to the reactionary Tory governments of Lords Liverpool and Wellington.⁴⁰ Whereas the Tories viewed the role of the established church and the king as pivotal, the Whigs stressed constitutional liberty, freedom of the press, toleration, and reform. Influenced by the philosophical radicalism of Bentham, the Whigs sought a

³⁸ Patrick P. O’Donnell, The Irish Faction Fighters of the Nineteenth Century (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1975).

³⁹ On repeal, see Kevin Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).

⁴⁰ Lord Liverpool, a close ally of the Crown, had served as Prime Minister from 1812 to 1827.

widened franchise with equal representation and a free market economy in place of protectionism. The Whigs were successful in overcoming the conservative interpretation of the British constitution and passed several notable reforms affecting the United Kingdom generally and Ireland in particular.⁴¹

Whig reforms in Ireland in the early 1830's were noteworthy. An act of 1831 established state sponsored primary education for Ireland. Although intended as non-denominational, the national schools in reality became state subsidized religious schools run by Catholic priests or Protestant clergymen. By 1881, Ireland could boast a literacy rate of 75%, marking it as one of the most literate societies in Europe. (Incidentally, as all educational instruction was to be in English, the new school system contributed to the rapid decline of the Irish language at this time.) An 1831 law was responsible for establishing a Board of Works, which would dispense loans for employment and infrastructure. Similarly, the Irish Reform Act of 1832 sought to address shortcomings in Ireland's political situation. Despite a massive increase in population since the Act of Union (where there had been 5 million in 1800, there were 7 million by 1830), Ireland had gained no new MPs; moreover, the number of Irish voters had increased only slightly. This new legislation gave Ireland five more MPs while expanding the electorate by some twenty percent. Despite all of these reforms, Ireland was by no means democratic. Most observers felt that this could only be achieved by repeal.

Repeal was never an attempt to completely sever the link between Britain and

⁴¹ Among the most notable was the Reform Act of 1832. Secured with O'Connell's support, this legislation eradicated the notorious rotten boroughs and extended the franchise to the British middle class. Other important advances included the Factory Reform Act of 1833, which limited child labor, and the Poor Law Amendment Act of the following year that introduced workhouses to England. The Abolition Act of 1833 outlawed slavery throughout the Empire (the slave trade itself had previously been abolished). For a good general overview of the period, consult E.L. Woodward, The Age of Reform, 1815-70 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

Ireland, or to turn Ireland into an independent republic. It was an attempt to restore an independent Irish parliament of Lords and Commons: a return to the pre-1800 arrangement, with some recognition of Catholic rights was the goal. Deliberately vague so as to maximize support, repeal lacked any detailed discussions of the powers of an Irish parliament on trade, defense, foreign, or imperial relations. Likewise, it encouraged speculation about, but said little on, economic and social reform. Indeed, repeal is best understood as a symbolic utterance, standing for general disaffection to the Union.

The initial push for repeal came in 1830, with the founding of the Society for the Repeal of the Union. Raising some £90000 from 1830 to 1834, this organization efficiently replaced the old Catholic Association. Buoyed by the ebullient tone of the Whig reforms, O'Connell believed that the newly enfranchised British middle class could persuade parliament to embrace his cause. Unfortunately, both Tory and Whig opposition remained strong, even after the 1832 Reform Act.⁴² O'Connell's belief that moral suasion would work for repeal as it had for emancipation was ill founded. Even British radicals considered repeal unnecessary; whereas emancipation had been endorsed on grounds of social justice, a lingering distrust of the Catholic Church doomed repeal. When O'Connell first brought the motion for a committee to investigate the effects of Union, it was defeated by 523 votes to 38. Only one British MP voted for the motion, which saw Whigs and Tories vote together to prevent the perceived dismemberment of the empire. Moreover, middle class Catholics were less than enthusiastic about repeal;

⁴² The Reform Act of 1832 may be seen as an attempt to preserve the elite power from the threat of the "mob." Revolts and rebellion in Poland, Italy, Belgium, and France in 1830, coupled with intense industrial and agricultural unrest in 1830's Britain and Ireland, were accompanied by radical demands for universal suffrage and annual parliaments. This Chartist movement drew heavily on working class support; its revolutionary undertones inspired many subsequent reforms. Ironically, as a result of the Reform Act of 1832, the electorate was only increased from 11% to 18% of the United Kingdom's population. Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Bill* (London: Hutchinson, 1973). See also: John Phillips, *The Great Reform in the Boroughs: English Electoral Behavior, 1818-1841* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

many now had access to office and wished to enjoy their new status in peace. This combination of Irish indifference and parliamentary opposition were to plague O'Connell's efforts for years to come.

O'Connell understood, perhaps better than his contemporaries realized, that repeal, at the present was a non-starter, but he could work pragmatically for piecemeal reforms until a more propitious moment presented itself. The years 1835-1840 were ones of cooperation between "the liberator" and the Whigs; in fact, O'Connell would abandon repeal for six years as he entered into an alliance with Lords Melbourne and John Russell. Although O'Connell had repeatedly said that he would never ask for less than an Irish parliament and full repeal, he would accept a devolved or federal assembly as a first step. His "Litchfield House Compact" was an offer of conditional cooperation; he would agree to support the Whigs in return for Irish reforms. O'Connell even hinted at dropping the matter entirely if justice and equality were given to Ireland.⁴³ This pragmatism led to one of the more fruitful periods of the Union.

Undersecretary of State Thomas Drummond was the administrator whose reforms ushered in this new era of Anglo-Irish history. His reforms included an end to coercion (now only the police, and not the army, would preside over evictions), the allowance for Catholics to serve in government, legal, and constabulary positions, the removal of bigoted judges, and the banning of Orange Order meetings. Furthermore, magistrates would now be paid a stipend, and those of known Orange sympathies were dismissed

⁴³ "The people of Ireland are ready to become a portion of the empire, provided they be made so in reality and not in name alone; they are ready to become a kind of West Britons if made so in reality and in justice; but if not, we are Irishmen again." The standard volumes on Irish politics and society remain K. Theodore Hoppen, Elections, Politics, and Society in Ireland, 1832-1885 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); and Tom Garvin, The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1983).

from service. In 1838, tithe reform was passed. Although not eradicated, this was a milestone towards resolving a crisis which was ongoing since the 1780's, and which had become increasingly violent by the early 1830's. That same year Ireland saw its first Poor Law. The Act of 1838, coming four years after its introduction in Britain, aimed to alleviate growing poverty and reduce Irish emigration to England.⁴⁴ While these actions may seem trivial, they were of inestimable benefit to certain parties. Not surprisingly, by the time of his death in April of 1840, Drummond was exceedingly unpopular among conservative Protestants.

Drummond's death marked the end to an era of reform. Although not all of the legislation enacted during his tenure were beneficial, the misery of the next decade would make his years in office seem a veritable golden age.⁴⁵ In April of 1840, feeling that cooperation with the newly elected Tory Prime Minister Robert Peel would be impossible, O'Connell oversaw the formation of the Loyal National Repeal Association and re-launched his campaign for dissolution of the Union. Initially, O'Connell had trouble reconstructing the basis of support for repeal; the Church hierarchy and upper class Catholics were reluctant to jeopardize their newfound advantages. Gradually, however, most clergy came out in favor of repeal, winning over the middle class with the help of the influential nationalist newspaper *The Nation*, published in Dublin by Thomas Davis. By the end of 1842, O'Connell once again headed a mass movement using the old

⁴⁴ The Poor Law of 1838 was immediately controversial. An earlier report by the Whately Commission, (chaired by the Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Whately) had advised public works, emigration, and a steep absentee tax as the most attractive solutions to Ireland's poverty; O'Connell wholly supported this plan. According to the dictates of political economy, however, the relief should be made as unpalatable as possible so as to prevent the formation of a welfare state. The 1838 action provided for workhouses, but rejected "outdoor" relief.

⁴⁵ Most notably, the Coercion Act of 1833 gave the Viceroy power to suppress public meetings and impose martial law.

methods of mobilization on an even grander scale.⁴⁶

O'Connell declared that 1843 was to be "the year of repeal." To dramatize this point, a series of "monster meetings" were held throughout Ireland in the course of that year. These would be unlike anything previously seen in the British Isles. At a number of meetings throughout the summer, O'Connell continually raised both tensions and expectations.⁴⁷ O'Connell, though, had seriously miscalculated the strength of opposition to repeal; he had virtually no Protestant support, and the middle class was fitfully disturbed by his rhetoric. Parliament originally ignored the clamor so as not to legitimize it; eventually, however, British public opinion forced Peel to take a stand.

Late in the summer of 1843 Peel increased the size of the army in Ireland, while stating that he would use all means to defend the Union.⁴⁸ When O'Connell planned the largest meeting yet for Clontarf on 8 October, the government called his bluff and declared the meeting illegal. O'Connell cancelled the gathering to avoid possible bloodshed; subsequently he lost a great deal of credibility. Although repeal agitation would continue, by 1845 the onset of the Famine would make "normal" politics temporarily irrelevant.

Despite the failure of repeal, O'Connell's achievements were considerable. Not only had he orchestrated the successful movement for Catholic emancipation, he had

⁴⁶ On Peel, see Robert Paul Shipley, Robert Peel's Irish Policy, 1812-1846 (New York: Garland Press, 1987).

⁴⁷ The site of each meeting was important. The meeting at Tara, the seat of the Irish government in medieval times, drew over a quarter million participants. Clontarf, near Dublin, was chosen for its historical impact; Brian Boru had defeated the Viking invaders there in 1014.

⁴⁸ Peel stated, "Deprecating as I do all war, but above all, civil war, yet there is no alternative which I do not think preferable to the dismemberment of this empire." Quoted in T.W. Moody, "Fenianism, Home Rule and the Land War," in T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin, eds., The Course of Irish History (Cork: Mercier Press, 1967), 260.

revolutionized Irish politics—it would never again be the preserve of the elite. He was the first Irish parliamentary leader to coordinate Irish MPs around Irish issues, and he oversaw an influential mix of Catholic nationalism with radicalism, utilitarianism, and liberalism.⁴⁹

The onset of the famine and the failure to achieve repeal via constitutional means would be the two strongest factors giving rise to the next generation of Ireland's nationalists. Both the Young Irelanders and the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood were the direct heirs of a legacy of discontent that stretched back some one hundred years. From the Whiteboys, through the Catholic Association and onto the O'Connellites, the next wave of Irish nationalists had much on which to draw. They would be faced with many of the same impediments as their predecessors, and they would try new strategies, but their goals were the same. Their struggles would leave an indelible mark on Irish and Irish-American history.

⁴⁹ For generally glowing treatments of O'Connell, consult Maurice R. O'Connell, Daniel O'Connell: The Man and His Politics (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990). See also: Charles C. Trench, The Great Dan: A Biography of Daniel O'Connell (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 1984); and Sean O'Faolin, King of the Beggars: A Life of Daniel O'Connell (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1980).

CHAPTER TWO

By 1845 Ireland was still a primarily rural and agricultural country— and a poor one relative to England. The partible inheritance of landholdings, stemming from laws limiting primogeniture, and a rapidly expanding population led to an increasingly Balkanized system of land ownership.¹ With estates being increasingly subdivided, and with an agricultural depression following the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars, levels of rural poverty reached epic proportions. At the same time, there was a concerted effort by landowners to switch to more lucrative pasturage.² The raising of sheep and cattle was less labor intensive and thus there was decreased reliance on agricultural workers; displacement was massive, and seasonal employment became the norm. Increasingly large numbers of indigent Irish farmers moved to Belfast in search of employment, but their chances of finding work in Ireland's only true industrial city were slim.³ Hence, more and more Irish began to emigrate to English and American cities in an attempt to alleviate the pressure on the land.⁴ For those who remained on the farm, the situation

¹ Ireland's population increased from 4 million in 1780 to 5 million in 1800, 6.7 million in 1821, and 8.2 million by 1841. In that year 560,000 of Ireland's 690,000 holdings amounted to less than fifteen acres. Such an explosion would have been difficult if not impossible to sustain at any measure, and represented a massive strain on an overwhelmingly rural economic base. To make matters worse, the poorest areas of Ireland, such as Connaught, had the highest population densities. It was in these areas, and among the lowest social classes, that the effects of the potato famine would be most felt.

² This switch from tillage to pasturage was a reflection of price shifts. The high prices for corn and wheat disappeared after the end of England's hostilities with France. See Cormac O'Grada, Ireland: Before and After the Famine (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

³ Although there was a strong brewing and distilling industry in Dublin and Cork, the basis for industry was in the cotton and linen factories of Ulster. The lack of raw materials and the absence of a local market precluded the industrialization of the island; with no demand for manufactured goods, it made little sense to establish factories on the island. See Cormac O'Grada, Ireland: A New Economic History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁴ On emigration patterns of the rural Irish, see Ruth Ann Mellish-Harris, The Nearest Place that Wasn't Irish: Early Nineteenth Century Irish Labor Migration (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994).

remained dire.

In the late summer of 1845, the fungus *phytophthora infestans* first appeared in Ireland, although it was limited to specific geographic areas. The blight, which turned potatoes black and mushy, had no known remedy, and it had been destroying the crop all over the world since 1840. That first year, between thirty and forty percent of the crop was destroyed, leading to severe hardship. In 1846, over 75% of the crop was lost, leading to famine.⁵ Over the course of the next five years, one million would die of disease and starvation; by 1855 nearly twice that number would emigrate. In fact, the ten years after the onset of the blight would see Ireland's population decline by 33%.⁶

The initial response of the British government was encouraging. Prime Minister Robert Peel adopted a surprisingly progressive stance. Public works institutions would soon be implemented; government grants and loans funded road, harbor, and drainage work schemes to provide public employment and allow for food to be purchased. The conservative Tories even purchased 100,000 pounds worth of Indian maize to be sold at cost from government depots. Unfortunately, much of the enacted legislation was evaded; for example, the price of maize doubled between August and December of 1846. Moreover, most of those affected were subsistence farmers who did not have access to, nor knowledge of, a cash-based economy; irrespective of how low prices were, most Irish

⁵ Although I use the terms interchangeably throughout this discussion, the preferred label for the catastrophe has come to be "the Hunger" and not "the Famine." The historiography of the Hunger is tremendous. The canonical works remain: Cormac O'Grada, The Great Irish Famine (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1989); and Christine Kinealy, A Death Dealing Famine: The Great Hunger in Ireland (Chicago: Pluto Press, 1997). Frank Neal offers a nationalist interpretation in his Black '47: Britain and the Irish Famine (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). An economic look at the Hunger is offered by Joel Mokyr, Why Ireland Starved: A Quantitative and Analytical History of the Irish Economy, 1800-1850 (London: Harper Collins, 1983).

⁶ Cecil Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger: Ireland, 1845-1849 (New York: Harper Collins, 1962), 409.

still could not afford to purchase food. Nevertheless, these attempts to keep food prices down and prevent profiteering assured that there were very few deaths from starvation during that first year of partial crop failure. More worrisome, the lack of precedent for sustained, long-term support would lead to a paucity of response in coming years

Peel's belief in the strength of laissez faire and the ideology of the free market was unflappable. This led him to seek repeal of the Corn Laws, legislation that had subsidized landlords by putting restrictive tariffs on imports of corn and wheat. At the urging of the Anti-Corn Law League, Peel abolished the legislation, which had protected Irish access to the markets of Great Britain. Not only did this remove Ireland's protected position in the British grain market, it reduced still further the desperate circumstances of the Irish peasantry.⁷ This would be the death of the administration, and the resulting split allowed a new Whig government to take power in the summer of 1846. The new administration of Prime Minister John Russell and Charles Edward Trevelyan reluctantly continued Peel's relief programs; they even established 650 local relief committees by August of 1848 to raise funds, provide information, and coordinate the construction of roads, bridges, and irrigation systems. Nevertheless, the Whig's Malthusian economic concepts and social philosophy did not bode well for the future.

The new Whig ministry was even more closely wedded to laissez faire than their predecessor had been. They sought minimum interference in the market; food provision should be left to that venue, and should never be given away for free or at below market

⁷ Of course, this affected British farmers, who had benefited from the protectionist legislation, as well. Peel was convinced that a more free market would provide the food needed in Ireland. He was not wrong; by late 1846 sufficient food was coming to Ireland. The problem was that poor Irish did not have the money available to purchase that food, compelling the administration to turn to public works. For the most recent interpretation of the Famine and its impact, see Cormac O'Grada, Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory (Princeton University Press, 2000).

price. While social engineering to aid future development was accepted, relief efforts should interfere as little as possible in the labor market. The economics of the Whigs was merged with providentialism and moralism—the famine had been sent by God as divine retribution for larger social, moral, and economic lapses.

This harsh attitude to poverty and relief was catastrophically inefficient. The prevailing attitude was that the government should relieve the destitute but not necessarily the poor, who were divided into deserving and undeserving. Public work schemes for the relief of the deserving poor should provide low wages; ideally, these projects would be nonproductive as well. Even workhouses had to be less attractive than the lowest level of independent laboring. The British perception of the Irish as lazy peasants who were controlled by irresponsible landlords became more prevalent as the famine progressed. The general principle of local responsibility for the relief of poverty—that Irish property should pay for Irish poverty—placed an increasingly unfeasible burden on local poor law unions.

The almost complete failure of the potato crop throughout Ireland in 1846 led to an immediate shortage of food, with widespread distress and hunger. Following the dictates of normal market mechanisms, Irish merchants continued to export food for higher prices abroad, although imports probably exceeded exports by the spring of 1847. At this stage, there was almost total reliance on public works to provide relief, and the government provided nearly £5 million for public works projects. Some 750,000 individuals were employed by the spring of 1847. Still, this represented only a drop in the needed bucket; soon, a system designed for 100,000 persons was dealing with 1.7 million people.

Widespread deaths from starvation and disease began in the winter and spring of 1846-1847. Incompetence, corruption, and delays in setting up public works caused many of the deaths. The fact that weak, diseased, poorly clothed, and undernourished victims were forced into hard labor on these public projects during the severe winter — one of the worst on record— contributed to the high death toll. Moreover, the local nature of relief, channeled through landlords and reliant upon energetic and benevolent (but overworked) clergy made for a patchy response.⁸ The poorest areas, and those with absentee landlords, often had no relief committees at all. The worsening situation led to a radical, but half-hearted, shift in Whig social policy.

Rising death tolls, the spread of disease, and increasing levels of public criticism led the Whigs to reluctantly concede the temporary need for free food distribution. The Temporary Relief, or “Soup Kitchen,” Act of February 1847 allowed Poor Law Unions to provide “outdoor relief;” one no longer needed to go to workhouses for relief. Despite the apparent change of heart, problems were numerous. While the local bodies would receive generous financing and feed over three million persons by August of that year, they were entirely responsible for providing all necessary services; in fact, the localities were expected to repay a sizable portion of the £2,255,000 provided by the British government. The Gregory clause to the Poor Law Amendment Act of June 1847 stipulated that no person occupying over a quarter acre of land was eligible for relief, and that the able bodied had to do work “as repulsive as possible consistent with humanity.” Only the destitute and those holding no or little land were eligible for relief; wage earners

⁸ On the local relief efforts, see: Donal Kerr, *A Nation of Beggars?: Priests, Politicians, and People in Famine Ireland, 1846-1852* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Michael O'Malley, “Local Relief During the Great Irish Famine, 1845-1850: The Case of Castlebar, County Mayo,” *Eire-Ireland* 32 (1997): 109-120.

had to purchase the soup at cost price. Fatal delays in implementing the new schemes were not uncommon; the six to eight week gap between closing public works schemes and opening the soup kitchens meant death to hundreds. Ironically, the government's policy might have worsened the effects of the very problem they were attempting to solve: public works projects, fever hospitals, workhouses, and food lines brought the afflicted to a common area, where typhus, dysentery, smallpox, and cholera could spread with relative ease.

The small but generally sound potato crop of 1847— no doubt a result of the lack of sowing— allowed the British government to gradually wash its hands of the problem. In 1848 the government declared that the famine was over, thereby placating the British conscience while closing the soup kitchens and ending all special relief. Drastic cuts in aid to the Poor Law Unions— £156,00 in 1848, and £114,000 in 1849— shifted the burden almost entirely to Ireland. At a time when only the British government had the resources to deal with the crisis, that body actually cut spending on relief measures. Further crop failures in 1848 and 1849 led to a massive cholera epidemic and spiraling mortality, disease, and emigration.⁹

The consequences of the famine were as important as its causes and effects. Among the most significant was the massive scale of emigration, which converted what had been a steady stream of willing migrants into a deluge of exiled refugees. From 1845 to 1855 nearly two million Irish left for America, Canada, Britain, Australia, and South Africa, instantly creating a Diaspora of considerable size. As many as 85% of these would eventually end up in the United States; indeed, by 1860, New York and Boston

⁹ Emigration reached 200,000 per annum from 1847 to 1852. On the impact of the Famine on the United States, see Arthur Gribben, The Great Famine and the Irish Diaspora in America (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).

ranked as the two largest Irish cities in the world. This consistent drain on human resources would continue even after the famine had passed; by 1890, nearly three million, or 40% of the Irish-born, lived abroad. While the decision to leave Ireland was made easier by the famine, it could still be a traumatic event. The psychological impact of emigration could be witnessed in “American wakes”; in these dockside scenes, families would bid farewell to sons and daughters whom they would in all likelihood never see again.

The nature of the crossing was abominable. The conditions aboard these notorious “coffin ships” rivaled those found on slave ships making the transatlantic voyage a century earlier; in fact, many of the vessels had served previously in that capacity.¹⁰ During bad weather, hatches were routinely battened down, allowing for no fresh air, light, or ventilation to reach the holds. The journey, which took a good ship some four to six weeks in favorable weather, claimed up to a third of the passengers on the run to Canada. Despite the horrid conditions, death rates on the crossing to America, which was a much more expensive voyage, were remarkably low, averaging 2-3%.¹¹

Initially, these emigrants faced considerable prejudice and economic hardships; the hostile American reception ensured that most would merely trade rural poverty for urban abjection. Eventually, however, these exiles would create a proud, powerful,

¹⁰ On the nature of the crossing and the condition aboard these “ocean hearses” consult: Edward Laxton, *The Famine Ships: The Irish Exodus to America* (New York: H. Holt, 1997); and, David Fitzpatrick, ed., *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

¹¹ At a time when daily wages in Ireland averaged six pence, the fare to New York or Philadelphia was four pounds; this was the equivalent of between \$7.50 and \$12.50 per person, or roughly half of an Irish laborer’s wages for an entire year. The fare to Quebec was a mere one pound, ten shillings, or at most two pounds. These cheap rates attracted the poorest, sickest passengers. Furthermore, as these people were transporting between two parts of the British Empire, and not to a foreign nation, the entrance requirements were less rigorous.

increasingly wealthy, intensely nationalist, and resentful community in the United States. Irish-America was soon to become a powerful lobby within a major world power, and emigration would remain central to the Irish economic and social life for years to come. Most importantly, Irish-America would provide a crucial source of arms, money, men, and intellectual and ideological capital for new nationalist causes in Ireland. Among the most important of these new nationalist groups was Young Ireland. These theorists are often seen as providing the ideological founding blocks of Irish republican nationalism. Founded in 1842 by the Protestant lawyer Thomas Davis and the Catholic journalists Charles Gavan Duffy and John Blake Dillon, the group used their weekly newspaper, *The Nation*, to tell a potent and damning story of British involvement in Ireland. Originally, this articulate and intellectual group had supported O'Connell's efforts to achieve repeal through parliamentary means; but following "the Liberator's" capitulation at Clonmel, the repeal movement split between O'Connellite constitutional nationalists and the Young Irelanders who would not rule out the possible use of physical force.¹² This was a split that, in a variety of forms, would last until independence.

The ideology of Young Ireland can best be described as romantic nationalism, which is to say that it was as much a cultural as it was a political phenomenon.¹³ Drawing on Irish history, language, and culture, they put forth an idealized, Gaelic view

¹² Ironically, the movement took its name from a statement made by O'Connell. Following a spirited oration by Thomas Francis Meagher to the Repeal Association of Lismore on 24 September 1843, "O'Connell, applauding, clapped him (Meagher) on the shoulder, enthusiastically exclaiming, 'Well done, young Ireland!'" Michael Cavanagh, Memoirs of General Thomas Francis Meagher, Comprising the Leading Events of his Career Chronologically Arranged, with Selections from his Speeches, Lectures, and Miscellaneous Writings, including Personal Reminiscences (Worcester: Messenger Press, 1892), 35. It was a speech by Meagher on 28 July 1846 that permanently fractured the Repeal movement into physical force and constitutional camps. Cavanagh, Memoirs of Thomas Francis Meagher, 65.

¹³ See: Giovanni Costigan, "Romantic Nationalism: Ireland and Europe," Irish University Review 3 (1973): 141-152.

of the Irish nation. Portraying the British as an alien, conquering race that should be ejected from Ireland, they sought to fashion a peculiarly Irish identity, one that could include all religions.¹⁴ Replacing the classicism of the United Irishmen with a devotion to “home grown” heroes such as the mythic Cuhulin, Young Ireland violently rejected English customs and character.¹⁵ Indeed, Young Ireland can be characterized as being inherently and rabidly anti-English and Anglophobic. They sought to revive pride and interest in the Gaelic language and Gaelic culture, and they found O’Connell’s attitude on most matters decidedly too British.¹⁶ Perhaps most strikingly, where “the Liberator” had sought only an independent Irish parliament with connection to Britain being retained through the Monarch, Young Ireland sought complete independence and the eventual creation of a republic.¹⁷

¹⁴ Whereas O’Connell’s support had come almost exclusively from Catholics, many of the most influential leaders of Young Ireland— Thomas Davis, John Mitchel, and William Smith O’Brien— were Protestants. On Young Ireland, see Richard Davis, The Young Ireland Movement (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1987).

¹⁵ Recent interpretations have focused on how the United Irishmen used the Celtic past as well as classical ideologies. Luke Gibbon, Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics and the Colonial Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁶ The romantic movement was not limited to Young Ireland. The Ossianic Society (1853-1862) published work devoted primarily to folkloric and Irish language materials. This literary mission was shared by Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’s Phoenix Society (1856) of Skibbereen, a group concerned with promoting heroic models for patriots. Dublin’s Society for the Promotion and Cultivation of the Irish Language, established in the summer of 1858, similarly provided occasions for fraternization. Any such congenial society or movement would have the active participation of large groups of young men. See: L.M. Cullen, “The Cultural Bias of Modern Irish Nationalism,” in Rosalind Mitchison, ed., The Roots of Nationalism: Studies in Northern Europe (Edinburgh: Freebourn Press, 1980): 91-106. See also: R.V. Comerford, Charles J. Kickham: A Study in Irish Nationalism and Literature (Portmarnock: Wolfhound Press, 1985); Owen Dudley Edwards, Celtic Nationalism (London: Routledge and Paul, 1968); and John Hutchinson, The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987). On the Phoenix Society, see Sean O’Luining, “The Phoenix Society in Kerry, 1858-1859,” Journal of the Kerry Archaeological Society 2 (1969): 5-26.

¹⁷ This was a gradual transformation. William Smith O’Brien, who considered himself a member of “Middle Aged Ireland” and a bridge between O’Connell and the Young Irishmen, was an avowed monarchist who embraced republicanism only for a short while. O’Brien is an interesting character, and an unlikely revolutionary. A descendent of an old Gaelic family that claimed links to Brian Boru, he was a

These differences in opinion can be attributed to the influence of European nationalism and romanticism. A growing belief in the people as a nation (in opposition to monarchy, tyranny, and foreign rule), was widespread in continental philosophy at mid-century.¹⁸ Guiseppe Mazzini's linking of nationalism with liberalism, and the economic nationalism of Georg Friedrich List found a responsive audience in Ireland and elsewhere.¹⁹ There was also a cultural dimension to nationalism: the belief that a shared language and customs were the true foundation of political states led to an emphasis on folk culture— fairy tales, mythology, song, history— as the basis for a new national identity. A philosophy of aesthetics, where landscape, art, literature, and music were all artistic expressions of nationalism soon took hold. While the romantic emphasis on emotion over reason was politically ambiguous, when tied to nationalism it could be reactionary. An emphasis on individuality, self-examination, and freedom underscored the Hegelian notion that the state— a living entity over and above the people— was an important vehicle for realizing a utopian society.

The political nature of the Young Irelanders' cultural program was evident enough; the desire to rid Ireland of all British influences (sport, fashion, etc.) allowed for the development of nationalistic sentiment in an innocuous setting. The reinforcement of Irish culture (language, music, dance, literature, history), the return to rural, pre-industrial values, and the rejection of materialism which accompanied pan-Irish nationalism allowed for the development of a movement which was pregnant with possibilities. The

wealthy Protestant landowner and MP who opposed social radicalism, but felt obliged to cast his lot with the Young Irelanders despite his lifelong friendship with O'Connell.

¹⁸ See H.G. Schenck, The Mind of the European Romantics (London: Constable Press, 1966).

¹⁹ Arthur Griffith, founder of Sinn Fein, was an ardent disciple of List.

inherent logic of “Irish exceptionalism” was that this stressing of a different culture would lead to calls for independence. Possessing a unique identity meant deserving autonomy.

All of these sentiments surfaced in 1848, a year of revolution throughout Europe. At that time, France, Italy, Germany, and the Austrian Empire were thrown into chaos. In February, Louis Philippe was overthrown, and the Second Republic was established in France. Both Sicily and Venice rose up in reaction to Hapsburg and Austrian rule, while in Berlin, Friedrich Wilhelm IV was forced to concede a constitution; in Frankfurt a German parliament tried unsuccessfully to unite Germany under this liberal document. At Budapest, Louis Kossuth’s bid for Hungarian independence was thwarted by Austria, which also quelled uprisings in Vienna and Prague. The creation of the Roman republic, although subsequently crushed by the French, forced Pope Pius IX to abandon his temporal power and flee the Vatican; the Catholic Church, and its leading representative in Ireland, Cardinal Paul Cullen, was now an adamantly anti-revolutionary, anti-republican body. Still, the success of European revolutionaries emboldened many in Ireland, particularly those who were affected by the famine, to try their own hand at revolution irrespective of clerical opposition.

The famine, and the continental revolutions, served to both traumatize and radicalize Young Ireland. During the height of the Hunger, they established a more formal political vessel for their aims. In what was essentially a “talking shop for revolution,” the Irish Confederation combined moderate and physical force elements; they even sent a deputation to the newly established government in France, offering support and seeking assistance in their own struggle. Moved by the plight of their

starving countrymen, many among the Young Irelanders saw in the famine a deliberate attempt by Britain to exterminate the Irish. Radicals, led by John Mitchel, developed an influential nationalist interpretation of the situation, arguing that the food shortage had been artificially created.²⁰ It was widely believed that while “the Almighty indeed created the potato blight, it was the English who created the famine.” The Hunger would be used to inspire “republican” nationalist movements from then onwards.²¹

As the famine progressed, Young Ireland increasingly called for the forcible ejection of the “alien and oppressive British race.” Even such relative moderates as William Smith O’Brien began to question how much longer they should adhere to constitutionalism.²² The government of Great Britain began to notice the activities of the Irish Confederation and the disconcerting rhetoric of its members. In May of 1848, Mitchel and Duffy were arrested, convicted, and transported to a penal colony on Bermuda on charges of treason felony. Whereas the first serious thought to an uprising had come in the wake of the Paris revolt, concrete plans were formulated for a rebellion to follow that year’s harvest. A war council consisting of John Blake Dillon, Thomas Francis Meagher, Richard O’Gorman, Thomas D’Arcy McGee, and Thomas Devin Reilly planned a rebellion for the southern countryside, where there was a strong

²⁰ Mitchel had become increasingly at odds with more socially conservative members of the movement. An outspoken advocate of peasant-led revolution to establish an independent Irish republic, he resigned from the Irish Confederation when his calls for a rent strike were rejected. In February of 1848 he began publishing *The United Irishman*, specifically as an organ of revolution. The incendiary tone of Mitchel’s paper resulted in his transportation to Bermuda under the Treason Felony Act.

²¹ For the impact of Young Ireland on later nationalist organizations, see Charles Townshend, Political Violence in Ireland: Government and Resistance from 1848 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

²² O’Brien, an Irish Protestant and Member of Parliament deeply concerned with the plight of his countrymen, reiterated statistics and horrifying examples of mortality and morbidity; though the government refused to find money to alleviate such misery, he felt sure that, “if there were a rebellion in Ireland tomorrow, they would cheerfully vote 10 or 20 millions to put it down; but what they would do to destroy a life they will not do so as to save it.” Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates. 3d ser., 89 (1847): 76-84.

tradition of agrarian unrest.

The authorities, told by informants of the plan, responded by suspending habeas corpus on 21 July and apprehending many of the ringleaders. A half-hearted campaign on behalf of the rebels ensued; crowds of poorly armed peasants assembled to hear the leaders, but dispersed rapidly in the face of clerical opposition and the failure of the leaders to distribute food or confiscate property. A minor clash at Ballingarry, Tipperary, resulted in limited bloodshed and the surrender of the remaining confederates.²³ Convicted of high treason, O'Brien, Meagher, and other Young Irelanders were given death sentences— "to be hanged, drawn and quartered, with their remnants to be disposed of as Her Majesty saw fit"— which were later commuted to lifetime transportation. Although the rebellion was ineffective, the ideology and example of Young Ireland provided a powerful inspiration to all subsequent nationalists. The first call to arms, the first revolutionary activity in a generation, theirs was to be viewed as a great moment of republican sacrifice in the name of independence.

For the next ten years, the primary issue in Irish politics was land. The horrors of the famine had made clear the need to reassess the relationship between those who owned the land and those who worked it. The key theorist of land reform and tenant rights at this early stage was James Fintan Lalor, an economist who argued that Ireland's problems would not be solved by independence alone.²⁴ The real issue, Lalor argued, was land

²³ The engagement is sometimes derisively referred to as the battle of Widow McCormick's cabbage patch. For an interesting analysis of the rebellion, see: Sean Cronin, "The Country Did Not Turn Out," *Eire-Ireland* 2 (1976): 3-17. Cronin states unequivocally that "peasants follow leaders, not principles, and the most conspicuous leaders in 1848 were the parish priest and the landlord— neither of whom were likely to advocate revolution."

²⁴ Wrote Lalor, "I will never act with nor aid any organization limiting itself strictly to the sole object of dissolving the present connection with Britain and rigidly excluding every other. I will not be

ownership, and he proposed a socialistic redistribution of real estate and an end to subdivisions to achieve his vision.²⁵ His goal was to replace landlordism with “a secure and independent agricultural peasantry;” while many of the Young Irelanders thought this was putting the cart before the horse, Lalor was much more of a realist. He understood that middle class intellectual idealists were unlikely to get the support they needed for a revolution without recognizing the basic needs and suffering of the people. By linking land to national independence, Lalor was able to create a powerful focus for political activity in later years. By equating land ownership to autonomy, Lalor ensured that the two topics would be forever intertwined: the question of land, with a focus on Anglo-Irish relations, was now a major political issue.²⁶

The remnants of the Young Ireland movement were soon to be re-formed into a new nationalist organization; more than an intellectual endeavor, the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood (IRB) would form the bedrock of future nationalist activity. Rejecting constitutionalism as useless, this new group was committed to the use of physical force to achieve independence; in an important advancement from earlier nationalists, the IRB would draw heavily on the men and money of the Irish Diaspora. Indeed, an auxiliary movement, the Fenian Brotherhood was established concomitantly in America to provide

fettered and handcuffed. A mightier question is in the land— one beside which Repeal dwarfs down into a petty parish question.” O’Day and Stevenson, Irish Historical Documents, 68.

²⁵ “The entire ownership of Ireland, moral and material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested of right in the people of Ireland... they and none but they, are the landowners and lawmakers of this island.” *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁶ The canonical work on this topic is Paul Bew, Land and the National Question in Ireland (Atlantic Highlands: Highlands Press, 1979). See also: Barbara Solow, The Land Question and the Irish Economy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); and W.E. Vaughn, Landlords and Tenants in Ireland, 1848-1904 (Dundalk: Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, 1984).

“the sinews of war” to the IRB.²⁷ Drawing on a century of tradition, the new movement would be uniquely long-lived, and would be responsible for carrying nationalism from the remnants of Young Ireland through to independence.

The Brotherhood was founded on 17 March 1858 by John O’Mahony and Michael Doheny in New York City. At that same time, its European counterpart, the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, was founded by James Stephens in a Dublin warehouse. Stephens and O’Mahony were both veterans of the failed 1848 uprising who had been living in France since that time; in fact, the pair had escaped to Paris by skillfully faking their own deaths and burials. Once on the continent, the two men renewed acquaintances with fellow revolutionaries and began to plan for the next stage in the fight for Irish independence. Retaining much of the ideology (and significant amounts of the membership) of Young Ireland, the group was distinctly Gaelic in outlook. Indeed, the very name “Fenian” is an Anglicized version of “Fianna”, the ancient Irish term for warriors.²⁸

Drawing heavily on lower and working class constituents, the Brotherhood was a secret military organization that saw violence as necessary and desirable.²⁹ Ideally, they would strike a blow for Ireland’s freedom when Britain was occupied elsewhere. The

²⁷ Although the term “Fenian” is really only applicable to the American-based Brotherhood, it was widely— even officially— used to denote the IRB as well. The separation of the two bodies was always maintained. See Leon O’Brion, “The Fenian Brotherhood,” in David Doyle and Owen Dudley Edwards, eds., America and Ireland, 1776-1976: The American Identity and the Irish Connection (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980): 117-132.

²⁸ O’Mahony was an accomplished Gaelic scholar who had made an English translation of Geoffrey Keating’s history of Ireland, Foras Feasa ar Eirinn.

²⁹ A pair of important studies has suggested that unlike previous nationalist groups, the Fenians were unique in drawing their support largely from an urban constituency. See: John Newsinger, Fenians in Mid-Victorian Britain (London: Pluto Press, 1994); and R.V. Comerford, The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society, 1848-1882 (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985).

IRB focused exclusively on independence and the creation of a republic; while acknowledging other issues, it felt that addressing them was counterintuitive and hence they had no detailed political demands in other areas. The relatively impoverished membership made the Brotherhood potentially much more radical; the requirement that members take an oath of loyalty and secrecy meant that they could expect little support from the Catholic middle class or Church hierarchy.³⁰ To protect themselves from the ubiquitous British spies, a complicated bureaucratic arrangement was developed. The IRB was organized into “Circles,” “Districts” (or “Counties,”) and “Divisions,” in ascending order. Each circle was to be controlled by a “center,” who in turn had nine captains under his command. Each of these was in charge of nine sergeants, who commanded nine privates each.³¹ Ideally, one would know only his peers and immediate superior officer. Circle “Centres” formed the County unit; County Centres the Divisional unit; and Divisional Centres sat on the Supreme Council, the IRB’s ruling body. The Supreme Council was composed of seven elected members who represented the Irish and British divisions. A President, Secretary, and Treasurer formed the ruling body’s executive. The IRB was the “sole government of the Irish Republic” and its President (or “Head Centre”) was President of the Republic. Every member owed unquestioning allegiance to the Supreme Council, whose decisions were reported regularly to its

³⁰ Stephens stipulated that in Ireland, if not in the United States, the members must be oath-bound, lest clerical interference ruin the movement as it had in 1848. O’Leary, Recollections, 1: 89.

³¹ John Savage attributes the use of circles (cells) to the influence that secret societies and their structures, particularly in Paris, held for O’Mahony and Stephens who claimed to have manned the barricades during the Third Republic. See John Savage, Fenian Heroes and Martyrs (Boston: P. Donahoe, 1868), 306 for a detailed look at the IRB structure.

American counterpart.³² Despite the admonitions of the Catholic hierarchy, the group did enjoy the support of many parish priests, which emboldened the movement to stand up to and oppose the conservative leaders of the Catholic Church.

Just as the famine had revolutionized Irish political, economic, and social history, it was equally a turning point in Irish religious history. Following the Hunger processes of transition and reorganization would transform the Catholic Church. A “devotional revolution” took place, whereby a slow shift from popular, supernatural piety to modern, formal, controlled worship occurred.³³ A reverence for a spiritualized landscape, pagan funeral rites filled with keening, and a belief in leprechauns and the Banshee were increasingly frowned upon, as more formal Church rituals became common.³⁴ While the change was slow and patchy, an increasingly powerful priesthood accompanied it.

As the church modernized, the nature of the clergy also changed. Accusations of indiscipline, scandal, drunkenness, and sexual misconduct declined. Many of the new clergy came from the relatively comfortable farming and commercial classes; at a time when laborers earned less than £15 per year, the annual income of clergymen rose from £65 to £180. This financial security allowed priests to become more socially divorced and hence more socially respected. This transformation from lax, “part-time” priests who were closely involved in the local economy to disciplined, full-time, professional priests who maintained some distance led to the clergy being identified with middling, “respectable” Catholics rather than the peasantry.

The changing nature of the priesthood was matched by an ambitious period of

³² Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian Chief: A Biography of James Stephens* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1967), 92-93.

³³ The seminal work on the devotional revolution is Emmet Larkin. “The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875,” *American Historical Review* 77 (1972): 625-652. Recent challenges to this thesis are offered by: Thomas G. McGrath, “The Tridentine Evolution of Modern Irish Catholicism: A Re-examination of the ‘Devotional Revolution’ Thesis,” *Recusant History* 20 (1991): 512-523; and by John Newsinger, “The Catholic Church in Nineteenth Century Ireland,” *European History Quarterly* 25 (1995): 247-267.

³⁴ Keening is the excessive wailing by females at the funeral of male family members. On the modernization of the Catholic Church, see: S.J. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982); and S.J. Connolly, *Religion and Society in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1985).

organization and modernization. A huge mid-century building program saw some £5 million spent on new churches, seminaries, and convents.³⁵ The violent disputes over episcopal appointments so typical of the pre-famine years gave way to an ordered system of selection as Gallicanism was replaced by Ultramontanism. This tighter control from Rome allowed for a corresponding growth in confidence, organization, and self-assurance by Irish clerics, who idealized the rural Irish traditions of piety and deference to Church figures.

The central figure of the Catholic Church in Ireland at this time was Cardinal Paul Cullen.³⁶ A friend and supporter of Pope Pius IX, Cullen was created Archbishop of Armagh in 1849, and he held the same position in Dublin from 1852 to 1878; in 1866, he was created Ireland's first Cardinal. Cullen accelerated the process of modernization and centralization, while encouraging the shift from Gallicanism to Ultramontanism. He sought to instill a sense of duty, discipline, and sexual restraint that mirrored the "respectability" and puritan mentalities that matched the social climate of the Victorian era. Under Cullen, the Church would adopt a conservative social agenda that would remain its hallmark until the late twentieth century. Indeed, from the famine on, the Church would be the major force in Irish emotional and social life, as well as a force for moral rectitude. The church would serve as a social and moral compass in a changing

³⁵ Years later, Irish nationalists responded to a similar program: "We implore our countrymen to save the poor of Ireland from the horrors of gnawing hunger, before they waste one cent in rearing aristocratic steeples over the roofless cabins and graves of the famine-slain. It is sheer murder to let a brother die of starvation while you squander the means of saving him on belfry houses. It is blasphemy to say that the God of love and charity would prefer an offering of stone and mortar to the succor of his own image and likeness." *The Irish People* 13 July 1867.

³⁶ On Cullen, see Peadar MacSuibhne, *Paul Cullen and His Contemporaries* (Naas: Leinster Leader, 1961). Consult also: Oliver P. Rafferty, "The Catholic Bishops and Revolutionary Violence in Ireland: Some 19th and 20th Century Comparisons," *Studies* 83, no.329 (1994): 30-42; and, Peter Donnelly, "Bishops and Violence: A Response to Oliver Rafferty," *Studies* 83, no. 331 (1994): 331-340.

world while providing solace and comfort for emigrants, those affected by the famine, and their families. In promoting a rural ideal over urban life, the Church embraced the anti-industrial, anti-material values of small farmers; this led to a perceived lack of concern for the laboring poor, or at least a lack of support for “radical” remedies.

The Fenians represented a major threat to Cullen. As a secret, oath-bound organization, they could expect to receive no quarter from the Church. Cullen himself was firmly opposed to violent nationalism, having witnessed firsthand the effects of the Roman Republic when he was a seminarian in the Vatican. While his condemnations of Fenianism infuriated many, his views were shared by other leading Irish clerics.³⁷ Bishop David Moriarty of Kerry echoed Cullen’s beliefs when he reportedly declared that “Hell is not hot enough, nor eternity long enough for the godless Fenians.” Cullen continually stated his belief that the sole duty of priests was their congregants’ spiritual welfare, and that they should steer clear of contentious political issues. Despite these admonitions, some clergy were sympathetic to the Brotherhood. These ranged from John MacHale, the Archbishop of Tuam, to Patrick Lavelle, the great nationalist priest of Irish history, who routinely spoke at Fenian gatherings and sermonized on the “Catholic right to revolution.” This division in the clergy reflected larger divisions in Ireland; the changing nature of economics, social relations, and land ownership gave fuel to the passions of the day.³⁸

These passions, and the conflict between the Church and the IRB, were magnified

³⁷ Wrote Fenian John Devoy: “Cardinal Cullen exercised an evil influence on politics.” John Devoy, Recollections of an Irish Rebel (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), 118.

³⁸ On the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Fenians, see: Oliver Rafferty, The Church, the State, and the Fenian Threat (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000); and E.R. Norman, The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965).

during the funeral of a long-forgotten Irish expatriate. Many point to the death of Terence Bellew McManus in 1861 as the true origin of transatlantic Fenianism. Prior to that time, Fenian activities in Ireland were reserved to propaganda and fundraising, but the outpouring of grief for this veteran of 1848 allowed for the creation of mystique and a new generation of nationalist feeling. McManus had died in San Francisco, where he had been living since his escape from Van Diemen's Land. His body was trafficked across North America, and dispatched from New York. Funeral processions in Dublin and Cork drew several hundred thousand spectators, as well as the ire of Cullen, who saw the internment of the revolutionary in Dublin's Glasnevin Cemetery as giving succor and support to a dangerous movement.³⁹ An agricultural downturn and economic depression added to the group's appeal; in 1863, founding member Thomas Clarke Luby used money collected from the American Irish and established *The Irish People* as a mouthpiece for the organization.⁴⁰ Slowly, membership increased, and plans for a revolution continued.⁴¹

³⁹ See: Oliver P. Rafferty, "Cardinal Cullen, Early Fenianism, and the MacManus Funeral Affair," *Recusant History* 22 (1995): 549-563. Some 80,000 to 100,000 took part in the procession in Cork alone, with 150,000 in Dublin, where the procession stretched some seven miles. These numbers are especially impressive when we consider the fact that the Church had spoken out against the proceedings, and that the weather on the day of the Dublin procession— 10 November 1861—was abominable. See Joseph Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), 166-167. For the traditional interpretation of the funeral as jumping off point for Fenianism, see Louis R. Bisceglia, "The Fenian Funeral of Terence Belew McManus," *Eire-Ireland* 14, no.3 (Autumn, 1979): 45-64.

⁴⁰ The paper made its first appearance on 29 November 1863. Two years later, when it was seized by the police, it had a circulation of 8000. Mabel Gregory Walker, *The Fenian Movement* (Colorado Springs: Ralph Myles Publisher, 1969), 21.

⁴¹ J.S. Donnelly makes the connection between the economy and the appeal of Fenianism clear. "The Irish Agricultural Depression of 1859-1864," *Irish Economic and Social History* 3 (1976): 33-54. Donnelly's profiles of rank-and-file Fenians indicate that nationalism's staunchest supporters were members of precisely those groups most threatened by economic displacement and the necessity of emigration: artisans, journeymen, and shopkeeper's assistants in South Leinster's and Munster's decaying towns.

James Stephens had routinely called for an uprising, but inadequate funding forced perpetual postponements. The outbreak of the American Civil War further hampered plans, as did the activities of government spies who had infiltrated the movement. By February of 1866, habeas corpus was suspended and the offices of *The Irish People* were raided; Luby, Stephens, John O'Leary, and Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa were all arrested. Leaderless, the movement seemed moribund, but plans for a revolt continued nonetheless. By March of 1867, the IRB was riddled with spies; even one of their senior military leaders, Godfrey Massey, had turned informer following his arrest. With the government knowing of their plots, any raid would be futile. A planned attack by British Fenians on Chester Castle was betrayed, and minor skirmishes at Cork and Dublin led to a dozen deaths. Most of the remaining Irish Fenians were apprehended, and a trial date was set.⁴²

On 18 September, an ill-fated rescue of IRB leaders Thomas Kelly and Timothy Deasy was attempted. During the rescue, an effort was made to shoot the lock off of a prison van, resulting in the death of British police sergeant William Brett. Twenty-nine arrests followed, and in November five men were convicted of murder. Of these, one was subsequently pardoned, and another's sentence was commuted, but William Allen, Michael Larkin, and William O'Brien, were hanged for their roles in the crime. While certainly culpable, those executed were probably not the perpetrators of the crime. The deaths of these "Manchester martyrs" prompted a partial reconciliation between the Catholic Church and Fenianism, and a groundswell of popular support for the movement

⁴² See Shin-Ichi Takagami, "The Fenian Rising in Dublin, March, 1867" *Irish Historical Studies* 29, no. 115 (May, 1995): 340-362.

in Ireland.⁴³ This support was matched by outrage in Britain, particularly following the Clerkenwell Prison Explosion in December of 1867. An attempt by the IRB to free jailed members via dynamite resulted in fifteen civilian deaths, but was successful in focusing attention on Irish problems. A growing amnesty movement centered on “justice for Ireland” helped to convert Prime Minister William Gladstone to take Irish problems seriously. The danger of the Fenians encouraged Liberal politicians to take concessionary action. Disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland in 1869, the Land Act of 1870, and an abortive educational reform act in 1873 were intended to show that Westminster could give the mass of the Irish what they wanted. If nothing else, the activities of the IRB had shown the level of discontent in Ireland, and had led the British government to reassess the situation there.⁴⁴ Moreover, the Fenians were the first political movement to channel the energies of agricultural laborers and small farmers, hitherto expressed in Ribbonism and faction fighting, into a national organization. By infusing local problems with a national perspective, the IRB helped to broaden petty horizons and foster a sense of national political consciousness.⁴⁵

To best understand the Fenian Brotherhood in Ireland, one should be careful not to divorce the movement from the larger issues of the day. While the Fenians can be viewed as a physical force nationalist group, they can just as rightly be seen as

⁴³ See, for example, Algernon Charles Swinburne, An Appeal to England Against the Execution of the Fenians (Manchester: William, Freeman, 1867).

⁴⁴ Said Gladstone, “Fenianism conditioned the British population to embrace in a manner foreign in their habits in other times, the vast importance of the Irish controversy.” Robert Kee, The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), 347.

⁴⁵ Prior to the IRB, “the horizon of their (the peasant’s) thoughts was bounded by the parish in which they lived, or at best by the county, and an Irish nation was a phrase to which no real meaning was attached.” Charles Gavan Duffy, Four Years of Irish History (London: Cassell Publishers, 1883), 690.

individuals striving to find a place for themselves amid fundamental social, religious, and cultural changes. When approached in this context, “the movement emerges not as a manifestation of indefeasible nationality, but rather as a product of a range of political, social, economic and intellectual-sentimental factors, and of assorted contingencies of personality, time, place, and interest.”⁴⁶

In post-famine Ireland the clergy had been able to achieve a fairly rigid form of social control. Many young men found in Fenianism a mechanism for autonomous self-assertion and for the defiance of social restraints. The members constituted a section of society that was in need of social and recreational outlets. Looking back many decades later at his Fenian years, John Devoy recalled that “touching elbows with fellow members at public demonstrations and having a pint with others was a great factor” in the appeal of the movement. Evidence of the Fenians taste for outings and a good time occurs so frequently that one must inevitably conclude that the social activity of the organization was a necessary component of the organization. There is voluminous evidence that fraternization was at the heart of Fenianism. Fenians enjoyed one another’s company as participants or spectators in a wide variety of sports and pastimes. The most important Fenian recruiting ground turned out to be what Thomas Clarke Luby described as “temples of conviviality”— the public houses. Pubs served as convenient meeting places, and as social outlets. The only serious military activity experienced by most Fenians— drill— became their mode of pastime par excellence. Learning (under the cover of a Sunday excursion, or the darkness of night) how to step in line and maneuver in unison was the most characteristic of all Fenian activities and it was a social rather

⁴⁶ Comerford, The Fenians in Context, 111.

than a purely military business.⁴⁷

This sense of confraternity was one mark of distinction that separated the IRB from previous Irish nationalist groups. Another was the fact that the men, materiel, and intellectual guidance of the American arm of the movement supported the European embodiment of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood. Recognizing the roots and implications of this transatlantic connection is crucial to understanding the Fenian Brotherhood.

⁴⁷ Brian Griffin, "Social Aspects of Fenianism in Connacht and Leinster, 1858-1870," Eire-Ireland 21, no.1 (Spring, 1986): 16-39.

CHAPTER THREE

We curse the tyrants, Erin does, though we be far away
From Galtee's Peaks and Liffey's sides to Hudson's Banks today
We curse them by the mounds of Earth above the Famine Graves
And by countless Irish hearts, beneath the Atlantic waves.¹

Although there had been a sizable Irish population in North America for some time, the emigrants and exiles who arrived en masse during the late 1840s and early 1850s were different from their predecessors in several significant ways. The men and women who joined the Fenian Brotherhood in America (and its sibling, the Fenian Sisterhood) had been deeply affected by the Great Famine. That tragedy, and the impact it had on those who survived it, left a lasting impression that colored past, present, and future interpretations of Irish history. Indeed, one contemporary noted: 'the famine, in so far as it influenced the minds of men then and afterwards against England, had, no doubt, great bearing upon Fenianism.'² Forced from their homes and torn from their families, the Irishmen and women who came to North America in the succeeding decades burned for revenge against the land that had made them refugees. They looked to America not as a refuge, but as a "saving ark and regeneration of the world."³ Wrote one commentator:

"Democracy is a principle easily expressed in a few words: hatred of oppression. And I have been a democrat from my birth to this hour. I saw in my mother's tearful eyes the history of oppression and learned to hate it. I saw shadowed in her tears the ruin of my race, and when I crossed the blue waters that roll between

¹ Richard Oulahan, "St. Patrick's Day," *The Irish News* 14 March 1856.

² O'Leary, *Recollections*, 1: 78. While few membership rolls exist for the Fenians, there is copious evidence—in the form of letters, editorials, and other correspondence—that support the interpretation that the Famine was the pivotal event in explaining the rise of transatlantic Fenianism.

³ *The Irish News* 4 October 1856. The paper proclaimed itself "dedicated to the service of Irish people at home and abroad." Shortly thereafter, the paper responded to an editorial in the *New York Daily News*: "*The Daily News*, enumerating the Catholic papers of New York, placed us among them. The paper we edit has no claim to the peculiar position...we neither profess nor pretend to conduct a religious paper, Catholic or otherwise." *The Irish News* 11 October 1856.

liberty and tyrants, I carried that sacred principle of democracy in my breast.”⁴

The impetus of the Hunger was not all that led to the expression of Irish American nationalism; within the span of a decade and a half, the Irish population of the United States grew tremendously, leading to myriad problems and responses.

To best gauge the formation of immigrant nationalism in the United States, one must be careful not to neglect the conditions from which the Irish emerged and those into which they migrated. The legacy of the Penal Era, the experiences of the Hunger, the horrors of the voyage to America, and the steely reception afforded the immigrants all contributed to the behavior patterns exhibited by Irishmen in their new homes. The creation of an Irish community in the United States that in size and scope would rival that in Ireland would forever change the outlook and composition of both Ireland and America; henceforth, Irish identity would be irrevocably diasporic.⁵

The earliest Irish migrants to the United States included a mixture of Ulster Presbyterians, Quakers, and members of the Church of Ireland—fleeing religious persecution following the Cromwellian land settlement—and impoverished Catholic and Protestant indentured servants.⁶ They were joined in later years by the leaders of the

⁴ *The Irish News* 6 September 1856.

⁵ For a recent look at the phenomena of diaspora as applied to Irish America, see Kevin Kenny, “Diaspora as Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study,” *Journal of American History* 90, no.1 (2003): 134-162.

⁶ The best treatment of Irish immigration to America in this period is: Kerby Miller, et al, eds., *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1675-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). See also Marianne Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to America* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). Protestants made up over half the total number of emigrants from Ireland to America in each year up to 1840. One of these, James Duane, served as New York’s mayor in the years immediately following the American Revolution. In later years, Irish nationalists would refer to Ulster Loyalists, “these Anglo-Saxon neighbors of ours,” as “nothing but a contemptible crew—the merest lickspittles and slaves. They are more English than the English themselves.” *The Irish American* 26 August and 2 September 1849.

1798 revolt, political refugees who were seeking sanctuary at a time of crisis. Throughout the early nineteenth century, there was a steady, if unimpressive, stream of Irish immigrants; by 1830 the Irish population of New York City numbered some forty thousand out of two hundred thousand, and had grown sufficiently in size and importance that it was capable of supporting social and business organizations and services. These early immigrants were mainly lower to middle class persons who had lost much of their source of income following the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars; still others had come to relieve pressures on the land, a phenomenon that was nonexistent in the United States. Those who migrated wrote letters to their kin in Ireland, often including remittances so that others might join them in this country. Indeed, more than half the immigrants who arrived in 1836 had their tickets purchased by friends or relatives. During the next decade, more than a million dollars was sent back to Ireland; these funds were used not only to avert starvation and evictions, but also to pay for the transatlantic passage of friends and kin.⁷

Upon arrival in America, the immigrant could count on any number of benevolent societies to get him or her situated in the new surroundings. Among the first of these was the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, organized in New York in 1784 to provide financial assistance to debtors and to organize collections for funeral funds and other expenses. Soon, this body was joined by other organizations: the Shamrock Friendly Association was active after the War of 1812, and by 1817, a year when some seventeen hundred Irish arrived in New York City, it had found employment for 1200 individuals. That same year, the Irish Emigrant Association was founded in New York by Doctor William

⁷ Arnold Schrier, America and the Irish Migration, 1850-1900 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), 5.

MacNeven, an exiled '98er to "advise and aid those in need." In 1825, the Society for the Encouragement of Faithful Domestic Servants was organized, to be joined the following year by the Emigrant Assistance Society. In 1829, the Union Emigrant Society was founded to cater explicitly to Irish Protestants. A moderately nationalist Catholic organization, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, was established in New York's Saint James' parish in May of 1836 to counter the political, socio-cultural, and economic influence of the Orangemen. Some five years later, on 30 March 1841 the Irish Emigrant Society held its first meeting. Through its office men and women could obtain advice and information about life in America, locate jobs and lodgings, or file complaints against swindlers and the horrid conditions they had endured onboard ships. The society also remitted money and prepaid passage tickets back to Ireland in such volume that in 1850 it established a thrift institution, the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank, at 51 Chambers Street.⁸

A similar function was provided by a nascent, yet burgeoning immigrant press. Whereas the press in Ireland had been a novelty or luxury, in America it became a necessity; papers told of ship arrivals, gave notice of employment opportunities, and relayed news from home. The press also served as a defense mechanism. As one leading journal stated, "It seems to be our singular lot to have to defend the name and character of

⁸ Richard C. Murphy and Lawrence J. Mannion, The History of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick in the City of New York, 1784-1955 (New York: The Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, 1962), 20-32. See also: Richard J. Purcell, "The Irish Emigrant Society of New York" Irish Studies 27 (1938): 538-547; and Thomas F. Meehan, "New York's First Irish Emigrant Society." Historical Records and Studies 6 (1912): 202-211. The Irish Emigrant Society was founded on the suggestion of New York's Archbishop, John Hughes. The New York Public Library has recently catalogued the records of the Emigrant Savings Bank, where they serve as an important window into socioeconomic mobility among nineteenth century immigrants. According to these records, Irish American laborers remitted some \$800,000 in 1846 alone.

our race at this side of the Atlantic.”⁹ Moreover, the immigrant press inculcated the newcomers in the ways and customs of America, alerting the immigrants to employment opportunities while introducing them to the Democratic Party. The continued subservience of Ireland to British rule and the discrimination and isolation facing the Irish immigrant in America gave the press a pair of compelling causes and assured a steady readership.¹⁰ The press thus served as an important conduit by which immigrants were taught the ways of the United States while being kept abreast of developments in the Old World.¹¹

The first Irish American newspaper, *The Shamrock, or Hibernian Chronicle*, was established in New York City in 1810. Edited by Edward Gillespy, it passed along news from Ireland while defending the rights of Irish Americans to citizenship. It was followed by a number of short-lived periodicals and weeklies in that city and in Boston; most of these spent their time defending the Catholic faith and various Irish national political causes, or defending immigrants from nativist attacks. Other journals presented essays on the history and literature of Ireland, Parliamentary speeches on Irish affairs,

⁹ *The Irish American* 6 January 1850. Later, the same paper announced that it would defend the immigrant against scurrilous abuse: “every rascal act shall be exposed to the world, and every rascal name given for deserved execration and scorn.” *The Irish American* 16 November 1850.

¹⁰ The canonical work on the Irish American press remains: William Leonard Joyce, *Editors and Ethnicity: A History of the Irish American Press, 1848-1883* (New York: Arno Press, 1976). See also: Brian Cogan, “The Irish American Press as an Agent of Change: The Transformation of the New York Irish, 1850-1980,” *New York Irish History* 14 (2000): 29-46; and Walter L. Willigan, “A History of the Irish American Press from 1691 to 1835” (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1934).

¹¹ Of the many papers catering to the Irish immigrant community, “One emphasized veneration of the memories of the homeland, while another advocated a national association that could lead to further action. Another preached the need for a hallowed and sanctified conflict against the most savage oppression the world ever witnessed...Another said that whenever Irishmen congregated, duty called them to aid their oppressed kindred at home to free the fair and fertile island of their fathers from the wasting plague of British domination.” Papers devoted to the immigrant often preached nationalism, with editors “agreeing on the need for an uncompromising, aggressive nationalism to which the immigrant was said to be dutybound.” Joyce, *Editors and Ethnicity*, 74-75.

and retrospects on Irish politics. The onset of the Hunger led to a deluge of Irish immigrants able to support numerous dailies; likewise, the failure of the 1848 rebellion supplied competent journalists who would use their editorial talents to great effect in the New World. Hence, the height of famine immigration was paralleled by a surge in the number of newspapers— some claiming nearly five thousand readers— catering to the newcomers. These new journals were more professional, longer lived, and served as some of the most influential social and educational forces in the immigrant community. On a formal level, the Irish American press combined Irish ethnicity with integration into America and helped the immigrants define themselves in this country. Journalists and editors aided the political education of Irish immigrants by encouraging obedience to the laws of this country and by espousing service in the various state militias as an avenue to effective citizenship.¹²

While the host society was often a cold one, the relatively small size—and ethnic homogeneity— of the Irish population until the mid-1840's made any type of organized, large-scale anti-Irish movement unnecessary.¹³ Of course, anti-Irish Catholic sentiment had existed even prior to the onset of famine immigration. Federalist diplomat Rufus King's refusal to grant asylum to exiles of the 1798 rebellion was a major campaign issue in the presidential election of 1800, and first secured the vote of Irish Americans to the

¹² One of their more obvious roles was in supporting nationalist activity by publicizing meetings and recalling past injustice. "The brutal and bloody English government, which is but too anxious to destroy the Irish people...it laughs at the cry of hunger and woe which rings in its ears." *The Irish American* 3 March 1850.

¹³ Most estimates place the number of Irish who came to North America in the seventeenth century at between 50,000 and 100,000, with another 250,000 to 400,000 arriving in the eighteenth century. Kerby Miller, Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 137.

Democratic party.¹⁴ The appearance in 1835 of Maria Monk's scandalous Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal: Confessions of Six Months in a Convent and the origins of the first national nativist party, the American Democratic Party, that same year heralded an increasing concern on the part of native-born Americans about the alleged threat posed by Irish Catholic interlopers.¹⁵ Still, this backlash was localized to certain geographic regions— those areas where the Irish Catholic immigrants were most numerous —and was visible only at specific times, most notably around elections.¹⁶

All of this would change during the middle years of the nineteenth century. As the Hunger worsened, more and more Irish chose emigration as the best course available to escape their uncertain fate. During the height of emigration, more than 200,000 persons fled Ireland each year, and most were never to return. Instantly, a Diaspora of tremendous size was created. The majority of those who emigrated eventually settled in the Eastern seaboard cities of the United States. New York, Boston, and other municipalities were soon overwhelmed by the human tide that was sweeping across the

¹⁴ The opposition of King and others was not made exclusively on religious lines, as Thomas Addis Emmet and many of his associates were Protestants. On the United Irishmen and their reception in—and impact on— American society, see: David Dixon, Daire Keogh, and Kevin Whelan, eds., The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1993); David Wilson, United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998); and Harvey Strum, "Federalist Hibernophobes in New York, 1807," Eire-Ireland 16, no.4 (1981): 7-13.

¹⁵ Monk's work told of young women being forced into sexual servitude by lascivious priests, who performed abortions on the women after they were impregnated. These tales were transmitted through such organs as the *New York Crusader*, the masthead of which proclaimed the paper to be "an anti-Jesuitical weekly... dedicated to the principles of civil and religious liberty." The New York Protestant Association (first established in 1831) was New York's inaugural nativist political organization; in the spring elections of 1835, at least two wards in New York City had nativist tickets in the field.

¹⁶ In New York, *The New York Observer* was among the leading early nativist organs, running a series of twelve letters by "Brutus," the pseudonym of Samuel F.B. Morse. Morse, whose anti-Catholic leanings were well known, had been the mayoral candidate of the American Democratic Association in 1835.

Atlantic. In 1845, only 2% of Boston's population was Irish; ten years later, that figure had risen to 20%. From June through December of 1847, more than fifty thousand Irish arrived in New York City: by 1850, 133,000 of that city's 513,000 residents, and 54% of New York's foreign population, were Irish-born.¹⁷ One observer opined, "Ireland is no longer where the Shannon flows, but rather, besides the Hudson."¹⁸ Moreover, the plurality—some 48%—came from just six of Ireland's thirty-two counties: Cork, Kerry, Tipperary, Limerick, Galway, and Mayo were situated in the provinces of Munster and Connaught, predominantly Catholic regions which had been hit particularly hard by the Hunger. Hence, the overwhelming majority of the Irish who entered America at this time were different from their predecessors in three important regards: the newcomers were poor, they were Catholic, and they arrived in unprecedented numbers.

The majority of these immigrants took up residence in the poorest sections of Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and other large cities; unable to keep up with the influx of people, slums cropped up overnight while civil services proved insufficient to meet the increased demands on scarce resources. Having come from an overwhelmingly rural society, the Irish had few of the requisite skills to survive in America's urban environments; shortly, the Irish found themselves on the bottom of the city's occupational and social pyramids. Soon, a crisis emerged: trapped in the worst slums,

¹⁷ One-third of New York's 1855 electorate were Irish-born. Commented the *London Times* of 3 October 1865: "The happy institution of universal suffrage, the foundation on which American institutions repose, has given the ignorant and prejudiced Irishman a power which he could never possess under any other circumstances. The Irish vote has become a matter of consequence, and American newspapers and American politicians have not been slow to pander to the weaknesses and delusions of those who possess it."

¹⁸ The Irish likewise constituted Brooklyn's largest foreign-born group as early as 1855, when they numbered 56,753 out of a total population of 205,250. The number of Irish in Brooklyn jumped to 57,143 in 1865, 73,985 in 1870, and 78,880 in 1875. In each of these years, the Irish outnumbered all other non-native Americans. Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, eds., *The New York Irish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1998), 93.

toiling at its worst jobs, struggling to maintain fragile families, many Irish slipped into alcoholism, insanity, chronic welfare dependency, or crime. Of some 3100 patients at New York's Bellevue Hospital in 1839, 2052, or fully 85% of all foreign-born patients, were from Ireland. In 1850, 2742 persons died of cholera; 1086 were Irish. In 1849, the Lunatic Asylum admitted 228 natives of Ireland, compared with 84 from New York.¹⁹ That year there were 341 foreigners in the workhouse; 252 were from Ireland, while another 1006 sought relief in the almshouse. In New York City in the 1850's, the Irish accounted for 60% of the almshouse population, 70% of its recipients of charity, and more than half of those arrested for drunkenness. Irish children constituted 40% of the inmates at the House of Refuge, and the infamous Five Points district had the highest death rate in the city.²⁰ In the notorious Sixth Ward, one out of every seventeen persons died in 1854. The death rate among Irish families in the 1850's, usually of consumption, was 21%, while among non-Irish it was perhaps 3%. Bishop John Hughes thought the

¹⁹ Three-fourths of those admitted to New York's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island were foreigners; of these, two out of every three were from Ireland. Between 1849 and 1854 the Irish constituted an average of 63% of the inmates of New York City's charitable and penal institutions. From 1849 to 1891, the percentage of Alms House residents born in Ireland never dropped below 53%. Florence Gibson, Attitudes of the New York Irish Towards State and National Affairs, 1848-1892 (New York: Arno Press, 1967), 16.

²⁰ The Five Points, an area bordered by Mulberry Street and Foley Square, was built upon a former swamp and was the scene of many frightful events. During the 1832 cholera epidemic, New York's Mayor Philip Hone blamed the disaster on the immorality of the regions' Irish and African American inhabitants; hence, not only did these groups suffer the most, but they were made scapegoats as well. Some Irish nationalists counseled their countrymen to disavow any notion of securing Irish independence at this time, admonishing them to work for the emancipation of the Irish living in the slums of New York rather than an attempted liberation of Ireland. Responded one who did not agree with this tact: "I consider that Young Ireland owes a debt to Ireland that is still unpaid...I trust indeed I shall never again see one of their leaders come to America and then strive to crush out from the hearts of my fellow exiles the hope of our country's redemption by armed force." Proceedings of the First National Convention of the Fenian Brotherhood, Held in Chicago, Illinois, November 1863 (Philadelphia: James Gibbons, 1863), 10. On the Five Points, see Tyler Anbinder, Five Points: The 19th- Century New York Neighborhood That Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum (New York: Free Press, 2001).

disease “the natural death of the Irish emigrant.”²¹ To xenophobic Americans, the filth, moral decay, morbidity, mortality, and rampant crime associated with the Five Points and the Sixth Ward were a reflection of the unhealthy lifestyles of the immigrants. The evils of the slum were not an outgrowth of overcrowding, but were interpreted as being directly attributable to the social—and ethnic—composition of their inhabitants.

Soon the nativist Order of the Star Spangled Banner, known colloquially as the Know-Nothings, were winning elections in the very places where the Irish Catholic immigrants were most numerous.²² In their characterization of the Irish as menace, the Know-Nothings could claim support from the scientific community; eminent physicians lent their names and reputations to the pseudo-sciences of physiognomy and phrenology. The protruding cranium and distorted countenance of the emigrant were seen as physical proof that the Irish composed a distinct, pugilistic race, one that had not yet attained the high level of sophistication attributed to Anglo-Americans.²³ Irish-haters such as Hezekiah Niles, editor of *Niles Weekly Register*, blamed the newcomers for taking the jobs of native-born workers, adding to the public’s burden by cramming the almshouses

²¹ Bayor and Meagher, *The New York Irish*, 20-21. The actual numbers are a bit misleading. For example, over 100,000 emigrants entered New York between 5 May and 30 September 1847, of whom 40,820 were Irish. A total of 6761 (of the total immigrant population) were sent to hospital or otherwise relieved; of these nearly 60% were Irish. This represents an admission rate of less than 10% for the immigrants from Ireland. See Carol Groneman-Pernicone, “‘The Bloody Ould Sixth’: A Social Analysis of a New York City Working Class Community in the Mid-Nineteenth Century” (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1977).

²² Some 74% of the immigrants ultimately took up residence in one of seven states: Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Connecticut, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. On the Order of the Star Spangled Banner, see: Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know-Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²³ An 1851 *Harper’s Magazine* article discussing two Irish newcomers described the Celtic physiognomy as “Distinctly marked—the small and somewhat upturned nose, the black tint of the skin; the eyes now looking gray, now black; the freckled cheek and sandy hair. Beard and whiskers covered half the face, and short, square-shouldered bodies were bent forward with eager impatience.” See also: Hugh E. O’Rourke, “Nativist and Irish Riots in Brooklyn, 1854,” *Long Island Historical Journal* 13, no.2 (2001): 158-173.

with their destitute, opening saloons to lure thirsty and gullible workers, and perverting local politics with their smooth-talking ward leaders. Playing on these fears, the Know Nothings were able to become a formidable, though short-lived force; in 1844, just one year after its founding, the nativist American Republican Party was successful in electing journalist James Harper mayor of New York City. Such political clout was predicated upon fears that the Irish could easily be manipulated by unscrupulous political bosses: the newcomers' alleged penchant for voting in blocs and their seeming tendency to be easily influenced worried Americans who feared that the Republic would be corrupted by these "slaves of Rome."²⁴ Catholicism, indeed, was seen as inimical to democracy and its institutions.²⁵

Statistics seemed to bear out the worst of these fears; in Boston, the number of naturalized voters increased 300% from 1850 to 1855, while the number of native voters rose by only 14%.²⁶ Increasingly, the ethnic Irish were viewed as not merely competition for unskilled labor, but as representing a grave threat to the relative homogeneity that had marked antebellum American society. Representations of a drunken, pugnacious, simian

²⁴ "Our immigrant population is deplorably clannish, misguided, and prone to violence. We never saw a party of American-born approach a peaceable poll with weapons in their hands; we have seen Irish bands of two or three hundreds, armed with heavy clubs, traversing the streets on election day and clearly provoking a fight. We have seen men taken to courts to be naturalized... when they did not know what they swore and were in no condition to take on the responsibilities of citizenship." *New York Tribune* 15 June 1854. The same paper would later refer to the city as "New Cork." *New York Tribune* 15 July 1859.

²⁵ For a discussion of the Irish as a threat to republicanism, see: Dale T. Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1986).

²⁶ Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1880: A Study in Acculturation* (Cambridge: University of Massachusetts Press, 1959), 25. Commenting on the propensity of American politicians to cater to the Irish, *The Democratic Review* of August 1852 wrote: "Everybody is now pacific and even flattering to Pat— it is Pat's holiday, election is." *The Democratic Review* was a monthly founded by John L. O'Sullivan that employed '48ers Thomas Devin Reilly and John Savage. Firmly entrenched in the camp of Young America, it espoused territorial expansion, particularly in the Caribbean, where the potential for a clash with Great Britain would lead to Irish independence.

Irishman became a regular occurrence in the drawings of *Harper's Weekly* cartoonist Thomas Nast. Similar depictions could be found in the work of *Puck's* Johannes Keppler and *Punch's* Sir John Tennile.²⁷ Militant groups such as the Order of the Star Spangled Banner patrolled Irish neighborhoods, picking fights with the residents. Even mainstream Americans considered the Irish as little better than African Americans, referring to them contemptuously as “niggers turned inside out.”²⁸ Advertisements for help wanted usually included the caveat that “No Irish Need Apply.”²⁹ Even when Irish immigrants entered the civil service, they were singled out as a discordant if not dangerous element of society. Commented the *New York Times* on the number of Irish who had been placed on the municipal payroll, “our police is composed of the scum of Connaught immigration and our lives and property placed at the mercy of the thieves, their confederates.”³⁰ Irish editors were not blind to these assaults. “Will the Irish never

²⁷ For an excellent overview of how the Irish were depicted, see: L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971); and Leroy Eid, “*Puck* and the Irish: The One American Idea,” *Eire-Ireland* 11, no. 2 (Summer, 1976): 18-35.

²⁸ Prodigious diarist George Templeton Strong opined that “The gorilla was superior to the Celt in muscle and hardly their inferior in a moral sense,” and that “Poor Ould Ireland is in such a low state because the majority of Irishmen are jackasses.” *Diary of George Templeton Strong*, ed. Alan Nevins and M.H. Thomas, 4 vols. (New York: Octagon Books, 1952), 4: 169. *The Irish American* of 6 January 1860 related the following letter by emigrant Joseph Brennan to depict the state of the Irish in America: “What I state of the Irish in America is fact, and it is foolish or criminal to conceal it. Their position is not what it is represented to be at home— far different; it is one of shame and poverty. They are shunned and despised. The name of Irish politics is anathema, and Ireland is as much a subject of contempt as of pity. ‘My master is a great tyrant,’ said a Negro lately, ‘he treats me as badly as if I were a common Irishman’.”

²⁹ Some Irish American editors went so far as to advocate leaving the cities of the East Coast, blaming the “shameful illiberality and injustice of the local press towards the Irish” for the proposed exodus. *The Irish American* 11 and 18 April 1857. *The New York Tribune* had broached the idea of relocation as early as 12 May 1849, in the immediate wake of the Astor Place riots. See also *The Citizen* of 22 October 1855 and the *New York Herald* of 14 and 16 February 1856 on the creation of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society which had as its aim the settling of Irish families out West.

³⁰ *New York Times* 21 April 1857. *The Irish News* of 15 November 1856 had previously classified that journal as “eminently Anglo-Saxon and, in consequence, pre-eminently arrogant, abusive, and mendacious.” The *Boston Pilot* of 29 September 1860 remarked that Henry J. Raymond, editor of the *Times*, was a “tricky tergiversator in facts and a philosophic poltroon in principle... his hope for renown

realize that there is no country— not even England herself— where it is considered so great a disgrace to be Irish as in this free, so-called, Anglo-Saxon Republic, where we now are and for which they are so ready to pour out their blood for all occasions?” asked John O’Mahony.³¹ Thomas D’Arcy McGee agreed:

“In the United States there is no more sympathy for Ireland than for Japan, and far less than for Russia. In New England, the people, tinctured with Puritanism, proud of their property and their education, hate the Irish emigrant for his creed; despise him for his poverty, and under-rate him for his want of book learning. The Irish emigrants in America have become badly demoralized. A large proportion go to destitution, and it would be better, when they are about to embark, that the earth should swallow many an ingenious youth and modest maiden than they should be what they are, in the streets and prisons of the United States.”³²

Added another: “Compared with this country Ireland is a paradise of health and social happiness, bailiffs and Orange factions notwithstanding. Let the Irish farmers and mechanics stay in Ireland. If they fight for their rights, and work for themselves only half as well as Irishmen must do here, they will soon be a free and happy nation.”³³

Many Irish immigrants went to considerable lengths to prove to the host society that they were deserving of citizenship and deeply committed to their new nation. *The Irish American* (whose masthead bore the stars and stripes flying from an Irish harp) stated in its inaugural publication:

“We want no distinct nationality— no second Ireland— in America. The adopted and native populations should form a perfect amalgam— alike in feelings, habits, and patriotic aspirations. We want no distinct platform for social and political combinations. Such are inconsistent with gratitude and right, injurious to the

rests in his hatred of the Irish race. He is the worst enemy to that people on the whole continent of America.”

³¹ *The Irish News* 20 September 1856.

³² William D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States, 1858-1886* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 204.

³³ *The Irish News* 20 June 1857.

totality of the Republic, and calculated to embitter and chagrin. And yet we do want the native of Ireland to love fatherland and revere early memories. The heart that can cool to the affections and grow careless of home associations can hardly prove faithful to its later responsibilities.”³⁴

Later that summer, the same journal responded to attacks on Irish Americans by claiming that “no body of citizens in these United States are more attached to democratic liberty, and the purity and holiness of the republican spirit, than the Irish Americans. If called on tomorrow to defend the Stars and Stripes, they would show...how deeply they love Republican America and her glorious institutions.”³⁵ Three weeks later that same journal cautioned Irish immigrants to “toil night and day to be worthy of the great country whose denizens they now are.”³⁶

Scarred by the Hunger, and faced with mounting resentment in America, the immigrants needed to demonstrate their cohesion as an ethnic community. Thus, the decades of the 1850's and the 1860's were ones of intense consolidation for the Irish American community and these years would serve as the crucible for the formation of ethnic identity. The panoply of benevolent associations and the immigrant press aided in this process, as did the twin pillars of Irish America, the Catholic Church and the Democratic Party. A third avenue was made available through the activities of nationalist organizations such as the Emmet Monument Association, the Phoenix Society, and, most notably, the Fenian Brotherhood.³⁷ Although most Irish immigrants were loyal to these

³⁴ *The Irish American* 12 August 1849. The masthead further proclaimed that the journal was “neutral in religion and politics,” but sought solidarity with the maxim “united we stand, divided we fall.”

³⁵ *The Irish American* 2 September 1849.

³⁶ *The Irish American* 23 September 1849.

³⁷ O'Mahony had previously founded the Sons of Erin, an upper class art and literature club modeled on the Parisian salons with which he had been associated some years earlier.

bodies, relations between the Catholic Church, the Democratic Party, and nationalist organizations were “largely utilitarian and cooperative, sometimes hostile.”³⁸

Irish attachment to the Democratic Party was rooted in a variety of factors. Historic allegiances between United Irish exiles and the followers of Jefferson, antagonism to the strong evangelical Protestant and anti-Irish Catholic strains which ran through opposing political organizations (Whig, Know-Nothing, and Republican), and pragmatic considerations all contributed to this close association.³⁹ Additionally, the legacy of Daniel O’Connell’s political tactics presented American politicians with a pre-constructed body of voters who were used to—indeed, relished—the notion of serving as a vocal, loyal, and unswerving constituency.⁴⁰ In return for Irish votes, Democratic politicians—especially on municipal levels—offered charity, jobs, upward mobility in party ranks, protection against discriminatory legislation, symbolic recognition of Irish culture and nationalism, and a sense of belonging to a powerful, American institution. Irish adherence to the Democratic Party was virtually assured, and almost impossible to

³⁸ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 328.

³⁹ Some prominent Irish and Irish American nationalists supported the Whigs during this period. William E. Robinson summarized the Whig position from an Irish point of view in the *New York Tribune* of 2 November 1848. Robinson, who would later serve as United States Representative from Brooklyn and was influential in Fenian affairs, urged his readers to support Zachary Taylor, who “was not, is not, and will not be in favor of nativism.” Robinson also supported the Whigs in 1852, despite candidate Winfield Scott’s flirtation with nativism years earlier. In that later contest, Archbishop John Hughes refused to take sides, and posited that the country was safe in the hands of either candidate, adding that Catholics “should vote as individuals—even if they voted wrong—rather than be subjected to ecclesiastical influence.” *New York Evening Post* 27 September 1852.

⁴⁰ For more on the concept that O’Connell’s pioneering of mass popular democracy and his creation of organized mass politics created the milieu for the urban political machine of nineteenth century America, see Edwin O’Connor, *The Last Hurrah* (1956; reprint, Boston: Back Bay Books, 1985), which argues that to best make sense of Irish America one needs to recognize the transatlantic context in which certain events were constructed and played out. For example, coming from a land where their religion had prevented their active participation in politics, Irishmen were eager to plunge into political activity. From the moment of his arrival, American political leaders fawned over the Irishman to woo his vote, so it is small wonder that he soon developed an overweening sense of his own political importance.

shake. As an example, during the 1856 presidential campaign, the Irish American press stood solidly behind Democrat James Buchanan. The erstwhile candidate angered Irish voters when, in the course of a speech in London he commented: "Wherever the English language is spoken, political slavery could not exist."⁴¹ Many papers switched their support to Lewis Cass, while the Republicans sought to widen the rift by publicizing Daniel O'Connell's statements opposing slavery and Pope Gregory's bull outlawing the slave trade.⁴² John Mitchel defended both Buchanan and the peculiar institution, claiming "He would be a bad Irishman who voted for the ascendance of principles which proscribed himself, and which jeopardized the present freedom of a nation of white men for the vague forlorn hope of elevating blacks to a level for which it is at least problematical whether God and nature ever intended them."⁴³ The Irish remained firmly attached to Buchanan and despite the fact that New York State went solidly for the Republican camp in 1856, the city voted overwhelmingly for Buchanan. *The Citizen* of

⁴¹ *The Irish American* 12 April 1856. The paper would return to the Democratic camp shortly, as evidenced by its strong pro-Buchanan editorial of 21 June 1856. On 6 March 1857, *The Irish American* defended the Irish immigrant's support of the administration. Responding to an anti-Buchanan article published in the *Freeman's Journal*, which had called on the Irish to repudiate the president for his mishandling of the situation in Kansas, and which predicted a wholesale desertion of the Democratic party by Irish immigrants, the editors commented: "Mr. McMaster writes his sentiments in the columns of the *Freeman's Journal*, and the public can take them for what they are worth; the Irish adopted citizens of New York indicate theirs at the ballot box and the ratification meeting."

⁴² *The Irish American* of 27 September 1856 characterized this as a campaign trick, urging its readers not to believe the charges. It later commented that "just because the Democrats oppose the Republicans does not mean that the Democrats favor slavery." 13 October 1858. One historian has noted: "As immigrants, the Irish Americans were keenly loyal to the Union to which they owed their opportunity in the New World. As laboring men they were interested in movements to improve the lot of their class but they were opposed to any movement to free the slaves since they saw in a mass of free Negroes a threat to their near monopoly of the labor market. This avowed self-interest did not permit many of them to change their politics—they were not yet ready to be counted in the ranks of any party but the Democratic." Gibson, *Attitudes of the New York Irish*, 52.

⁴³ *The Citizen* 19 July 1856. Mitchel defended Buchanan's speech, claiming that while the content was offensive it was not intended to hurt the Irish, only to appease the candidate's British hosts. *The Citizen* 2 August 1856.

15 November claimed that the Irish voted to a man for their candidate, and that every Irish journal supported his campaign.⁴⁴ The *New York Tribune* agreed. “Who does not know that the Five Points, the Hook, lower Cherry street, and all the dens of debauchery, vice and crime in the city, — the offscourings of our jails and penitentiaries—... polled nine-tenths of their votes for the Democrats.”⁴⁵ Such connections to politics, and the ability to trade votes for favors, helped the Irish secure a more stable place in American society and represented the first steps in a trend of economic and political empowerment that would continue for generations.⁴⁶

The anti-Irish sentiments heard in antebellum New York also heightened the immigrant’s devotion to the Catholic Church. In Ireland, the Catholic Church had become a powerful social and cultural force; in America, it would serve a similar function, protecting its members from the wrath of nativism while providing a venue for socialization and confraternity. It was natural for the immigrants to view the Church as a haven and as a reflection of their identity; New York’s Bishop John Hughes led the campaigns against Protestant instruction in the city’s schools and for equal public funding

⁴⁴ “The Irish American press consistently and emphatically supported the Democratic ticket and there seems to have been a general conviction on the part of all that Irish support of the Democracy was unshakeable.” Gibson, *Attitudes of the New York Irish*, 88.

⁴⁵ *New York Tribune* 3 September 1856.

⁴⁶ Of course, not all Irish nationalists countenanced this connection. John Mitchel argued that “Irish citizens should not act together as Irishmen— should not isolate themselves from other American parties, should not place themselves in the hands of Irish priests, still less of Irish grog shop sellers to be disposed of as political capital. Every Irish voter ought to vote upon his individual judgment— there ought to be no ‘Irish vote’ at all. Irishmen in America should be so entirely absorbed into the American system as to be indifferently Democrats or Whigs, etc.” *The Citizen* 28 October 1854. Four years later, *The Irish American* again had to answer these charges, denying that Hughes or *The Freeman’s Journal* exercised any influence over Irish Catholic voters. *The Irish American* 3 April 1858.

of parochial education.⁴⁷ As the numbers of Catholic Irish swelled, the Church and its ancillary Catholic institutions became important focal points for the community.

Parochial schools were constructed throughout the city, in an effort to educate the persecuted and thereby refute nativist attacks against the supposedly ignorant, uneducated Irish. Church leaders oversaw the construction of several new parishes to cater to the refugees, and solicited funds for the establishment of a Catholic hospital and orphanage to meet the needs of the community.⁴⁸ The bishop also realized that maintaining such a visible presence would allow the newcomers a basis for institutional identification and serve as a proud display of their faith in the presence of open hostility and prejudice. By the sheer weight of their numbers, the Irish newcomers had transformed the American Church into an immigrant institution that served the needs of the poor and which became increasingly identified with one nationality. Soon, under the tutelage of Hughes and his successors, the Catholic Church became a visible and powerful institution in New York, and one that incubated Irish nationalism and ethnic identity alongside piety and religiosity.⁴⁹

In the immediate post-famine years, however, the American Church found itself

⁴⁷ New York Governor William Seward would support Hughes' stance in the crisis, recommending the establishment of schools in which students would be instructed by teachers speaking the same language, and practicing the same faith, as the pupils.

⁴⁸ In 1846, Hughes invited the Sisters of Mercy from Ireland to create an infrastructure of services for women in New York City, who by 1855 accounted for 92% of the domestic work force. Interestingly, employment as domestic servants exposed Irish immigrant women to middle class mores, a trend that influenced how these individuals perceived others in the immigrant community. For an authoritative account of the Irish female experience in America, see: Hasia Diner, Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).

⁴⁹ For an excellent overview of the American Catholic Church, see: Jay P. Dolan, The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1965 (Baltimore, 1975); and Jay Dolan, American Catholic Parish Life (New York, 1987). On Hughes, see Charles P. O'Connor, "The American Catholic Political Position at Mid-Century: Archbishop Hughes as Test Case" (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1979).

unable to accommodate the immigrants; one estimate puts the ratio of priests to parishioners at 1: 3500, with many immigrants slipping into apostasy.⁵⁰ In time, as more clergy were added, and as the largely unchurched immigrants were converted to “mass and sacrament” Catholics, the Church would become the central institution around which Irish America grew. In the immediate absence of such a modifying force, however, hordes of Irish immigrants were free to pursue more secular, even revolutionary, objectives. Meeting in public houses and social clubs, free from the influence of conservative clergymen, Irish immigrants spoke of the horrors of the Hunger and of their hatred for England.⁵¹ As stated by “An Irish Republican in this Country:” “I believe the Irishman cannot be social or feel at home unless he mingles with his fellows, shares their joys and sorrows, and anticipates the halo of a nationality around him.”⁵² Here, finding companionship and the support of machine politicians, young men spoke openly of returning to Ireland and replacing Saxon suzerainty with a republican form of government.

Of course, such sentiments were not new; the hope of using the men, resources, and materiel of the Diaspora to effect change in Ireland had long been a goal of Irish nationalists.⁵³ Early groups such as the Juvenile Sons of Ireland, the St. Patrick

⁵⁰ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 332.

⁵¹ Observing this phenomenon, John O’Leary noted that “the Irishman in America is, and he soon comes to feel he is, free to say what he thinks and to do what he wishes; and the first wish of the natural man is, I am happy to say, to do something against England. He has no longer the fear of the landlord or the law— he soon, too, ceases to feel the full influence of the priest.” O’Leary, *Recollections*, 1: 110. Echoed the *New York Times* of 26 July 1865: “The natural desire of an Irishman, uneducated and youthful, is to oppose somebody or something, and the natural enemy of that individual is merry England.”

⁵² *The Irish News* 20 February 1858.

⁵³ Such self-serving associations were by no means limited to nationalists. Throughout the 1850’s Irish immigrants organized gangs to protect themselves from nativist aggression and to defend their rights. Often, such groups were modeled on similar organizations in Ireland. Obvious connections can be drawn to

Benevolent Society, the Friends of Ireland, and the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick frequently invoked the memory of 1782, when armed Irish Volunteers had wrung concessions from the British government during an American War. In 1848, in the wake of the Mexican-American War, a band of Irish American veterans, emboldened by the ambitions of Young Ireland, organized the Irish Directory in New York; reports circulated that recently demobilized veterans of that conflict were embarking for Ireland, where they would train their compatriots and lead a revolution.⁵⁴ Counting New York politico Fernando Wood as one of its charter members, the Directory solicited funds to be

the faction fighters of the mid-nineteenth century, agrarian radicals of the same period, and Catholic groups that sought an end to Protestant economic and political domination. One such American Irish group, claiming a link to the Volunteers of the eighteenth century, called themselves the Ball O/G O/Glaihgh: the young volunteers. This term of self respect and identity would be Anglicized and bastardized by Anglo Americans into "Plug Uglies," ostensibly one of the most notorious street gangs of nineteenth century New York. The *New York Tribune* of 6 July 1857 trumpeted, "10 Plug Uglies killed, 80 wounded" in battles at the gates of the Five Points." The following year, some of these survivors would form the basis of the Fenians in New York. While most in Anglo America regarded them as a band of noisome thugs, these proto Fenians saw themselves as the heirs to a republican heritage begun generations earlier in a land three thousand miles away! Commenting on the linguistic problems which further separated immigrant from native New Yorker, *The Irish American* of 13 July 1850 postulated that the "beastly translations of Irish idiom, patois, or brogue, the most impossible blunders and exaggerated absurdities, meet us at every turn." Many in the Gaeltacht Diaspora saw the maintenance of their language as a mark of nationality and self-respect, a mark of a sovereign and independent people. Some saw their English-speaking colleagues as pandering to the enemy, echoing the words of Tacitus that "the language of the colonizer in the mouths of the colonized is the language of a slave." For reports of gang violence in the Five Points, see *The Irish News* of 11 July 1857, which reported on battles between the Dead Rabbits and Bowery Boys. The *Irish American* of 18 July 1857 claimed that the Dead Rabbits were upset with the Court of Appeals judging in favor of the Metropolitans over Fernando Woods' Municipals, and that this adjudication prompted their attack on Metro policemen. *The Citizen* of the same day scolded the Irish for their participation, charging it to drink.

⁵⁴ The British charge d'affaires in Washington worried that the "disbanded miscreants who are now returning from Mexico with appetites whetted for all deeds of rapine and blood will be ready for any congenial job." Elgin to Grey, 16 August 1848, *Elgin-Grey Papers, 1846-1852*, ed. Sir Arthur G. Doughty (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1937), 149. In a prescient observation some three months later, Elgin wrote Grey that: "A very slight acquaintance with American politics enables one to affirm with tolerable confidence that if the reckless and powerful faction who were advocating in the States annexation of Canada as a species of retaliation for British misdeeds in Ireland had received much encouragement from this side of the border it would neither have been within the power of the United States Government nor in its will pending the canvas for the Presidential election to have restrained them." Elgin to Grey, 30 November 1848, *Elgin-Grey Papers*, 264.

shipped to Ireland to support that year's rebellion.⁵⁵ The *New York Herald* of 14 May carried a letter from Thomas D'Arcy McGee appealing to the Irish in America "not to delay too long their organization" and making a strong bid for financial assistance.⁵⁶ The movement enjoyed wide support, garnering these words from the *New York Tribune*:

"We have never intended to incite the Irish to rebellion; we certainly have in no manner encouraged them to expect assistance from this country; but in case they should be driven into forcible resistance to the tyranny that grinds and crushes them, we are anxious that they should be sustained by the 'sympathy' of our countrymen not only, but of those who in all countries love Freedom and Justice and hope to see wrong righted and injury redressed. To such sympathy we believe them fairly entitled, if any people ever were. What we propose is to disseminate the more important and obvious facts respecting the treatment of Ireland under British domination, so that the world may thereby be led to feel keenly her wants and her woes, to discern their chief causes, and hope if not labor for their removal. So much we deem due to Truth, Freedom, and Humanity, and we shall discharge our share of the obligation at whatever cost."⁵⁷

The *Tribune* of 6 June 1848 carried reports of the previous evening's "Mass Meeting of the Friends of Ireland." Mayors Havemayer of New York and Stryker of Brooklyn were the presiding officers, and Horace Greeley was the featured speaker.⁵⁸ Greeley directed his words to the people of Great Britain:

"These facts, people of Great Britain, we commend to your understanding and your consciences. You are fearfully accountable to God and Humanity for their

⁵⁵ The fact that 1848 was a presidential election year indubitably accounted for the involvement of so many influential politicians in the Irish Directory. The *New York Herald* of 6 June 1848 reported that political support of the Irish Directory was "a regular auction ... all there were bidding for the Irish vote." Echoed the *Democratic Review* of August 1852, "Election day has supplanted the 17th of March as Pat's holiday."

⁵⁶ *New York Herald* 14 May 1848.

⁵⁷ *New York Tribune* 19 May 1848.

⁵⁸ Other dignitaries included Mayor Drummer of Jersey City and politicians Ben Butler and Samuel J. Tilden. The association of so many prominent Americans led Great Britain to protest the activities. In later years, Greeley would continue to court the Irish vote. He addressed a gathering of some 1500 persons at Tammany Hall on 22 July 1852 who had turned out in support of Thomas Kaine. Kaine had murdered James Balfe, his landlord, in Ireland on 5 April 1851 and the British were seeking extradition; Greeley characterized the offense as "a political, but not a moral crime." The case was dismissed in April 1853.

just appreciation! Tremendous is the responsibility braved by that nation which dares to hold another people subject to its rule— which assumes the Divine prerogative of Government over others— which holds in enforced thralldom the energies and destinies of a Race. If your dominion over Ireland has been just, humane and beneficent, why are its fruits destitution, hatred, crime, misery, and despair? If your duty as rulers has been faithfully preformed, why are your subjects destitute, turbulent, and suffering? Why is Ireland, in the very heart of civilization, herself retrograding, a scandal and a sorrow to civilization? If Ireland is to you an unsolved and perplexing enigma why do you not leave her to herself? In confessing that they know not how to make the Irish people happy, your statesmen admit that they have not the ability to govern Ireland, and therefore have no moral right to persist in this attempt. We entreat you, therefore, to absolve yourselves from further responsibility for her woes and her crimes by relinquishing the dominion which the experience of six centuries has proved calamitous to her and therefore discreditable to you, and thus test her capacity for self-government. Call this an untried experiment, if you will; better this than an established failure. Hear us, men and brethren, and tempt the visitations of God by persisting in endeavors to hold in thralldom a people whom you cannot truly govern, and who the sword may silence and scatter, but cannot comfort, enlighten, elevate, or feed.”

In a backhanded show of support, the newspaper editorialized that “the American people have the right to speak to the British regarding Ireland because as a result of British policy thousands of immigrants were annually arriving in America to spread disease in our midst and add to our taxation problem.”⁵⁹ A military brigade was formed, which drilled in the streets and parks of the city.⁶⁰ That same year saw the creation of a fundraising and political lobbying vehicle known as the American Emergency Fund in Boston. When the Young Ireland revolution was crushed in Ireland, some Irish American editors proposed using the funds for the relief of destitute Irish immigrants.⁶¹

⁵⁹ *New York Tribune* 6 June 1848.

⁶⁰ On the military activities of the Directory, see John Belchem, “Republican Spirit and Military Science: The ‘Irish Brigade’ and Irish American Nationalism in 1848,” *Irish Historical Studies* 29, no. 113, (May, 1994): 44-64.

⁶¹ *The Irish American* 10 February 1850. Archbishop John Hughes of New York contributed \$500 to the fund. When later news proved the rebellion to be a fiasco, he transferred the gift to the Sisters of Mercy for the care of destitute Irish girls in New York City. The same paper of 3 August 1850 counseled using the funds to relocate Irish families in the Western United States, “thereby placing the Irish poor out of

The failure of the Young Ireland revolt was interpreted by some optimistic observers as a blessing in disguise; it exposed the bombast and treachery of certain self-constituted leaders who probably were traitors and most certainly cowards. Now, "the truthful, gallant, vilified, deserted people have taken the matter into their own hands."⁶²

The "Irish Brigade" was not the only militia unit composed of Irish immigrants. In 1851, when 163,000 Irish arrived in the City, the most famous of all Irish American military organizations, the Sixty Ninth Regiment of New York Volunteers, was incorporated.⁶³ With their distinctive uniforms and overt ethnic association, this unit, and others like it, served as valuable social links, while maintaining bonds of identity among the newcomers.⁶⁴ In the wake of the horrors of the Hunger, and the psychological scars

the reach of a drain upon the public taxes." Despite the failure of the Young Ireland rebellion, Irish Americans continued to seek justice for their jailed compatriots. The *New York Tribune* of 26 January 1852 carried a report that a deputation of Irish Americans had called on President Millard Fillmore and asked him to intercede on behalf of imprisoned Young Irelanders in Van Diemen's Land. Fillmore replied "that he had a strong desire for the accomplishment of the object they had in view, but international law rendered it impossible for him to interfere in the internal concerns of another nation." An earlier resolution by Senator Foote of Mississippi, urging Great Britain to release the prisoners, had been passed over in December 1851.

⁶² *The Irish American* 14 October 1849. Despite the setback, the paper continued its call for violent revolution, stating that "Parliament never made any concession to Ireland as a result of justice, reasoning, or facts...nothing was ever gained by agitation, associations, or monster meetings. Nothing can hope to be accomplished except through fear." *The Irish American* 2 December 1849. See also *The Irish American* 10 October 1849.

⁶³ The *Irish American* press greeted the creation of these units. "Quite a military spirit has been aroused within the last few months among the intelligent masses of our Irish adopted citizens," wrote *The Irish American* of 1 February 1851. "Breathing the free atmosphere of our glorious and happy republic, we rejoice to see this military spirit fostered and cultivated among our fellow countrymen. A military education always creates a taste and spirit in the citizen soldier and elevates him among his fellow-citizens and gains him hosts of friends." Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 129 claims that by 1853 there were 6000 uniformed militia troops in the state, of whom 4000 were foreign, and 2600 Irish.

⁶⁴ The unit was officially incorporated on 12 October 1851. Much work has been done on the "Fighting Sixty Ninth." For a good overall treatment of its early years, consult Patrick D. O'Flaherty, "The History of the Sixty-Ninth Regiment of the New York State Militia, 1852-1861" (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1963). That the units served an important social role can be seen in the pages of *The Irish American* of 3 February 1850, which carried reports of the formation, and grand ball, of the Irish Volunteers. On similar organizations in Brooklyn, see the *Irish American* of 4 January 1851. The regiments, of course, were not limited to New York City. *The Citizen* of 27 January 1855 reported that

its survivors carried, such groups mobilized the community and helped to give it some coherence. They also kept alive the hopes of physical force nationalists, who took pride in the persistence of the revolutionary spirit. As *The Citizen* of 28 July 1855 proclaimed: "The time is now come...the power of England is crushed forever...the bully is now the cringing beggar. Now or never is the time for vengeance. The Almighty God did not send you to this country for the purpose of working and living. He sent you to learn that you are men...He sent you to learn the mode and the means of setting your country free."⁶⁵ A journalist in Dublin's *The Nation* seconded these sentiments: "If the exodus goes on, as it is likely to go on... the United States will become very Irish. So an Ireland there will be. We have only pushed the Celt westwards. There, no longer cooped up between the Liffey and the Shannon, he will spread from New York to San Francisco, and keep up the ancient feud at an unforeseen advantage."⁶⁶

The opening of the Crimean War in 1854 was perceived by many as the perfect opportunity to strike a blow for Irish independence.⁶⁷ As John Mitchel observed: "Who can tell what the chances and changes of the blessed war may bring us? I believe in

contrary to orders emanating from the governor of Massachusetts, General Benjamin Butler had refused to disband Irish military companies, thereby leaving himself open to court-martial.

⁶⁵ *The Citizen* 28 July 1855. That same day, an article titled "What America Owes to Ireland" recounted the prior contributions of Irishmen to America ("one-half the army of the Revolution, augmented by the blood of Irishmen in the war of 1812, and further enhanced in the Mexican War") and demanded that America support the insurgents, stating: "Americans are bound by every obligation, human and divine, to give at the present moment their influence and their money, their rifles and their blood, to those who have contributed so mightily to the success of the American Republic."

⁶⁶ *Dublin Nation* 5 May 1860.

⁶⁷ In later years, Irish American nationalists would see the day of reckoning in such struggles as the Sepoy Revolt, during which *The Irish News* of 29 August and 5 September 1857 tried to inflame American opinion against the British by issuing reports suggesting that British agents were enlisting New Yorkers for the struggle in India. Editor Thomas Francis Meagher opined that "The British lion is sick at present and has fallen into the hands of very bad doctors, who prescribe grape shot and other hard medicines, not calculated to improve his appetite for plunder and fighting." *The Irish News* 19 September 1857.

moral and spiritual electricity; I believe that a spark, caught at some happy moment, may give life to masses of humanity; that out of the “exodus” of the Celts may be born a return of the Heraclidae.”⁶⁸ *The Citizen* published a series of articles calling for the formation of a military organization that would take advantage of England’s precarious situation. On 1 April that journal declared: “Be assured that certain Irishmen in New York, who have the nearest and dearest interest in the Cause, have resolved, if a fair occasion arise, to avail themselves of it, and ask a sufficient number of you to help them.”⁶⁹ Heightened tensions between the United States and Great Britain further encouraged bellicose talk and martial preparations. When British Minister Crampton was dismissed for illegal recruitment in this country, Irish American journalists reported the tale gleefully. Opined one: “We hope and expect that the Buchanan and Crampton passage of arms may superinduce a collision between the two countries, so that the desire of our heart in this matter may be realized.”⁷⁰ Others wrote ebulliently of the war and encouraged Irishmen everywhere to subscribe liberally to the cause:

“Fellow exiles— the sun of Ireland’s independence, so long obscured by the clouds of adversity, is bursting through the darkness of centuries, and will soon shine in splendor over a liberated nation... The voice of the exiled Celt has gone forth to cheer the drooping, to stimulate the slothful, and to unite all Irishmen in one grand rally for the freedom of Old Ireland. Awake, then Irishmen, and to the rescue! The day of England’s tribulation is now— the withering breath of an angry God is upon her, scourging her for the robberies, the murders, the massacres of ages, and dissolving her power like snow before the sun.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ John Mitchel, “Jail Journal Continuation,” quoted in William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel* (London: K. Paul, Trench and Company, 1888), 32.

⁶⁹ *The Citizen* 1 April 1854.

⁷⁰ *The Irish American* 20 October 1855. A number of Irish American revolutionaries— members of the American Irish Emigrant Aid Association— were arrested by the United States Attorney General in Cincinnati at the behest of the British consul.

⁷¹ *The Citizen* 6 October 1855.

The response to this call was immense. Dozens of letters filled the pages of the Irish American press over the next several weeks, each of which expressed a willingness on the part of the writers to depart with “one who would go” (the pseudonym of the original correspondent) and “shed the last drop of their blood for Ireland.”⁷² *The Citizen* proudly asserted: “Every sign of the times indicates that undying hatred of the Sassanach still warms the blood of our race.”⁷³ Answering criticisms that the calls for revolution were incompatible with the laws of this country and of heaven, Mitchel responded: “The rifle is the most moral force to persuade England to a fair compliance; therefore, physical force is truly moral, and that tame slavish thing denominated in Ireland ‘agitation’ is immoral and tends to no good; it is now time to work.”⁷⁴ The result of this effort was the creation of a series of military organizations that had as their goal the liberation of Ireland from Saxon suzerainty. The first of these was the Irishmen’s Civil and Military Republican Union (IRU). Founded in New York on 13 April 1854, the IRU planned to raise funds, outfit, and equip an army of liberation that would engage in the struggle for Irish freedom. Led by John Mitchel, the group approached Russian officials in Washington and New York to see if there was any possibility of joint action against the

⁷² See *The Citizen* of 4, 11, 18, 25 August and 1 September. One letter was signed by an unnamed individual claiming to be a Catholic priest, who commented: “brave hearts throb beneath a cassock as beneath any other coat.” *The Citizen* 29 December 1855. Letters came from as far away as “the wild mountains of California, where the hopes of a blow being struck for our native land inspires every Irishman with other thoughts than digging gold”, and Mississippi. *The Citizen* 27 October 1855.

⁷³ *The Citizen* 18 August 1855.

⁷⁴ *The Citizen* 1 September 1855. Mitchel characterized those journals that opposed his plan as “un-Irish,” adding: “Of the *Pilot*, no Irishman with an erect spine or one dash of republican spirit would read it.” *The Citizen* 24 November 1855.

English.⁷⁵ In 1855, much to the chagrin of Mitchel— who felt that unanimity was a necessary precondition for success— Irish expatriates in America created another organization, the Emmet Monument Association (EMA).⁷⁶ This organization took its name from Robert Emmet’s 1803 speech from the dock, where he stated that his epitaph not be written until Ireland took her place among the nations of the world. The EMA collected funds, solicited political support, and procured weapons to achieve independence, planning to attack Ireland in September of 1855.⁷⁷ They also tried to influence Americans to recognize that their cause was one which deserved support; some editors upbraided those Americans who frowned on Irish American nationalism. As one contributor to *The Irish News* put it, “some of the best blood of Ireland was shed for the liberties of this country, and but few families are now in it who are not closely or remotely allied to them. Can they forget the wrongs and sufferings of their oppressed nation?”⁷⁸ Added another, “The true interests of this country are intimately identified with the liberation of Ireland. Does not a restoration of the old Celtic nationality rise in importance beyond a mere Irish question and become an American question?”⁷⁹ Inflammatory newspaper reports concerning the activities of British warships in

⁷⁵ On Mitchel’s meeting with Baron Stockl, see John Mitchel, *Jail Journal* (Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1913), 378.

⁷⁶ Organizers of the EMA included Michael Doheny, a veteran of the failed ’48 rising who started his own periodical, *The Honest Truth*, to offset Mitchel and *The Citizen’s* opposition to their scheme. Mitchel suggested *The Damned Lie* as a more appropriate title, and dismissed one of his employees whom he suspected was copying the names of *The Citizen’s* subscribers for Doheny. The dismissed employee, Richard Lalor, was later editor of Thomas Francis Meagher’s *Irish News*. Meetings of the EMA were routinely held at Michael Corcoran’s Hibernian Hall, located at 42 Prince Street. *The Irish News* 6 September 1856.

⁷⁷ Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative*, 3.

⁷⁸ *The Irish News* 12 June 1858.

⁷⁹ *The Citizen* 9 February 1856.

American waters were designed to outrage Americans, while ephemeral columns concerning Irish contributions to prior American conflicts (the Revolution and War of 1812 in particular, since these were anti-British actions) attempted to paint Irish Americans as loyal patriots.⁸⁰

Many were convinced that England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity and plans were made to harass English shipping and funnel war materiel across the Atlantic. Yet another organization, the American Irish Emigrant Aid Association (AIEAA), was soon formed; having essentially the same objective as the Emmet Monument Association, it differed only in its size and scope.⁸¹ While the EMA was for the most part confined to New York City, the AIEAA, which had originally been limited to Massachusetts, had grown to include branches throughout the United States. Holding a three-day convention in New York City in early December 1855, the AIEAA listed Robert Tyler (son of the American President) as its President.⁸² The convention cautioned its members "that it was the duty of all American citizens, native-born or naturalized, of whatever political opinions, or of whatever nationality, to faithfully respect the laws and constitution of this country," but that working for the independence of Ireland would be "worthy of the noble character of American freedom."⁸³ While some observed that it would be better to have only one society in the United States having for its object the liberation of Ireland, there

⁸⁰ *The Citizen* 19 July 1856.

⁸¹ The organization was founded on 14 August 1855. *The Citizen* 25 August 1855. For reports on its growth and progress, see *The Citizen* of 15, 22, 29 September and 6 and 13 October, 1855.

⁸² The representatives, who came from twenty-four states, were described as "high-minded, intelligent, honorable...not drunken loafers or brawling demagogues. Never before in the history of conventions was there so little of jarring and so much unanimity. The whole proceedings were characterized by unity, concord, and calm resolve." *The Citizen* 15 December 1855.

⁸³ Ibid.. *The Citizen* of 9 February 1856 carried the Manifesto of the Supreme Directory of the Association.

was acknowledgement that there was “room enough for two and work enough for all.”⁸⁴

Despite these pressures and internal factionalism, both the EMA and the AIEAA kept up their activities.⁸⁵ *The Citizen* of 19 January 1856 carried the following poetic appeal for support, “To Our Brothers in America”:

“We know you well brave patriot band, the good, the brave, the true
You’re working in a distant land. We’re working with you too
We’re watching you, we know the love you bear our native land
And where’s the coward Irishman who will not lend a hand
And then we’ll try the cause again; we’ll prove the tyrants might
True hearts, sharp swords, a battlefield, and God defend the right!”⁸⁶

Although the speedy settlement of the Crimean War, coupled with the economic depression of 1857, quickly vitiated the movements, the framework for subsequent nationalist groups had been established.⁸⁷

These would-be revolutionaries were not disheartened; reports circulated that the clubs were in a prosperous and flourishing condition, and that “whatever of torpor or

⁸⁴ *The Citizen* 12 January 1856.

⁸⁵ There was continued animosity between Doheny and Mitchel. When the former tried to gain entrance to the AIEAA convention in December, John McClenahan, associate editor of *The Citizen*, which painted Doheny as a British spy, denied him entrance. *The Citizen* 22 December 1855. *The New York Daily News* of 10 December 1855 presented the opinions of a number of Irish American newspapers, on the subject of the recent convention. “*The Citizen*, edited by John McClenahan, is oracular and general in its comments...*The American Celt*, edited by D’Arcy McGee, is utterly opposed to the movement, looks upon it as unchristian, and evidently not only wants the Irish to stay in Ireland, but also to stay under English rule! *The Celt’s* opinions just about agree with those of the Know-Nothing organs, the *New York Express*, etc.” McClenahan had earlier characterized McGee as a “political firebrand— a bomb always ready to burst, no matter whether on friend or foe.” *The Citizen* 13 October 1855.

⁸⁶ *The Citizen* 19 January 1856.

⁸⁷ Many of the trappings of the AIEAA— such as its nonsectarianism, aversion to oath-bound membership, and presence of both a constitution and a supreme directory— would be adopted by the Fenians. Religious intolerance was particularly vexing to John Mitchel, who saw in sectarianism “the apples of discord, disunion, and political damnation that have both Catholic and Protestant under Sassanach treachery and deceit.” *The Citizen* 15 December 1855. Echoed others: “Factions we abhor, sectionalism we scorn, and religion we leave between a man’s conscience and his Maker. Our only creed is the right of the people of Ireland to govern themselves; our only faith and only hope is in the rifle and the sword, in the hands of devoted and fearless sons of Ireland.” Sixth National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood. Proceedings of Joint Convention of Senate and House of Representatives (n.p., n.d.), 25.

inactivity was induced by the conclusion of peace in Europe has been thrown off.”⁸⁸ Transparent attempts to keep the revolutionary coffers filled through such tactics as the creation of an “Irish Patriotic Defense Fund” were soon betrayed by journalists who harangued the would-be revolutionaries for duping naive servants and laborers of their savings.⁸⁹ Despite such obstacles, the work of Irish Americans to achieve an independent Ireland continued. The formation of the Fenian Brotherhood in the spring of 1858 proved just how strong these connections were; unfortunately, many of the problems that plagued these earlier efforts would be replicated along with this commitment.

⁸⁸ *The Citizen* 14 June 1856. *The Irish News* ran a series of articles outlining “How gunpowder was manufactured and treated” and detailing the development of a submarine by “Herr Bauer of Schlessig-Holstein.” *Irish News* 5 June and 18 September 1858.

⁸⁹ The money raised was ostensibly for the defense of prisoners—members of the Phoenix National and Literary Society, founded in 1857—imprisoned in Ireland. Patrick J. Meehan, editor of the *Irish American* exposed the scheme in an article that appeared in his paper on 22 January 1859. The claims were substantiated in *The Irish News* of that same day. When some in the community suggested using the funds to erect a monument to Irish rebels, Thomas Francis Meagher countered that “the money that would be expended in doing honor to Ireland’s illustrious dead could be used for a nobler purpose—the achievement of Irish independence.” *The Irish News* 22 May 1858. Commenting on the row, the *Freeman’s Journal* stated that Ireland’s primary enemy was the Irish, adding “if you put one Irishman on the spit, you’ll find another to turn it.” *Freeman’s Journal* 21 May 1859. On the propensity for Fenian gatherings to devolve into fisticuffs, see Gustave Paul Cluseret. “My Connection with Fenianism,” *Littell’s Living Age* 94 (July, 1872): 353-365. Cluseret, a Frenchman who had served on John Fremont’s staff during the Civil War; and who would later serve as military liaison between the Fenians and the IRB wrote: “Fighting followed whiskey as whiskey followed words...the amount of whiskey that was drunk is inconceivable. What fortunes in liquor then disappeared into the stomachs of Irishmen.” Apparently this was not a new problem. Some fifteen years earlier, Irish temperance advocate Father Theobald Mathew urged his countrymen in the United States: “I implore you, as I would with my dying breath, to discard forever those foolish divisions—those insensate quarrels—those factious broils (too often, alas! — the fruits of intemperance) in which your country is disgraced, the peace and order of society violated, and the laws of heaven trampled on and outraged.” *New York Tribune* 10 November 1851.

CHAPTER FOUR

“No Irishman could have invented such a scheme, no American would have believed in it; but put American exaggeration and Irish credulity together, and you get Fenianism.”

London Times 30 October 1865

The story of the Fenian Brotherhood in New York City closely parallels that of the organization on the national stage. Indeed, the passions, problems, and internal factionalism seen in American Fenianism as a whole were magnified in what was then the largest and most important city in Irish America. As such, a closer analysis of the organization in New York will tell us much of the movement, and of the city it called home. This chapter, therefore, attempts to reconstruct the internal history of the movement in New York City; it serves to root the Brotherhood in the larger contexts of its contemporary society.

New York was central to the evolution, development, and maturation of Irish American nationalism. Commenting on the propensity of Irish republicans to migrate to Gotham, *The Irish News* editorialized that “New York became the principal refugium peccatorum of the crowd. Great were the subsequent jubilations in that city; but in Ireland there was a grievous disappointment among jailers and hangmen.”¹ Echoed *The Citizen*, “The basis of operations of a revolution in Ireland is in New York. It must be by an infusion of the blood of men who have tasted freedom here that her spirit would be revived.”² The city was likewise the birthplace of the Fenian movement, the locale for its headquarters, the site of some of its most vituperative battles, and the scene of some of its most important events. Nationalist dealings with nativists, the Church, American

¹ *The Irish News* 7 April 1860.

² *The Citizen* 17 November 1855.

politicians, and each other were played out in the pages of the secular, ethnic, and religious press, leaving an indelible record of what transpired and what motivated the actors. The Brotherhood struggled in its early years, but capitalized on the funeral of Terence Bellew McManus to thrust itself into mainstream society. Initially hampered by the outbreak of the American Civil War, the battlefields of that conflict would eventually be turned into a training ground for Irish nationalists. Following Appomattox, the Fenians would be fractured by a series of highly contentious feuds; nowhere were the rifts that characterized the organization on the national level more evident than in New York.

The Fenian Brotherhood was founded by former Young Ireland members John O'Mahony and Michael Doheny in New York City on 17 March 1858.³ The name of the organization was taken to honor the legendary band of warriors known as the Fianna, epic heroes in the mystical and mythical Gaelic past. O'Mahony was an accomplished Gaelic scholar who had translated Geoffrey Keating's history of Ireland, Foras Feasa an Eirann.⁴ He had escaped prosecution in 1848 by faking his own death and burial, only to reemerge sometime later in Paris, the city of revolutionaries. His companion in exile was James Stephens, another Irish expatriate who believed that Ireland would soon be free; the two men would be the central figures in the formative years of the Fenian movement, and their relationship would be a central one in understanding that organization. While in France, O'Mahony earned a decent living as a tutor and teacher, and met with others

³ Doheny even wrote a popular history of the failed uprising: Michael Doheny, The Felon's Track: History of the Attempted Outbreak in Ireland, 1848 (Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1918).

⁴ *The New York Times* of 4 May 1866 offered the following, which contrasted O'Mahony's talents as an academic with his inadequacies as a soldier: "O'Mahony's abilities as a Gaelic scholar are unquestioned. His translation of Keating's *History of Ireland* furnishes all the testimony needed on that score. In time perhaps, we may have a supplement to this volume, bringing down the history of the Green Isle from the period that the British did invade it to the time that the Fenians did not invade it."

who shared his vision that Ireland would one day be a republic. Upon learning that John Mitchel, doyen of mid-nineteenth century Irish nationalists, had escaped from penal servitude and had settled in America, O'Mahony decided to follow his mentor and headed to New York.⁵ After reaching that city in 1854, he immediately formulated plans to recruit and train an army of Irish expatriates who could be used to liberate their homeland from the hated English. Many believed that the disastrous Irish economic situation provided ample justification for revolution. One contemporary observer of the situation in Kilkenny in the summer of 1855 commented:

“The woolen mills that were working when I left home (five years ago) were all closed up and deserted, gloom and sadness prevailed all over; no improvements, everything seemed going to the dogs...business crushed, industry paralyzed, not a ray of hope around. Apathy, and the continuous flight of the best bone and sinew of our race to the emigrant ships were becoming a settled conclusion in all minds. The poorhouse was the only refuge in sight for those who couldn't get away. The excessive taxes exorted from the poor farmers and other taxpayers reduced them to a condition that left them no choice between those institutions or the emigrant ship.”⁶

Furtive attempts to liberate Ireland from American shores, such as the Emmet Monument Association and American Irish Emigrant Aid Association, capitalized on the collective sense of exile as felt by Irish immigrants, but were hampered by logistical, economic, and ideological problems. It was not until 1858 that Irish nationalists were able to formulate plans for a transatlantic organization that would aim to liberate their

⁵ Mitchel was the son of a Presbyterian minister and was consumed by a fervid hatred of all things British. His unrepentant calls for violence had even cost him the support of many of his compatriots in the Irish republican movement. Convicted of felony treason for his part in the Young Ireland movement, he was transported first to Bermuda and then to Tasmania. His Jail Journal remains a landmark of Irish republican theory, as well as of his rabid Anglophobia: one critic claimed that Mitchel espoused the Irish to burn everything that came from England except her coal! In a 28 January 1867 letter to Mortimer Moynihan, Mitchel claimed: “It is not that I stand out for civilized warfare: the Irish have the clear right to strike at England anywhere or anyhow. In Canada, in Ireland, in England; by steel, or gunpowder, or firewood.” Fenian papers, Catholic University of America.

⁶ Denieffe, A Personal Narrative, p 7.

homeland.

In the late autumn of 1857, O'Mahony and Doheny sent another veteran of '48, Owen Considine, to Dublin to confer with James Stephens as to the efficacy of establishing a transatlantic Irish nationalist movement. After a heralded fact-finding tour of Ireland, in which Stephens claimed to traverse some three thousand miles to determine the level of support for such a venture, the man known as "The Hawk" agreed to the proposal, so long as he be named provisional dictator of the organization.⁷ Furthermore, Stephens dictated that some 500 men skilled in the arts of war be sent to Ireland to train the masses there.⁸ In addition to his unconditional authority, Stephens stipulated that he be supplied with a monthly financial contribution to bankroll the revolution, and that he alone be responsible for its disbursement.⁹ Upon conferring with their associates, Considine, O'Mahony, and Doheny organized the American branch of the movement in New York on 17 March 1858. Originally, only forty Irish exiles took the oath:

"In the presence of Almighty God, I solemnly swear allegiance to the Irish Republic, now virtually established, and I will ...defend its independence and integrity, and ... yield implicit obedience in all things, not contrary to the laws of God, to the commands of my superior officers, so help me God. Amen"¹⁰

Although the terms would be used — both at the time and subsequently — interchangeably, there was to be a separation between the American Fenian Brotherhood

⁷ Stephens further stipulated that in Ireland, at least, the organization be secret, lest the movement be broken by clerical interference. O'Leary, *Recollections*, 1: 89.

⁸ John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), 160.

⁹ Stephens requested from £80 to £100 per month and that "it is essential to the success of this organization that I should be perfectly unshackled, a provisional dictator. On this point I can conscientiously concede nothing." Ibid. Stephens was wildly popular with his associates. Wrote one: "Stephens was at the highest notch in my estimation. He was grand... I would undertake anything for him. He seemed to have me under a spell. He was all that could be desired as a leader. We were willing to bear all and follow him to the end." Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative*, 29.

¹⁰ Ryan, *The Fenian Chief*, 92.

and its European counterpart, the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The expressed aim of the American branch was to procure men, money, weapons, and military training—the so-called “sinews of war”—which would be transported to “the men in the gap.”¹¹ On 13 October 1858 Stephens arrived in New York City; later, at a meeting of the Friends of Ireland in Tammany Hall, he installed O’Mahony as the “supreme organizer and Director of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood in America.”¹² Shortly, O’Mahony began to urge Irishmen throughout the United States to join the Fenians, or at least to make some financial contributions to the cause. Toward this end, O’Mahony organized some forty military regiments and companies—bearing such illustrative names as the Irish Legion and the Phoenix Brigade—that would train hordes of enthusiastic young Irishmen to mete out justice to the British interlopers in Ireland.¹³

While military preparations continued, the monetary goals would be difficult to fulfill—the economic panic of 1857 had made the economic situation of the American Irish a precarious one, and the paltry initiation fee of one dollar (with five cent weekly dues) would not suffice to build a war chest. When Stephens returned to Ireland in early

¹¹ “Government authorities in Dublin Castle were able to distinguish between the IRB as a secret revolutionary society that aimed at putting an army in the field, and the Fenian Brotherhood as an auxiliary whose mission was to provide the Irish army with arms and military stores, with officers, and conceivably with reinforcements of men.” Leon O’Brion, Revolutionary Underground: The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, 1858-1924 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976), 2-3.

¹² A copy of this document is located in the Fenian Brotherhood Records, Catholic University of America. Wrote O’Mahony some years later: “I accepted the position of Head Centre of the Fenian Brotherhood, with the understanding that my duty should be to unite and organize, as far as possible, the Irish element in America and to concentrate its moral and material forces, and to direct them systematically. The understanding was that the IRB should be organized secretly with James Stephens as its leader and chief.” Letter from O’Mahony to *Boston Pilot*, 27 January 1866. For a succinct history of Fenianism’s formative years, see To the Senate and House of Delegates of the Fenian Brotherhood, in Congress Assembled, January 1866 (New York: J. Craft, 1866).

¹³ “Fenianism- By One Who Knows,” Contemporary Review 19 (1871-1872), 304.

1859, he carried only £600 with him.¹⁴ Moreover, the clandestine nature of the organization, with an intricate arrangement designed to make infiltration and detection by spies and government agents impossible, indubitably hampered early recruitment efforts and scared some potential supporters who, fearing clerical condemnation, shied away from such quasi-conspiratorial groups.¹⁵

The Brotherhood was arranged in a series of concentric groups known as circles, each of which was commanded by a centre. Each centre had nine captains under his command, who oversaw nine sergeants. Each of these, in turn, commanded nine privates. Ostensibly, one only knew the eight cohorts in his immediate group, as well as his own commander. This prevented any one informant from handing over more than nine conspirators. Despite these precautions, it was exceedingly hard to keep the organization under wraps, especially when we consider the fact that the Fenians operated not one but two weekly newspapers which routinely reported on the plans of the group.¹⁶

Hampered by slow growth, the Fenians tried to raise funds through surreptitious means. A proposed “Irish Patriotic Defense Fund,” to achieve the release of jailed 1858 Phoenix conspirators was advertised; soon however, Patrick Meehan of *The Irish American* exposed the scheme and the Brotherhood was in serious jeopardy of folding. Even mainstream papers joined the fray, belittling the Fenians for stealing money from

¹⁴ Ryan, *The Fenian Chief*, 149.

¹⁵ Clerical opposition was mirrored by that of the press. “*The Nation* of Dublin, then in the hands of AM and TD Sullivan, published an article on the evils of spreading an illegal society in the south and declaring it would be the duty of that paper to expose those engaged in such reprehensible business.” Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative*, 43. O’Mahony later assailed Patrick Meehan of the *Irish American* for opposing the movement, citing him as “the most persistent and malignant of the assailants of the Fenian Brotherhood on this continent. In the columns of the *Irish American* he labored hard to crush it in its infancy.” *To the Senate and House of Delegates*, 9-10.

¹⁶ As an example of how difficult it was to maintain a low profile, when Stephens sent John O’Leary as secret envoy to the United States, *The Irish News* of 7 May 1859 trumpeted his arrival.

honest, though naive, laborers and domestic servants.¹⁷ Such attacks were devastating; by not having the leading and most influential paper in Irish America behind them, the Fenians were hampered in many ways. Worse, the scandal meant that potential supporters would be less inclined to back the Fenians; as Joseph Denieffe commented: “The Irish Americans have been humbugged so much that they have lost confidence, and at present have no faith in attempts for the regeneration of Ireland. They will not subscribe until they are obliged to...there can be no help for Ireland from America.”¹⁸ Faced with mounting criticism and dwindling resources, the Brotherhood needed something that would reinvigorate their sagging fortunes and fill their depleted coffers. In 1861, they were presented with a public relations coup that would catapult the organization into prominence and ensure that they would be able to weather many a future storm.

The saving moment for the Fenian Brotherhood came in January of 1861. In that year, exiled Young Irelander Terence Bellew McManus passed away in California. McManus had escaped from Van Dieman’s Land and made his way to America in 1851; like others in his position, he was feted by leading politicians and hackneyed demagogues upon his arrival. His raucous reception at San Francisco’s Union Hotel resulted in the

¹⁷ *The Irish American* 22 January 1859. O’Mahony blasted Meehan as a traitor. John O’Leary added, “may all the devils in hell lay hold of those who kept their rascally dollars from us.” Fenian papers, letter from O’Leary to O’Mahony dated January 1859. Joseph Denieffe concurred, adding: “Meehan took special interest in decrying any active movement for Ireland.” Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative*, 20. The aspersions cast on Meehan may have been in haste, as the story was first reported in other journals one week earlier. See, for example the *New York Herald*, 15 January 1859.

¹⁸ Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative*, 28. A letter for W.M. O’Carroll to O’Mahony seconded this sentiment. “Less reliance on America would have strengthened the position in Ireland. They are unembarrassed by the eternal struggle against the Law and against poverty that we have to maintain. They can do much, and if they had faith they would do much. Alas, we cannot work miracles to give them this faith. I fear that if tomorrow the mail bore to them the news of a Rising here they would, many of them, even then require us to prove we were in earnest by being hewn in pieces before they would be convinced.” O’Carroll to O’Mahony, July 1861, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

collapse of that building's main foyer, with the attendants dispersed into the cellar when the ballroom crumpled.¹⁹ Despite this grand introduction to American society, McManus lived the remainder of his life in relative obscurity, trying his hand at several businesses, including a stint as a cattle rancher in San Jose.

McManus died in virtual anonymity on 15 January 1861, and a modest ceremony was held the following day. Soon, however, in what has been termed the "grandfather of all Irish wakes," the forgotten exile would be disinterred and used as a launching pad for the Fenian organization. Exhumed from Calvary Cemetery on 19 August 1861, there was a public viewing of the fallen patriot the following day at Platt's Music Hall. A standing room only crowd attended a memorial mass at St. Mary's Cathedral, and a throng of 20,000 watched as a procession of some 1600 escorted the casket to the steamer *Uncle Sam*, which transported the body to New York, by way of Panama.²⁰ On the East Coast, "overwhelming crowds" who wanted to pay their respects to the fallen rebel greeted the funeral cortege, notwithstanding the threatening appearance of the weather.²¹ Arriving in New York on 13 September, a memorial mass was celebrated three days later at St. Patrick's Cathedral. There, Archbishop John Hughes preached a sermon, "upholding the right of an oppressed people to struggle for their liberation" and stating that "love of one's country was not equal to love of government", thereby giving support

¹⁹ The only injury was to a Hungarian immigrant, who attended the ceremony so that he would be able to meet a colleague of Louis Kossuth. On the events surrounding the public reception, see Louis R. Bisceglia, "The MacManus Welcome, 1851," *Eire-Ireland* 14, no.3 (Autumn 1979): 45-64.

²⁰ For a new interpretation, see Timothy J. Sarbaugh, "Post Civil War Fever and Adjustment: Fenianism in the Californian Context, 1858-1872," *Working Papers in Irish Studies* 3 (1991): 2-29. Sarbaugh postulates that the turnout was so great because it represented not spontaneous mourning for a fallen patriot, but a chance to socialize and take the day off from work.

²¹ *New York Sun* 19 October 1861. "The affair was exclusively an Irish one, the honest expression of sorrow for one to whom the good of his native country was dearer than life, who for this love had suffered persecution, imprisonment, and banishment." The hearse was attended by "thirty-two pall bearers, representing the counties of Ireland."

and succor to a movement which was tainted by its revolutionary tone and republican rhetoric.²²

One month later, thousands lined lower Manhattan as the hearse carrying McManus' body was escorted to Pier 44 on the Hudson River for its final departure to Ireland aboard the steamer *Glasgow*; opined the *New York Times*, "...there has not been assembled in the streets of New York so large a throng of the children of Ireland as that which yesterday lined them, to bid farewell to Terrence Bellew McManus. His was a sad fate—to perish far from home, in the very agony of his new country, and before he had beheld the full regeneration of the old one...it seemed strange to many that this country, which had afforded him a shelter, could not furnish him a grave."²³ Respects were not all the mourners paid, as the Fenian coffers attested. Contributions to the McManus Obsequies Fund—"for charitable purposes and for the regeneration of Ireland"—grew from less than \$800 when the cortege arrived in New York to \$2800 by the time the funeral delegation departed for Ireland on 19 October.²⁴ Indeed, the McManus funeral marked a turning point in the history of the movement, and Fenianism made rapid progress thereafter. One journalist commented: "the multitude that attended the funeral was more imposing for numbers, and of dignity and devotion than anything of the kind I ever witnessed...the vast mass of human beings inspired by feelings of mixed reverence,

²² Hughes hailed from the same town as the deceased revolutionary. The sermon is reprinted in Cavanagh, *Memoirs of Thomas Francis Meagher*, 419-422. Archbishop Joseph Alemany of San Francisco had previously administered the last rites to McManus. On the relationship between the Catholic Church and the IRB, see Oliver Rafferty, *The Church, the State, and the Fenian Threat, 1861-1875* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999). In Ireland, the Church opposed the IRB since the revolutionary aspects of the movement threatened the position of all recognized authority; in the United States, the hierarchy opposed the Fenians because the movement threatened gains made by Catholics in the wake of nativist sentiments.

²³ *New York Times* 19 October 1861.

²⁴ *The Irish American* 28 September, and 12, 19, and 26 October 1861. This represents a considerable sum, particularly when one considers the panoply of burial and benevolent societies, widows and orphans funds, et cetera which vied with one another for immigrant dollars.

enthusiasm and anger. No such demonstration ever took place, and it was an index of anti-English feeling.”²⁵

Following the McManus obsequies and the resultant rise in membership, the Brotherhood struggled through the years of the American Civil War.²⁶ The conflict transformed the Irish experience in America. Many within the community saw the war as a proving ground upon which the immigrant Irish could assert their loyalty to the Union. Many swore allegiance to the Union, remembering all that had been done to assuage their transition from exile to citizen. Editorialized *The Irish American*: “Secession means revolution; there can be no doubt of this; and we cannot be induced to forswear the allegiance we have pledged to our adopted country to gratify the secessionists, by abetting them in their unwise and anti-national proceedings.”²⁷ The paper pleaded with its readers to remain loyal to the Union, and begged the secessionists to reconsider their precipitous actions. The journal noted that it was working class Irish Americans who were most likely to feel the economic impact of the war, pointing out the irony that “the working class, which had consistently been the South’s best friends in the North, was bound to suffer unemployment and economic distress as a result of the disorganization of trade and business that it faced.”²⁸ Roughly speaking, the Irish community— and by

²⁵ *New York Times* 23 November 1861. See also *New York Tribune* 17 September 1861.

²⁶ Membership estimates vary widely. The most reliable sources place the figure at 5000 for 1860, with peak membership of 40,000 in 1865. These figures are extrapolated from monies collected by the organization, based upon initiation fees of one dollar, with five cents weekly dues. A quasi-official source placed the figure for 1865 at “more than 500,000.” Preface to Fenianism, or The Irish Republic: Its Origins and Progress by a Prominent Member of the Fenian Congress (New York: n.p. 1865), 4.

²⁷ *The Irish American* 26 January 1861. As early as 30 June 1860 that paper had counseled defense of the Union. “The adopted citizen cannot without incurring the guilt of deliberate perjury, ...recognize one section of the country to the prejudice of its whole. For him there is no North, no South, no east, no West.”

²⁸ *The Irish American* 15 December 1860.

extension the Fenians— was divided into two broad camps regarding the conflict.²⁹ The majority believed that meritorious service on their part would translate into a greater acceptance of the Irish in general and of their nationalist aspirations in particular; in addition, the Fenians viewed the war as a potentially fecund recruiting and training ground.³⁰

Others joined for more pragmatic reasons. One cause of the rush to service was the high rate of unemployment among Irishmen, which had been worsened by the economic uncertainties arising from secession. The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor estimated that unemployment in 1861 was “at least 25 per cent greater” than in any year since the Panic of 1857.³¹ Thus, it is not surprising to find that nearly forty percent of all foreign-born soldiers in the Union army, and nearly

²⁹ The Irish were not alone in their divided loyalty. On 7 January 1861 New York Mayor Fernando Wood came out in favor of the city’s seceding from the state and becoming a “free city,” urging that New York “disrupt the bonds that tie her to a venal and corrupt master- to a people and a party that have plundered the revenues, attempted to ruin her commerce, taken away her power of self-government...” *New York Herald*, 8 January 1861. Representative Daniel Sickles, who declared “in the event of secession in the South, New York City would free herself from the hatred of Republican government and throw open her ports to free commerce,” seconded Wood’s stance. The strictly pacifist *New York Daily News* (owned and operated by Fernando Wood’s brother Benjamin), the *Brooklyn Eagle*, and the *Freeman’s Journal* were prominent daily publications that would be banned from the mails after August 1861 for their spirited attacks on the administration and its war aims. Democrats in the State Legislature opposed a bill appropriating \$500,000 to equip the state militia upon the grounds that it was not necessary. Following the attack on Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s call for 75,000 volunteers, that same body rushed through a bill authorizing the governor to enroll 30,000 volunteers for twenty-four months, and appropriating \$3 million for expenses by a vote of 102 to 6. Interestingly, all six dissenting votes were cast by representatives from New York City. Sidney David Brummer, *Political History of the State of New York during the Period of the Civil War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), 139.

³⁰ One commented that service and sacrifice would “end forever the charges against the naturalized citizen and the Catholic, as being unworthy of citizenship.” *The Irish American* 23 November 1861. The extent to which Irish immigrants were still influenced by events in Europe could be seen in *The Irish Americans* lead editorial of 1 February 1861. Despite swirling reports of an impending civil war, the focus was on “The British Government and the Famine.”

³¹ In some respects, the war brought relief, providing thousands of jobs in war related industries and generating millions of dollars in pay and support money. By 1865, the city’s leading welfare agency could claim that there was “less suffering from indigence than in any proceeding four years in our history.” Bayor and Meagher, *New York Irish*, 195.

one-sixth of the entire Union enlistments, were Irish. Entire Fenian circles enlisted. John O'Leary suggests that T.F. Meagher's unit was Fenian to a man, while another commented: "The contribution of the Fenians both in officers and men was notable. Nearly all the officers of Meagher's Irish Brigade, as well as the Corcoran Legion, were Fenians... The 164th New York was originally raised and officered by Fenians who had graduated in the 99th New York State Militia, also known as the Phoenix, or Fenian, regiment, which sent over 1200 men into the army. In Milford, Massachusetts, out of a circle of 115 previous to the war, eighty enlisted. In Connecticut, one whole circle volunteered, and two-thirds of the Ninth Massachusetts Infantry were Fenians."³² It has been estimated that between 150,000 and 175,000 Irish served in the Union army during the Civil War.³³ Considerable numbers of Irish also joined and served in the Confederate Army, though Irish participation in the conflict was actually less than their proportional numbers suggest.

In the opposing camp were individuals who lamented the inevitable loss of life that would indubitably hamper the immediate plans of achieving Irish independence. This view was expressed in the 4 May 1861 issue of the *Boston Pilot*:

"The first enemies the 69th will encounter will, in all probability, be Irishman, some of them their own relatives, and all of them their friends, all of them owning the same country, the same aspirations, the same dear, fond hope. What a spectacle this is. There they stand in the death grip of one another, thousands of miles from the land that it would be their common pride to defend, and their common honor to die for. Many of the promoters of the war, many of those men

³² John Rutherford, The Secret History of the Fenian Conspiracy: Its Origins, Objects, and Ramifications, 2 vols. (London: Routledge Press, 1877), 1: 231.

³³ P.H. Bagenal, The American Irish and their Influence on Irish Politics (London: K. Paul Trench and Company, 1882), 136-148. One statistician estimates that of the 337,800 soldiers from New York, 51,206 were born in Ireland. These figures show that approximately fifteen percent of the soldiers serving from New York State were Irish; the census of 1865 gives the Irish born as fifteen per cent of the population. Gibson, Attitudes of the New York Irish, 122.

who now feel good towards the Irish are the very men with whom ‘no Irish need apply’ was a canon of faith.”³⁴

Others reinforced this view. One editor stated that “we deprecate the idea of Irish Americans— who have themselves suffered so much for opinions sake not only at home but even here— volunteering to coerce those with whom they have no direct connection.”³⁵ The *Irish American* carried a report of John O’Mahony’s address to the Second Fenian Congress, where he stated, “fifty branches had become extinct through the enlistment of their members.”³⁶ O’Mahony would later claim that the conflict “deprived us of the service of at least two-thirds of the truest, most earnest, and hardest working of my associates.”³⁷ One Fenian correspondent apologized for the paucity of his circle’s financial contribution, explaining “the amount is smaller than we wish, but some of our members is gone to the war.”³⁸ Added another: “There is some of us here who would like to get the chance to go fight for Ireland at the present time instead of having to go in

³⁴ *Boston Pilot* 4 May 1861. Edmund O’Flaherty of Crawfordsville, Indiana supported the belief that the war would hamper Fenian activities. Wrote O’Flaherty, “the weight of everything is thrown upon my shoulders, so that I not only have to think, write and diplomatize for the organization, but I must in many instances do the duty of the subordinate officers, or the work will not be done or, if done, done badly. I feel this the more now, as vast numbers of my best men have gone to this infernal war.” Letter from O’Flaherty to O’Mahony, 9 November 1861, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

³⁵ *The Irish American* 14 February 1861.

³⁶ *The Irish American* 11 February 1865.

³⁷ To the Senate and House of Delegates, 10. Despite these reservations, O’Mahony himself participated in the conflict, guarding Confederate prisoners for three months at Elmira, New York. *Boston Pilot* 11 January 1862.

³⁸ P.M. Dahey to O’Mahony, 26 July 1864, Fenian Brotherhood Records. *The Irish American* of 12 November 1864 suggested that the relatively low enrollment figures for the Fenian Brotherhood could be attributed to “the war, and the hard times immediately preceding it.” The author went on to state: “There are obstructions in our way for which no individual or society can be held answerable. Among these are the doubt of success, which very naturally fills the mind of a people who have had in their midst a multitude of organizations which promised or pretended the same object as ourselves, and which signally and in a few instances disgracefully failed.”

the next draft.”³⁹ Despite the problems bought on by the war, Fenian activities would continue unabated and uninterrupted throughout the conflict. The following statement by Thomas Galwey, First Lieutenant the Hibernian Guard, a company of the 8th Ohio Volunteers, and Centre of the Potomac Circle, gives an indication of the nature and extent of nationalist sentiment expressed by Irish soldiers: “Our meetings take place at eight o’clock in the evening. A few minutes are enough for the dispatch of routine business, for the initiation of new members, and so forth. After this, any officer who has to go on duty is careful to steal back to his camp, often six or eight miles away, for the officers belong to every corps of the army.” The soldiers met as comrades to discuss Ireland and what should be done to free her and they met in good fellowship to drink away the dullness of camp life. “Whiskey is a great thing in the army. At times we have ‘lashins’ of it, as they say in the Irish Brigade, and then it is sometimes very hard to find.”⁴⁰ Even one of the most hostile critics of Irish involvement in the war acknowledged that the battlefields proved to be ripe recruiting territory, claiming, “during 1864 the activity and energy of the Fenian movement was redoubled...the number of circles was increased from about 63 to 300, with a corresponding increase in financial resources.”⁴¹ Still, the rancorous debate over Irish American involvement in the American Civil War was to be the first in a series of bitter and fractious disputes that would splinter the nationalist movement in subsequent years.

³⁹ John Cosgrove to O’Mahony, 4 July 1864, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁴⁰ T.F. Galwey, The Valiant Hours: Narrative of “Captain Brevet”, An Irish-American in the Army of the Potomac (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Press, 1961), 75.

⁴¹ To the Senate and House of Delegates, 12. Another observer was less impressed, observing of the Brotherhood in 1865, “it continued to increase in numbers and resources, but unfortunately, neither in prudence nor discipline.” “Fenianism: Past, Present, and Future” *The Irish People* 22 June 1867.

By far, the greater part of the Irish community supported the Union in its war efforts. The Confederate firing upon Fort Sumter in April of 1861 was answered by an immediate call for 75,000 troops to meet the insurrection. According to one historian, “no group surpassed the Irish in enthusiasm,” abandoning their green uniforms in favor of Union blue.”⁴² The Irish American press answered Lincoln’s call with stirring editorials excoriating those who dared defy the challenge. Wrote one: “Irish Americans, we call on you by the sacred memories of your past, by your remembrance of the succor extended to your suffering brethren, by the future hopes of your native land here taking root and springing towards a vigorous maturity, to be true to the land of your adoption in this crisis of her fate.”⁴³ On 23 April Thomas Francis Meagher placed the following advertisement in several of New York’s daily newspapers:

“One hundred young Irishmen— healthy, intelligent, and active— are wanted at once to form a company of Irish Zoaves... to be attached to the 69th regiment, New York State Militia. No applicants under age eighteen or above thirty-five years of age will be enrolled in this company. Application to be made at No. 36 Beekman Street, corner of William Street, between the hours of 10 am and 5pm.”⁴⁴

The Sixty-Ninth Regiment, in danger of disbandment and with its commanding

⁴² Wallace and Burroughs, *Gotham*, 870. Added another, “The Irish can truly claim to have been in the forefront of the first rush to colors which followed the attack on Fort Sumter.” Gibson, *Attitudes of the New York Irish*, 122-123.

⁴³ *The Irish American* 20 April 1861. The call was echoed by Archbishop Hughes who urged unflinching support of the administration and its war. “I admit and maintain, that foreigners now naturalized, whether Catholics or not, ought to bear their relative burden in defence of the only country on these shores which they have recognized, and which has recognized them as citizens of the United States.” Even the recalcitrant Dan Sickles came around, reversing his earlier position to support the war. The level of support for the war can be seen in the fact that the Republican Party captured the mayoralty of New York in the fall of 1861. The victory was short-lived; in 1862 the Democrats regained the office for Horatio Seymour.

⁴⁴ See the *New York Daily Tribune*, *The Irish News*, and *The Irish American*, all of which carried the message. Two weeks later, responding to this call, William Smith O’Brien, a compatriot of Meagher in the Young Ireland movement, replied: “General Meagher has made an appeal- endorsed by your paper- which, if left unanswered, might induce several thousands of Irishmen to sacrifice themselves in a contest for which their intervention is not demanded by any obligation of duty.” *The Irish American* 4 May 1861.

officer under court martial, was particularly eager to prove its usefulness as a unit.⁴⁵ The regiment voted unanimously to volunteer for duty, and the charges against Colonel Michael Corcoran were summarily dropped. Corcoran was authorized to bring his troop strength to 1,000 (from roughly 650); this he had no trouble accomplishing as five times as many applicants as were needed turned out; indeed, Corcoran's problem was more one of selection than recruitment, as many volunteers had to be turned away at the armory. Following a few intensive weeks of training the 69th set off on 16 July for Washington, D.C, where it was attached to Sherman's Brigade. At the same time, Meagher was promoted to Major, and would serve as aide-de-camp to Colonel Corcoran.⁴⁶ Soon after arriving in Washington, however, the beleaguered Corcoran was beset with another controversy.

⁴⁵ In October 1860, the 69th had become embroiled in major controversy. The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII of England) paid a visit to New York as part of his North American tour, and great celebrations, complete with a military parade, were held in his honor. All of the State Militia regiments were ordered to participate, a notion that was loath to Corcoran and the Irish community in general. Corcoran refused to parade his regiment, stating that he felt it was "an insult both to his adopted country to entertain the great-grandson of George III and to his native home to do homage to a sovereign under whose rule Ireland was left a desert and her best sons exiled or banished." *Irish American*. 20 October 1860. For his actions, Corcoran was arrested and court martialled. David P. Conyngham, The Irish Brigade and its Campaigns (New York: McSorley, 1867), 538. In the wake of the controversy, the *New York Herald* of 18 October 1860 called on the Governor to disband the regiment. The *Irish American* of 5 and 19 January 1861 defended Corcoran and chided American politicians for kowtowing to the Prince of Wales: "The whole affair is extremely distasteful, this homage to mere rank- without personal merit to ennoble it- is a dereliction of republican principle. The man so honored is a representative of a system that banished them from their native homes, and made their kindred outcasts on the face of the earth...Let who will, then, from the President downwards, kneel before this golden calf of monarchy, and make flunkeys of themselves...but let themselves be aware how they compromise the public name and the public faith in the connection, for as surely as they do, a swift and exemplary retribution shall overtake them in the indignation of the people who have made them what they are, and who will not with indifference see them forget the national creed, to run after the tinsel of royalty as turkeys are led by the flutter of the crimson flag." As early as 1859, the Fenians had considered sending members of the regiment on a "nostalgic trip" to Ireland, to train revolutionaries there and gauge the level of military preparedness. Brian Jenkins, Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 70.

⁴⁶ Thomas Francis Meagher, The Last Days of the Sixty-Ninth in Virginia: A Narrative in Three Parts (New York: Lynch and Cole, 1861), 3-4. Meagher would turn down a later offer to serve in a similar capacity to General John C. Fremont with the rank of colonel so that he could remain with the 69th. *New York Daily Tribune* 21 August 1861.

Upon entering the capital city, the regiment was assigned various tasks, including the building of fortifications across the Potomac River in Alexandria, Virginia. Upon completion of "Fort Corcoran" there was a raucous celebration over which Father Thomas Mooney, the first wartime chaplain of the regiment, presided. In the course of the festivities, the chaplain took it upon himself to "christen the cannon" guarding the fort, dubbing it "Hunter" and continuing: "In the last nine years I have baptized many a fine blue-eyed babe... but never such a healthy and promising fellow as the one now before me. This noble son of a great father has his mouth wide open and is anxious to speak, in a thundering voice, to the joy of his friends and the terror of his enemies. May he soon speak to the glory of the Stars and Stripes, and the honor of the Sixty-Ninth New York." Upon hearing of this, Archbishop Hughes recalled Mooney to New York, relieved him of his duties to the regiment, and thereby ended his brief military career.⁴⁷

Presently, the regiment would see its first action of the war. July of 1861 saw the first significant battle of the conflict, near Manassas, Virginia, and the 69th was there. The Battle of Bull Run was a disastrous one for the Union, resulting in a retreat that soon turned into a rout of their forces. Amidst this general confusion, however, Corcoran and his men were among the few Federal troops who fought admirably.⁴⁸ During the confusion that marked the retreat, the 69th staved off a rebel counterattack, thereby preventing the capture of General Sherman; Colonel Corcoran was not so fortunate; surrounded by Confederates, he was captured and would spend the next year in a

⁴⁷ Bernard B. Kelly, "Chaplains of the 69th Regiment" Unpublished Regimental Archives.

⁴⁸ On 2 August 1861 The *New York Daily Tribune* quoted the *Memphis Avalanche* as reporting, "The 69th fought like tigers." Four days later, citing the *Memphis Argus*, the same source commented, "The 69th, even in its errors, deserves all honors." The assumption is that the only error committed by the 69th was in fighting against the Confederacy.

Southern prison.⁴⁹ With their commander lost and their enlistment drawing to a close, the 69th returned to New York City.

Upon reaching New York on 27 July, the troops were greeted by a grateful community, replete with a grand parade down Fifth Avenue. On 29 August there followed a reception in Jones Wood, a public park in Yorkville. Here, Meagher spoke of organizing a “new 69th”—the regiment had lost nearly twenty per cent of its 1276 men, including 38 killed at Manassas—which would be part of an “all Irish Brigade.”⁵⁰ These views were seconded by *The Irish American*, which asked: “Would the creation of an all-Irish regiment not revive the inspiring memories of the Irish Brigade in other lands, and stimulate our armed countrymen in the ranks of the union host to rival the deeds which history has immortalized?”⁵¹ It was Meagher’s hope that General James R. Shields—a native of Ireland, a veteran of the Mexican War and now a Senator from Minnesota—would command such a force. When it became obvious that Shields had no such desire, Meagher continued to work on the project, organizing and training the new recruits.⁵² At

⁴⁹ There are conflicting reports concerning Meagher’s conduct at the battle. John Russell, a correspondent who had won a splendid reputation for battlefield reporting as a writer for the *London Times* during the Crimean War intimated that Meagher was inebriated. An officer who noted that in the battle, “Meagher had just enough sense and elation to rush forward and afterward fell from his horse drunk, and was picked up by the troopers” substantiated this. *New York Daily Tribune*, 25 July 1861. Towards the end of his military career, Meagher was removed from duty for drunkenness. (20 February, 1865) *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* 53 vols., (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), Ser. 1, Vol. 47: 501.

⁵⁰ *New York Daily Tribune* 30 August 1861. Meagher’s request of Secretary of War Simon Cameron “Authorize positively to organize an Irish Brigade of 5000 men. I can do so forthwith and have it ready to march in 30 days. Please reply at once authoritatively by telegraph, afterward by official letter. Expedition in the matter of vital importance.” *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 5 vols., (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880) Ser. 3, Vol 1: 491.

⁵¹ *The Irish American* 14 September 1861.

⁵² In a letter to Charles P. Daly dated 14 October 1861, Shields refused Meagher’s offer, stating that he would instead petition the regular army for an appointment at the rank of Major General. Charles P. Daly Collection.

first, it seemed that the New York Irish would be an unlikely recruiting ground for the campaign to save the Union. Ardent Democrats and avid supporters of Mayor Fernando Wood's Mozart Hall political machine, the Irish had contributed to Lincoln's loss of New York City in the election of 1860 by almost 30,000 votes. Meagher overcame these obstacles with a series of inspiring speeches. He began:

"What is asked of an Irishman in this crisis? He is asked to preserve that government which those Irishmen who signed the Declaration of Independence meant to transmit, with its manifest blessings, to every Irishman who should make this country the land of his adoption. To the Irish race it has in every sense been a country. Here we have a free government, just laws, and a Constitution that guarantees equal rights and privileges to all. Here thousands of the sons and daughters of Ireland have come to seek a refuge from tyranny and persecution. And thousands still continue to come. Here Irishmen and their descendants have a claim, a stake in the nation. America is Ireland's refuge, Ireland's last hope. If any Irish adopted citizen is willing to give it up, let him go and live under the monarchy of Great Britain."⁵³

He further encouraged recruitment by citing the desires of the American Irish to injure England. "England favors the South, that is reason enough to support the Union. Every blow dealt against the great conspiracy of the South beats back the insolence and base plots of England, which would only be too glad to see the defeat of the republic which the Irish were about to defend."⁵⁴ Meagher later added that "should only one in ten of us come back when this war is over, the military experience gained by that one will be of more service in the fight for Ireland's freedom than would that of the entire ten as they are now."⁵⁵ Meagher's eloquence worked; by playing on the dual patriotisms of the New York Irish, the recruitment office was soon overrun with applicants. On 25 October

⁵³ Conyngham, *The Irish Brigade*, 60. Meagher was aided by Charles G. Halpine, associate editor of the *New York Times*. Writing under the pseudonym Miles O'Reilly, Halpine produced a series of editorials and columns that called for continued loyalty by Irish Americans to the war effort. Halpine served as a lieutenant in the 69th, and was later made adjutant general.

⁵⁴ *New York Daily Tribune* 11 September 1861.

⁵⁵ John Paul Jones, *The Irish Brigade* (Washington, D.C.: R.B. Luce, 1969), 17.

they were being trained at Fort Schuyler in the Bronx, and by winter the 69th (combined with other all Irish regiments from New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania) was up to full fighting strength. By year's end the Irish Brigade, commanded by Thomas Francis Meagher—who was to be confirmed by the United States Senate as a Brigadier General on 3 February 1862—set off once again for the seat of war.⁵⁶ On 8 February the brigade was joined to General Edwin V. Sumner's Division in the Army of the Potomac. This assignment displeased Meagher, who had hoped that his Irish Brigade would be joined with similar units into an all-Irish Division, presumably under his own command.⁵⁷ In a letter dated 18 February, 1862 Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas answered this request by saying that “the War Department looks upon the organization of troops already in the service on the basis of distinct nationalities as unwise and inexpedient.”⁵⁸

Under Meagher's leadership the Brigade would see some of the fiercest action of the war. In the spring of 1862 the brigade took part in General George B. McClellan's ill-fated Peninsula Campaign; during the Battle of Fair Oaks, the unit saw its first real taste of action, suffering heavy losses. It was not the last time the men would be asked to

⁵⁶ Before departing, the troops were presented with battle flags and regimental colors by some of the leading citizens of the city. The 69th received a flag, replete with Celtic imagery and made by Tiffany and Company, from a group of influential lady citizens, including Maria Lydig Daly. The 88th Massachusetts received similar gifts from the General's wife, and it became known as “Mrs. Meagher's Own.” TF himself took this designation seriously. Prior to the battle of Fredericksburg, he addressed the men of the 88th: “Soldiers, this is my wife's own regiment- her own dear eighty-eighth, as she calls it- and I know, and have confidence, that with that dear woman's smile upon you, and for woman's sake, this day you will strike a deadly blow to those wicked traitors who now stand but a few hundred yards from you, and bring back to this distracted country it's former prestige and glory.” Jones, *The Irish Brigade*, 17. Prior to the Battle of Seven Pines in June of 1862, Meagher distributed matches to all flag bearers, with the instructions that the banners should be set afire if their capture seemed imminent, “lest they be exhibited in Richmond as trophies of war.” Michael Horgan, “A Devoted Son of Ireland and America,” *Donahoe's Magazine*, 17 (April, 1887), 327.

⁵⁷ Earlier, Meagher had stated unequivocally, “An Irishman never fights so well as when he has an Irishman as a comrade.” *The Boston Morning Journal* 24 September 1861

⁵⁸ *War of the Rebellion*, Ser. 3, Vol. 1: 895.

sacrifice themselves for a futile objective, and more devastating losses would soon follow.⁵⁹ Throughout the summer months, Meagher returned to New York City, where he spoke on behalf of the war effort and chided those Irish Americans who had not yet enlisted, urging them to do so. Archbishop Hughes, recently returned from a tour of Europe where he had spoken out in favor of the war, agreed with Meagher that a more vigorous prosecution was needed on military as well as humanitarian grounds.⁶⁰ Apparently, these admonitions worked, for the unit was reconstituted in full in time for the fall campaign.⁶¹

On 17 September the Irish Brigade was thrown into the Battle of Antietam, where the men were subjected to the bloodiest day in American history. On this day there were over 22,000 casualties, and the brigade suffered as much as any other. During the course of the battle, the unit was ordered to advance, under withering fire, to engage the rebel positions near the “Sunken Road” or, more aptly, “Bloody Lane.” The brigade lost a staggering 540 men out of a contingent of 3,000.⁶² Eight color bearers, obeying

⁵⁹ For example, between the Battle of Fair Oaks on 31 May 1862 and that of Malvern Hill on 1 July, the 69th lost 445 men, and the 88th 200. War of the Rebellion, Ser. 1, Vol. 11:, 776-779.

⁶⁰ Hughes, in what was termed his “War Sermon,” justified his call to arms as being in the interests of humanity and peace, adding, “the country as I knew it was one, and I hope I shall never be called upon to recognize it as two.” *New York Times* 18 August 1862.

⁶¹ *The Irish American* of 12 July 1862 supported this campaign, editorializing on behalf of Lincoln and McClellan’s call for 300,000 more recruits: “We shall need them all, and the sooner they are forthcoming the better it will be for us hereafter. Why we believe this to be so, and why we, Irish Americans, should take a deeper interest in it than any other portion of the community, is explained by the general feeling that the hostile intervention of England, at least, in our domestic quarrel is imminent, and that the receipt of the news of our apparent reverses on the other side may precipitate the collision. The ‘opportunity’ for which we have sighed and prayed seems almost within our grasp. Are we prepared to seize it, or to make the sacrifices which the advent of that occasion will imperatively demand as the price of success?”

⁶² The 69th Regiment lost 196 of its complement of 317 men. Fifteen flagbearers lost their lives that day, with five falling in a five-minute span. Meagher himself was listed as a casualty, and reports of his death were widely disseminated, though he had only been knocked unconscious after having a horse shot out from beneath him. Robert G. Athearn, Thomas Francis Meagher: An Irish Revolutionary in

Meagher's orders to "raise the colors and follow me" and his exhortations to "Remember Fontenoy!" (a battle in which members of the Irish Brigade had saved the day for the French despite overwhelming odds), lost their lives, and the regimental flags were so torn asunder by shot and shell that they had to be returned to New York to be replaced. Despite the catastrophic losses, the Union forces held the field at the close of the day, forcing the Confederates to abandon their proposed invasion of the North and paving the way for Lincoln's issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.⁶³

Just two months later, on 13 December, the horrible scene of Antietam repeated itself at the Battle of Fredericksburg. Prior to leading his troops into battle, Meagher ordered that all the men place a sprig of evergreen in their caps so that the enemy would be able to identify them as members of the Irish Brigade (the regimental colors, remember, were being repaired and replaced in New York City). They again proved their gallantry, throwing themselves in a fearless rush upon the supposedly impregnable defenses at Marye's Heights. They had advanced to within a hundred yards of the top when a barrage of fire that mowed them down hit them, said one observer, "like corn before a sickle." "It will be," predicted one of the survivors, "a sad, sad Christmas by many an Irish hearthstone."⁶⁴ Perhaps as many as seventy percent of the men involved in

America (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1949), 117. The unit received special praise from McClellan, who wrote in his official report of 15 October 1862 that "the Irish Brigade sustained its well-deserved reputation." *War of the Rebellion*, Ser. 1, Vol. 19: 58.

⁶³ Another result of the battle was the removal of General George B. McClellan from his command, leading many Irish officers- who felt that "Little Mac" was taking the fall for situations outside of his control- to resign in protest. Meagher responded by issuing General Order No. 10, stating unequivocally "it was his duty to refuse all officers who applied for resignation, as loyalty to the flag...ought to preclude loyalty to an individual." He expanded upon these views in an article that appeared in the *New York Daily Tribune* on 28 November: "The great error of the Irish people in their struggle for an independent national existence, has been their passionate and blind adherence to an individual, instead of to a principal or cause. Thus for generations their heroic efforts in the right direction have been feverish and spasmodic, when they should have been continuous, equable, and constant."

⁶⁴ *The Irish American* 27 December 1862. The 69th lost 128 out of its 238 remaining members.

the charge were either killed or wounded; Meagher himself suffered a fairly serious knee injury during the battle.⁶⁵ Confederate General George E. Pickett, who would later lead a famous charge of his own at Gettysburg, wrote to his fiancé describing the attack: “My heart stopped as we watched these sons of Erin fearlessly rush to their death. The brilliant assault by the Irish Brigade was beyond description. We forgot they were fighting us and cheer after cheer at their fearlessness went up all along our lines.”⁶⁶

Meagher spent the early part of 1863 in New York, recuperating from his injury while he continued to encourage support for the Union’s efforts. This was an increasingly tough sell, so Meagher petitioned the Army to allow the brigade to return home to New York for a brief rest; it was hoped that a triumphal return would be of immense help in encouraging volunteers.⁶⁷ When Meagher’s entreaties were refused, he returned to Virginia to retake command of his tattered forces.⁶⁸ Following another bloody battle at Chancellorsville, on 3 May, in which the brigade lost 102 of the 520 men it could still claim, Meagher once again requested permission to allow the unit to return to New York so that they might rest and replenish their ranks. This was summarily

⁶⁵ A staff surgeon, Dr. F. Reynolds, later attested to the severity of the injury by declaring that unless Meagher did not receive twenty days leave immediately, he would suffer permanent disability. Athearn, Thomas Francis Meagher, 121.

⁶⁶ A.C. Inman, Soldier of the South: General Pickett’s War Letters to this Wife (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 30-31.

⁶⁷ *The Irish American* 17 January 1863. The brigade had lost some 1200 men in three main battles between June and December of 1862.

⁶⁸ Some members of the Irish community saw this refusal as proof of discrimination on the part of the administration. Hearing that a brigade of New Englanders from Maine had recently been placed on inactive duty so that it might recruit up to full strength, one newspaper reported: “If the Brigade were not so markedly and distinctly Irish, they would not have been treated with the positive injustice and neglect to which they have been exposed.” *The Irish American* 14 March 1863. Following the Battle of Chancellorsville, the paper felt that the administration had little respect for the Irish soldier, and was trying to bleed the unit to death. *The Irish American* 22 May 1863.

denied. Feeling that the brigade had effectively ceased to exist, Meagher resigned his commission. On 8 May, he wrote to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton: "I beg most respectfully to tender my resignation as Brigadier-General, commanding what was once known as the Irish Brigade...I beg sincerely to assure you that my services, in any capacity that can prove useful, are freely at the summons and disposition of the Government of the United States."⁶⁹

When Meagher returned to New York he was feted by the community. On 16 June Mayor George Opdyke presented him with the Kearny Cross for his constant attention to the war effort. Two days later he was the guest of honor at a dinner held at the Astor House, where the citizens of New York presented him with "a magnificent gold medal." Here he "reiterated his stand on the national question, condemning any peace in the present state of affairs. Though a Democrat, he is no Copperhead."⁷⁰ His continued appeals for recruitment, though, were increasingly falling on deaf ears. The men who had rushed to fill the ranks in 1861 were now increasingly soured by the turn the war had taken. Many opposed emancipation as a war aim, while others recognized the economic benefit of selling their services as draft surrogates rather than enlisting on their own.

Faced with mounting battlefield casualties and with waning enlistments, Union leaders were left with little choice but to turn to conscription. Although the measure was

⁶⁹ Athearn, Thomas Francis Meagher, 125.

⁷⁰ *New York Times* 19 June 1863. Lamenting the blind loyalty that the Irish exhibited towards the Democratic Party, Meagher commented: "Democrats they profess themselves to be from the start—the instant the baggage-smashers and cut-throat lodging-house keepers lay hands on them—and Democrats they remain until the day of their death, miserably and repulsively regardless of the conflicting meaning that name acquires through the progressive working of the great world about them." Gibson, Attitudes of the New York Irish, 170. Meagher had earlier used *The Irish News* as a personal vehicle to attack the Democrats of New York City, excoriating Fernando Wood and all who supported his 1860 mayoral campaign. See *The Irish News* 1 and 8 September 1860.

hotly contested, it was passed in March of 1863 and instituted in July of that year. A series of highly visible protests were held throughout the city in the months and weeks leading up to the draft. Politicians were sure not to miss the opportunity to grandstand for votes while making known their objection to the conscription law. Shortly after its passage, the Mozart Hall political machine drew up a series of resolutions to the effect that the conscription law was subversive of the rights of state governments.⁷¹ A huge rally was held in Union Square on 20 May; attacking both the draft and the violation of civil liberties, it was attended by several leading state and city politicians.⁷² An estimated 30,000 attended a similar meeting on 3 June at Cooper Union. A month later, Governor Horatio Seymour addressed an Independence Day crowd by proclaiming: “Remember this— that the bloody and treasonable and revolutionary doctrine of public necessity can be proclaimed by a mob as well as by a Government.”⁷³ Despite these protests, the draft was to take place as scheduled.

Irish opposition to the draft was particularly virulent, and was rooted in several factors. Widespread racism against African Americans was certainly one factor, but the primary motivation was economic. African Americans had been introduced as strike breakers— most notably in March 1863 during a longshoreman’s strike— and clashes between themselves and Irish Americans were common.⁷⁴ With emancipation as a war

⁷¹ Gibson, *Attitudes of the New York Irish*, 147.

⁷² See *The Freeman’s Journal* and *The Irish American* of 23 May 1863.

⁷³ *New York Tribune* 6 July 1863. Of course there were many, even in the Irish and Democratic communities, who defended the draft. For example, a group of Democrats had founded the Loyal National League in March 1863, and had launched their program of defending the administration during a mass meeting in Union Square 11 April.

⁷⁴ *New York Tribune* 6 March 1863. Of course, there had been incidents where Irish and African American workers cooperated, particularly the 1853 waiters strike. The riots have been interpreted not merely as motivated by race hatred, but as an indictment of a system which turned worker against worker.

aim, the unskilled Irish and African Americans would become competitors on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder.⁷⁵ Resentful of the way in which the Irish soldiers had been treated and fearful of losing their precarious hold on economic independence, the New York Irish were determined not to let the draft be implemented in their city.⁷⁶

On 11 July, the draft began and some twelve hundred names were selected. Most of those called were poor men who could not afford the \$300 exemption. Two days later, their passions flamed by demagogues and alcohol, Irish men and women converged on the draft office—located at 46th Street and Third Avenue—and burned it to the ground.⁷⁷ The mob then turned its ire to other prominent pro-administration edifices, before turning on the city's African American community. In perhaps the ugliest single incident, a mob

For more on the complex, though often-peaceful relations between these two communities in the Sixth Ward, see: Graham Hodges. " 'Desirable Companions and Lovers': Irish and African Americans in the Sixth Ward, 1830-1870" in Bayor and Meagher, *The New York Irish*, 107-124. There is, of course, ample evidence that explains Irish antagonism towards African Americans on racial grounds. In a 22 September 1860 editorial titled "Sambo and the Ballot-Box," *The Irish News* commented: "Negroes are a shiftless and thriftless set of hand to mouth folks. Ballot or no ballot, the Negro can never be anything in this community." Noel Ignatiev, *How The Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge Press, 1994) remains a canonical, if much-maligned look at the social construction of race as applied to Irish immigrants in nineteenth century America.

⁷⁵ *The Irish American* of 10 January 1863 best-reflected contemporary sentiments regarding the issue. "The Emancipation Proclamation is universally condemned as one of the worst acts of the presidents administration...clearly illegal, it gives the South every incentive to fight with greater desperation than ever." On the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, that same paper defended those who resisted the draft when it wrote that it "saw the duty of Irish Americans to lie in fighting to protect the traditional rights and liberties of *American citizens*." *The Irish American* 26 September 1863.

⁷⁶ Just two weeks earlier, the 69th regiment had lost 25 of its remaining 75 men at the battle of Gettysburg. As early as 19 October 1861, some prominent publications had chastised the administration for bleeding the Irish community to death. *The Irish American* of that day commented that the Republican Party had brought the war on, and its leaders were now fighting it from behind their desks. On 16 May 1863 that paper lambasted Lincoln's call for more volunteers.

⁷⁷ The influential Catholic periodical *The Freeman's Journal* declared that to not resist the "outrage" of conscription would be "an apathy that denoted an emasculated and slavish people." 11 July 1863. See also the *New York Daily News* of 11 and 13 July 1863, which proclaimed that it was the intention of the draft to kill Democrats so that Republican candidates could steal subsequent elections. Thomas Emmet agreed, interpreting the draft as biased. "Everything was done to exasperate the people and force them into outbreak. The whole action was against the Irish people who were Democrats almost to a man, and yet had from the beginning promptly volunteered for the army"

of Irish protestors burned the Negro Orphan Asylum to the ground, attacking those fortunate enough to escape the conflagration. The mob was not, however, did not limit their attacks to African Americans. Seeking out Meagher, who had continued to defend Lincoln and the reviled draft legislation, for “special retribution,” they had to content themselves with vandalizing a portrait of the man, slashing it to ribbons.⁷⁸ Meagher’s continued defense of the Lincoln administration cost him dearly. Wrote the *Irish American*: “In General Meagher’s fall from the high position he once held in the esteem and affection of his countrymen, we see only a subject for regret; our indignation at his unprovoked attack upon our people has long since subsided into contempt, and we have no desire to add a deeper tint to an act that has gone so far to darken the whole record of a life, of which a promise was once so fair.”⁷⁹ Vacationing on Long Island, Governor Horatio Seymour hurried to the city, where he addressed the rioters:

“My friends...let me assure you that I am your friend...it is your duty to maintain the good order of the city, and I know you will do it. Listen to me and see that no harm is done to either persons or property.”⁸⁰

Seymour’s pleas were in vain. The riot continued for another forty-eight hours, when Archbishop Hughes, in what would be his final public appearance, addressed 3,000 persons from his Madison Avenue residence:

“Men of New York: They call you rioters, but I cannot see a riotous face among

⁷⁸ *Freeman’s Journal* 18 July 1863. Not even Meagher’s membership in the Fenian Brotherhood could assuage the community. Having joined the Brotherhood in June, Meagher was even elected as one of the delegates to represent the organization at its inaugural convention in November of 1863. Meagher would not attend the Chicago meeting, as he was called to Washington on official duty. Cavanagh, *Memoirs of Thomas Francis Meagher*, 490.

⁷⁹ *The Irish American* 12 November 1864.

⁸⁰ Seymour, a Democrat, was vehemently anti-draft. The fact that the city police and provost marshals responsible for overseeing the draft were Metropolitans appointed by a Republican state legislature only exacerbated the situation.

you... I thank God that I came to this country, where no oppression exists. If you are Irishmen— for your enemies say the rioters are Irishmen— I am also an Irishman, but not a rioter. If you are Catholic, as they have reported— then I am a Catholic too.”⁸¹

The riot finally began to die down, but was only quelled when Federal troops were recalled from Gettysburg to deal with the situation.⁸² When the smoke cleared, 120 had died, millions of dollars in property had been destroyed, and the reputation of the Irish had been severely damaged.⁸³

The debate over Irish participation in the American Civil War was but one of many questions plaguing the Fenians in their formative years. Of equal, if not more, importance was the nascent divisions that could be seen developing within the Brotherhood itself. During the war years, IRB leaders in Ireland continually harangued the American Fenians for lack of funding and negligence in their duties.⁸⁴ Unwilling to believe that the American operation was functioning properly, and hoping to impress upon his American brethren that the movement in Europe was gearing up for revolution, James Stephens visited the United States during 1863.⁸⁵ In America, Stephens was

⁸¹ *New York Tribune* 18 July 1863.

⁸² Some editors saw more than a coincidence in the timing of the riots, believing that it was part of a master plan to aid in Lee's invasion of the North. Among those implicated in the plot were Fernando Wood and James McMaster, publisher of *The Freeman's Journal*. See *New York Tribune* 14 July, *New York Evening Post* 16 July, and *New York Times* 24 July. The canonical work on the riots remains Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁸³ In an effort to remind Americans that the Irish were steadfast supporters of the war effort, the Loyal Publication Society published a pamphlet containing essays by Meagher and others on the conduct of Irish Americans during the conflict. See, for example Thomas Francis Meagher, *Pamphlet Number 38: Letters on Our National Struggle* (New York: Loyal Publication Society, 1863).

⁸⁴ Only £1500 were remitted between 1858 and 1864, with £30,000 collected by American supporters from 1858 to 1886. See O'Leary, *Recollections*, 1: 135-136.

⁸⁵ This was a follow-up visit to one made by Thomas Clarke Luby in the spring of that year. Luby had toured the East Coast and spent time in the Union camp at Suffolk, Virginia, holding a “nocturnal meeting of the officers in General Corcoran's camp.” D'Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, 30.

allowed to visit the Army of the Potomac and organize circles among the officers and men. He was furnished with letters of introduction from Colonel B.F. Mullen to the Generals at the front, and the organization in the Union Army was conducted with the full consent of the latter, many of whom were in sympathy with the movement.⁸⁶ Stephens was pleased with what he saw. Writing O'Mahony he stated:

"I am more and more convinced that the more places I visit and the more men I meet the better for the cause. I everywhere met considerable bodies of men, all or nearly all animated by a good spirit and willing to act generously and energetically. It is made clear to me everywhere I go that masses of our race are now turning their hearts toward the old land...numbers of these men would cheerfully part with all they possess for the cause we have at heart, and all of them are willing to do something. On the whole I have no doubt that the American branch will be very powerful, and that we can from it alone get almost all we require in order to meet the enemy with a fair chance at least, not to say certainty, of success. Rely on it, your power will be increased tenfold by my visit to America. By pressing hard and steadily on my footsteps, the work here will take immense proportions. Don't say that I exaggerate...I am convinced that I do not. You can have 100,000 men in our ranks by the time I say; and between this and then you can raise as much money as...will make our success as certain as anything human can be before its accomplishment. Be therefore of the very best

⁸⁶ This was no doubt a reflection of political exigencies. Abraham Lincoln was a minority president, having garnered only 39% of the popular vote in 1860. Moreover, he had fared most poorly in those areas where the Fenians were most numerous (New York City, for example, had been lost by more than 30,000 votes). The fact that Lincoln allowed Stephens access to Irish American troops, and that he furloughed hundreds of Irish to attend annual Fenian conventions was a transparent attempt to placate and secure a potential group of voters for the upcoming election. Efforts to entice the Irish vote away from the Democrats were widespread. Commented the *Chicago Tribune* of 18 March 1864: "Fenian voters, you owe a duty to the government you expect will aid you in your struggle for freedom. You protest against British oppression and priestly dictation. Show now today your equal independence of those priestly demagogues who lead too many of your countrymen by the nose. Vote the Union ticket." The tactic was fruitless, as Lincoln lost New York City to his Democratic opponent George McClellan by a two-to-one margin in the presidential election of 1864. This actually represented a loss of support in the city for Lincoln! The *New York Evening Post* of 10 November 1864 reported that newly naturalized Irish immigrants largely accounted for the defeat. There is some evidence that Lincoln supported the Brotherhood in its aims. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* of 27 April 1867 published a letter written by J.W. Pomfrey "Late Captain and Detective Officer under President Lincoln," to John O'Brian. The letter states: "As a citizen, Mr. Lincoln did all he could in the effort to republicanize Ireland. As president he could do nothing which to him could but have been a source of great regret. His hands were tied, as far as any public recognition of the Fenians was concerned but many of the leaders and would-be deliverers of their country can bear witness to the words of encouragement he gave them at private and unofficial interviews and how he evoked the blessings of heaven upon their laudable efforts to redeem their native land."

cheer, and rest our faith in the people as on a rock.”⁸⁷

It was an indication of his success that members of the Union forces were given leave in 1863 to attend the first Fenian Convention, held in Chicago, where they and other delegates drafted a constitution and began to erect an Irish government in exile.⁸⁸

Despite the fears of some Fenians that the Civil War would retard the growth of the movement, the number of circles actually multiplied during the war years, as the conglomeration of thousands of Irish Americans into the military encouraged the growth of the organization.⁸⁹ As O’Mahony himself acknowledged, the Brotherhood had weathered many storms and was now ripe for growth.

“In 1858 there were not more than forty men who belonged to our organization...outside New York City there was not a single member enrolled. Setting out from such small beginnings, it has since put forth its branches from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific. Since the inauguration of our Brotherhood many obstructions have been cast in the way of its development. Newspapers published in Ireland of the effete school of constitutional agitation have striven with might and main to cry it down. The ‘moral force’ deluders of the Irish people have uttered all manner of denunciations against it.”⁹⁰

He added sanguinely, “We are thoroughly convinced of the utter futility of legal and constitutional agitations, parliamentary policies, and all similar delusions. These things have brought more suffering upon our people than would be caused by the most protracted and devastating war.” Echoed others:

⁸⁷ Stephens to O’Mahony, 27 October 1863, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁸⁸ The delegates, who attended from as far away as California, represented sixty-three circles in twelve states, the District of Columbia, and the armies of the Potomac, the Cumberland, and the Tennessee. Brigadier General Thomas Smith was the Head Centre of the Army of the Potomac. Devoy, *Recollections*, 47.

⁸⁹ See *The Irish American* 1 April 1865 for an article, “Fenianism: Its assailants and defenders—what the Irish in America can do.” Similarly, 29 April and 17 June 1865.

⁹⁰ *Proceedings of the First National Convention*, 8-9. The Brotherhood ordered 20,000 copies of the Resolutions, which they termed the Declaration of the Independence of Ireland, to be printed. This is ironic in that the first statement of the approved minutes reads “It is necessary that the business of this shall be transacted with closed doors.” *Ibid.*, 5. Other resolutions reminded the Brotherhood to “Avoid all public meetings and electioneering delusions, which only serve to expose good men to the persecution of village despots.” *Ibid.*, 38.

“It is the duty of every Irishman to oppose and renounce the resumption of constitutional leagues and oratorical spouting societies as an insult to the intelligence of his country and a heartless outrage offered to her misery...it is charged by our enemies— a race of foul-mouthed declaimers, swallow-swift in promise, snail-slow in performance— that we lack the capacity for cool, concentrated preparation and that while others silently conspire and prepare to fight for liberty, we spout about it, toast it, and then resume our money-making until some recurring national holiday again condenses our vapid enthusiasm...but if the pledged cohorts of freedom are worthily supported by us, they will be victors; but, if we basely betray their trust, falsify our pledges, and so disgrace ourselves, the glory of the martyr shall be theirs, while to us shall cling forever the scorn of the present and the curses of unborn generations...our sunburst proud shall be our shroud, or float free on the gale.”⁹¹

With the growth in numbers actuated by the wartime recruitment came calls for “reorganization and pre-organization”— which was considered essential to success: “with it there may be defeat and glory, without it there must be defeat and shame.” Heretofore, O’Mahony had exercised unfettered authority over the American movement, a position that was no longer tenable. At the inaugural Chicago convention, which convened on 3 November 1863, a constitution and a code of by-laws were drafted that would place the Brotherhood on a basis “more in accordance with the habits and customs of the United States.” A cabinet of five, nominated by the Head Centre but elected by the conventions eighty-two delegates, was created.⁹² This council was to advise O’Mahony and assist him in performing his duties. Likewise, the Head Centre would now be an elected position, beholden to the representatives of the entire constituency.⁹³ O’Mahony

⁹¹ Proceedings of the First General Convention of the Fenian Brotherhood of the Pacific Coast, Held in San Francisco, California, September 1864. (San Francisco: George W. Stevens and Company, 1864), 17.

⁹² Each circle was entitled to one delegate for every hundred members, with one additional delegate for a fractional part of one hundred members exceeding fifty.

⁹³ *The Irish American* 21 November 1863. “Such a system of periodical election will render our association in better accord with the democratic institutions of America, and thus secure for it a greater popularity than heretofore among our fellow citizens born in this country.” O’Mahony was modest in victory. Upon being recognized as “the representative of the race” and lauded as having “ability and

resigned his post on the last day of the three-day convention, stating: “In order that the Fenian Brotherhood be in reality what your legislation has made it this day— a thoroughly democratic, self-governing institution— it still remains for me to divest myself of the almost absolute authority which, with your assent, I have held for nearly five years, and by so doing to place the government and direction of the Fenian Brotherhood in the guardianship of this General Convention, thereby becoming but a private member of the organization,” but was re-nominated and unanimously elected under the provisions of the new constitution. In taking office, O’Mahony made important statements about the relationship between the Fenian Brotherhood and its European counterpart. These changes should have come as no surprise to the IRB; in a letter of 19 October 1863, O’Mahony informed Stephens of the changes, adding:

“I shall refuse to accept office if subjected to the dictation or control of any person or party outside the Fenian Brotherhood in America...neither shall any party outside of these States be permitted henceforth to interfere with its internal or external action...all emissaries sent here to interfere with and interrupt the actions of the Fenian Brotherhood will be treated as traitors and enemies, no matter who sends them hither. Henceforth, the Fenian Brotherhood and the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood must be considered equal in authority; their chief officers must treat with each other as equal to equal if my wishes be carried out.”⁹⁴

In a letter to Charles Kickham, O’Mahony was even more assertive:

“I am discontented with Stephen’s treatment of myself. Having long used my

patriotism not surpassed by any living Irishman,” he insisted: “This hour repays me for all the annoyance and pain I have suffered in bringing the Fenian Brotherhood to its present height. I would have been better pleased had you found another competent person to fill the place of Head Centre. But as your choice has fallen upon me, I shall endeavor to discharge the duties it has imposed upon me. Fortified by your votes, I shall set to work with a lighter heart than I have done hitherto, if not with more efficiency. But while I perform my peculiar task as chief officer, do not neglect to perform yours as associates. While I am watching and advancing on the enemy in front of our array, do you take care that no coward or traitor betrays us on our flank or rear. While certain that there are true men beside and behind me, I shall dread no attack coming from before, whether my assailants contend by force or by wile.” Proceedings of the First National Convention, 27.

⁹⁴ O’Mahony to Stephens, 19 October 1863, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

name and my person as a shield against his private enemies and the enemies of his organization, he has for sometime been making a scapegoat of me among his partisans and blaming me for shortcomings that were the inevitable consequences of his own deserting me...to this interference with my functions I can no longer submit. Neither can I submit to dictatorial arrogance on his part when my reason tells me that such arrogance, so far from aiding, is actually impeding our progress. As chief organizer of the American organization my powers must be put upon an even level with his authority over the Irish. I will no longer consent to be accountable to him for my official conduct. We must treat as equal to equal, when it is necessary for us to treat at all, and as the presiding officers of equal and independent organizations mutually aiding each other and closely allied, but still distinct in their government and internal management.”⁹⁵

Despite these private fears, O’Mahony spoke ebulliently of the future, believing that the rancorous feuds that had characterized earlier Irish nationalist organizations had gone the way of all flesh:

“The time is fast approaching when we will have to strike a blow for the independence of Ireland— a time for which we have been preparing ourselves for years. Now is the golden time. Our people are learning to think as well as to feel. They begin to reason as well as to fancy. Irishmen begin to see that if they wish to peer with other nationalities, it is necessary to initiate unanimity of action...The Brotherhood is composed of such men...men with true hearts and willing hands, ready to do and to die for the dear old land...men who are ardently devoted to the cause they have espoused, and who are in favor of taking advantage of the earliest chance that offers itself to rise in open rebellion against the despoilers of the liberties and rights of our people....”

Disavowing any notion of secrecy, a step that many believed would make it more palatable to the Catholic Church, the convention proclaimed as its goal: “the national freedom of Ireland, by every honorable means within our reach, collectively and individually, save and except such means as may be in violation of the constitution and laws under which we live and to which all of us, who are citizens of the United States, owe our allegiance.”⁹⁶ Other resolutions claimed that “the voice of this assembly is the

⁹⁵ O’Mahony to Kickham, 18 October 1863, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁹⁶ “It is also necessary that we declare our position, our object and our resources before the world, so that all the friends of Irish freedom may understand us; for our enemies have been allowed to calumniate

voice of the Irish race,” and declared their “intense and undying hatred towards the monarchy and oligarchy of Great Britain which had for so long ground our country to the dust, hanging her patriots, starving out her people, and sweeping myriads of Irishmen, women and children off their paternal fields to find refuge in foreign lands, bringing with them thither a burning desire for the destruction of British tyranny...bequeathing this feeling as an heirloom to their posterity.” After proclaiming “the Republic of Ireland to be virtually established” and “directing the whole force, moral and material, from all points towards the overthrow of British tyranny in Ireland,” each attendee was asked to “pledge their sacred word of honor as a truthful and honest man, to labor with earnest zeal for the liberation of Ireland from the yoke of England, and for the establishment of a free and independent government on Irish soil.”⁹⁷ Finally, the convention declared that the “Fenian Brotherhood represented a ‘fixed and permanent’ institution in America, and that it continue its labors without ceasing until Ireland shall be restored to her rightful

our organization too long. By declaring our status openly, we will confound all their vile emissaries— their paid spies and secret agents— whether they assail us as the open foes or as the pretended friends of the Irish people. Certain men, actuated by feelings of hostility, either to the national resurrection and independence of Ireland in particular, or by a general hatred to the principles of self-government and popular sovereignty— to the republican idea itself— have repeatedly attacked the Fenian Brotherhood upon false pretenses and unfounded assumptions; we feel called upon to repudiate and deny their truth. We have been charged with being a secret society. Churchmen have been persuaded to assail us...rare as these instances have been, no other attack has injured us so much. The Fenian Brotherhood is not a Secret Society, inasmuch as no pledge of secrecy, expressed or implied, is demanded from the candidates for membership thereof; neither is it an oath-bound society, for no oath whatever is required in order to entitle a man to all the privileges of the association. Hence, if the mere fact of its members pledging themselves to secrecy can render an association sinful according to the laws of the Catholic Church, there being no pledge of secrecy, there can be no sin in becoming a Fenian brother; again, if the mere fact of its members being required to take an oath upon entering into it can render it sinful, where there is no oath rejoined there can be no sin, on the grounds above stated, in joining the Fenian Brotherhood. By declaring openly what we are, what our objects are, and how we propose to gain them, and by declaring our rights as freemen and as Catholics... we will force our traitorous assailants to come out in their true colors, or else to let us alone for the future.” Proceedings of the First National Convention, 6.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 40.

place among free nations.”⁹⁸

Following the inaugural convention, the Brotherhood grew in both numbers and influence.⁹⁹ A female auxiliary— whose purpose was “to spur their men on to renewed energy” and whose responsibilities included such tasks as rolling bandages for the Fenian army— was formed under the tutelage of Ellen Mahony, and soon orchestrated a fundraising fair to be held in Chicago’s Bryan Hall in the spring of 1864.¹⁰⁰

The First Annual Grand Irish National Fair began on Easter Monday and was a marked success. Tickets were sold for one dollar each, and attendees were told that they were aiding “the holiest cause that ever engaged the hearts and minds of men.”¹⁰¹ Contributions of Irish ephemera were raffled off and the proceeds from the sale of turf, pikes, and other “ethnic junk” filled Fenian coffers to the tune of \$50,000.¹⁰² *The Irish*

⁹⁸ “We declare the said Irish people to constitute one of the distinct nationalities of the Earth, and as such justly entitled to all the rights of self-government.” *Chicago Tribune* 6 November 1863. There were sentiments of realism. “We are fully impressed with the magnitude of the task undertaken by the Fenian Brotherhood, and well aware of the difficulties and delays that may retard its accomplishment, but are nevertheless resolved to persevere steadfastly and with active zeal in our efforts until they shall be crowned with complete success, in the firm and implicit faith.”

⁹⁹ *The Irish American* of 29 November listed twenty-one new circles. By October 1865, the Brotherhood claimed over 600 circles, with 42 in New York City alone. By that time the organization, which maintained its headquarters at 22 Duane Street, had grown to include a military bureau, with treasury, civil, and naval departments. Circular of the Corresponding Secretary, for the period commencing 10 September and ending 28 October 1865 (New York: O’Sullivan and McBride, 1865).

¹⁰⁰ Mahony was the principal of the Chicago Normal School. *Cleveland Leader* 20 September 1865. The Sisterhood claimed 300 circles by the fall of 1865, when resolutions to elevate the women to full membership were rejected on the grounds that “the fairer sex could not be trusted to keep secrets.” In later years Mahony would write of her experiences with Fenianism, “telling wholesome truths in a forceful manner, and showing very little respect for many of the ‘patriots’ who have figured before the public for the last few years.” *The Irish People* 19 January 1867. In later years, the Sisterhood would hold a variety of fundraising functions, for the relief of families affected by Fenian activities. See *The Irish Republic* 8 June 1867 and *The Irish People* of 23 February 1867. Also, *New York Herald* 17 April 1866.

¹⁰¹ O’Leary, *Recollections*, 1: 256. The Catholic Church was worried, stating: “the Chicago fair will bring things to a crisis.” Bishop John Luers of Fort Wayne to Archbishop John Purcell of Cincinnati, 23 March 1864, John Baptist Purcell papers, University of Notre Dame Archives.

¹⁰² The donated objects came mostly from Ireland, and comprised items on which \$1000 of import duties had to be paid. Other goods, including a gold brick that originated in San Francisco, were

American solicited donations, and Fernando Wood, Schuyler Colfax, and other prominent politicians made generous contributions.¹⁰³ James Stephens attended the fair, and subsequently toured the country, organizing new circles and enthralling many with his promises of “war or dissolution” of the organization in 1865.¹⁰⁴ For all the worries that had accompanied the outbreak of hostilities in 1861, the Fenians had grown strong through the Civil War: the conflict helped stimulate and heighten Irish group consciousness, it facilitated the increase of Fenian sentiment among trained soldiers, and it provided an amenable atmosphere in which the Brotherhood could implement their plans.¹⁰⁵ In fact, the conflict had produced Fenians in the truest sense of the word. As one hostile editor surmised:

transported from across the United States. On the fair, see Brain Griffin, “Scallions, Oaks, and Bog Oak Ornaments: The Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Chicago Fenian Fair, 1864,” *Studia Hibernica* 29, (1995-97): 85-97.

¹⁰³ Horace Greeley contributed \$100, Colfax subscribed \$20, and Wood \$100 for the cause of “justice, right and patriotism— as if he knew the meaning of those terms.” *New York Times* 2 April 1865. See also *Chicago Tribune* 29 March 1864. A full report of the fair, along with an “Address by the Fenian Sisterhood to their Countrywomen,” appeared in *The Irish American* of 25 February 1865. This was not the first such Fenian gathering. *The Irish American* of 22 July 1865 carried an advertisement for the Fourth Annual pic-nic of the New York Fenian Brotherhood, to be held at Jones Wood on 25 July, “with special amusements and entertainments.”

¹⁰⁴ *The Freeman’s Journal* 16 January 1864. Supplied with a pass issued by Brigadier General Grainger, Stephens had access to the Army of the Cumberland, and netted some \$10,000 in additional contributions. Rutherford, *Secret History*, 1: 240. O’Mahony was skeptical of Stephens’ intentions. In a letter to James Gibbons dated 25 March 1864, O’Mahony surmised: “The fair is a more important crisis for us than the convention. The design of his coming is obviously to usurp the credit of all done here the last six months. His minions will go around in Ireland and state but for his coming nothing would have been done I have reason to think that he (Stephens) means to take off the proceeds with him— a thing that would leave us in the same struggling condition in which we have been hitherto. If this be done I shall instantly resign. Stephens and I met; I impressed upon him the ruinous effect of allowing any appearance of misunderstanding to be manifested in the organization. He seems fully alive to this; still I feel he would supersede me if possible. He wants a money feeder for the IRB here, not a directing mind; a drudge to do the work and never think. He makes light, or would make light, of our Fenian organization here—except in so far as it may seem a draw farm for the IRB at home. To it’s doing so I will no more consent.” Fenian Brotherhood Records.

¹⁰⁵ The war, seen by many as a crucible of loyalty, also facilitated the movement of Irish men and women into mainstream America, replacing nativist hostility with grudging acceptance. The military served as vehicles for social advancement, while battlefield services provided by nuns and nurses allowed for a growing acceptance of Irish women and Catholics.

“Foolish as all these things are, they have an influence, and an influence which we cannot afford to despise. The Irish in America are a power, and are everyday becoming more so. They entertain and they communicate a feeling hostile to England. By means of the Fenian organization, they are able to get together for political purposes, and they certainly can turn the balance of party either way they will. They know that this importance has been augmented by the events of the civil war which has now drawn to a close. Never before had Ireland a better ally or England a more implacable, relentless foe.”¹⁰⁶

Many hoped to use the military training they had received on the battlefields of the Civil War against the British foe. As Fenian Secretary of War, Thomas Sweeny stated: “I was sanguine that the skill and knowledge I was acquiring might contribute to the freedom of Ireland.”¹⁰⁷ Shortly before the final battles of the American conflict, *The Irish American* of 8 April 1865 editorialized:

“We take this opportunity to declare in favor of ‘the next war.’ There is a certain party with whom we have an account to settle. We go in for bringing John Bull square up to the rack and exacting restitution and retribution to the last iota. We guarantee that no draft will be needed...for a dash at John Bull we are ready, on both sides of the Atlantic, half a million of the finest fighting material under the sun. Let America but say the word and the Union Jack, the red flag of oppression and spoliation, goes down— at once and forever— before the banner of Freedom.”¹⁰⁸

Offered one Fenian in the Union ranks: “The cause of Ireland is the cause of humanity. We hope that the day is not far distant when we can turn our swords to the achievement of the independence of the old land. Ere the time arrives, many of us may fall in the cause of Liberty, and find soldiers graves on this continent; but those who will survive

¹⁰⁶ *Belfast News-Letter* 7 May 1865. Reprinted in *The Irish American* 13 May 1865.

¹⁰⁷ Address to the Fenian Brotherhood on the Western Tour, 1866 (n.p., n.d.) T.W. Sweeny papers, Division of Manuscripts and Archives, New York Public Library. Discharged veterans could retain their arms and accoutrements for a mere \$6.

¹⁰⁸ *The Irish American* 8 April 1865.

will bring to the cause of Ireland military experience acquired in the best school.”¹⁰⁹ A Fenian from Cincinnati concurred: “The returned soldiers of both sides are particularly ardent and would go home to Ireland at their own expense if they were only sure of a fight when they’d get there. Would be a good plan to encourage such men to go to Ireland. Not one Irishman in a thousand would refuse to sacrifice half his wealth to support the struggle.”¹¹⁰ A poetic nationalist concurred:

“ The Fenian drums are beating, the men are eager for the fray
To strike once more for Erin, may Heaven speed that glorious day
May the God of battles aid us, and nerve each arm our cause is just
And the foe that would degrade us, in manly strife shall bite the dust
Foul traitors may dissuade us, and try to stay the patriot hand
Such cowards would degrade us, and spread oppression o’er the land
But all their clap-trap teaching, no longer can avert the stroke
The Fenian Drums are beating, Freedom’s spirit has awoke
Soon the patriots of old Erin, will raise the sunburst from the dust
So ’tis time to cease despairing, in Irish steel and God we trust
With the glorious sunburst o’er us, to cheer the patriot in the fight
We’ll free the land that bore us, and battle for the nation’s right.”¹¹¹

Others had had enough of fighting and bloodshed. Writing from Richmond, Virginia, Bessie Sweeny told her husband:

“You cannot imagine how lukewarm the majority are in Fenian matters. I have had three or four strapping specimens of ex-rebel Irish Americans declare that they had seen and done a sufficiency of fighting during the past four years to cure them of any further wish to participate in the perils of the battlefield. Sublimity in the sentiment of that expression, don’t you think? More especially when falling from Irish lips in a time like the present. I cannot help thinking— half-badly, half-proudly— of somebody of whom many a year of fighting did not disgust.

¹⁰⁹ *New York Times* 2 April 1865. The editor surmised “in case of a war with England, we should have much more help from the Irish than they have given us against the rebellion. They are now a sort of ‘reserved force’ to keep John Bull in check.”

¹¹⁰ John Finerty to O’Mahony, 23 May 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

¹¹¹ “The Fenian Drums are Beating,” *The Irish American* 22 April 1865. The poem was given prominent status, while coverage of the investigation surrounding President Lincoln’s assassination was relegated to later pages. Of the many poems and ballads the paper received, the editor commented “the deeds of the Fenians of modern times will be sung by future generations, as the deeds of ancient Fenians have been sung in the past.” *The Irish American* 16 September 1865.

Somebody who is willing to give his glorious life to redeem his land...we cannot fail. God would not permit such a thing. But many and many a dear life will be sacrificed and it is that thought that gives me heartache. Fenianism is making a melancholy lass of me.”¹¹²

Contrary to the words of a popular Fenian marching tune, there was plenty to occupy the minds and time of grizzled Civil War veterans.¹¹³ Despite the heady optimism that accompanied the close of the Civil War and the proceeds from the fair, the Fenians were to be plagued by a series of bitter and contentious feuds that have subsequently relegated them to the footnotes of most scholarly treatments.¹¹⁴

The American Civil War had been used by Irish nationalists to build, outfit, and train an army of liberation on American soil. Under the watchful eyes of the United States government, the Fenians had openly proclaimed the existence of an Irish Republic and fomented plans for its creation in fact as well as in name. The battlefields of the Civil War and of New York politics had taught the Fenians much in the ways of American diplomacy and politics, and they would use these lessons to great effect in coming years. Unfortunately, the debates over Irish participation in the war prefaced other, more disturbing, disputes that would mark the subsequent story of Fenianism in New York and in the United States. Racked by internal dissension, overwhelmed by

¹¹² Bessie to T.W. Sweeny, 27 May 1866. T.W. Sweeny papers. In an effort to embolden those who had lost the martial spirit, *The Irish American* ran a number of articles outlining “the Duties of Our Race.” These typically called on Irish Americans to take on the responsibility of freeing their countrymen as they had the African American. “It seems strange that so many puerile objections are raised against an Irishman doing anything for the sake of his fatherland. He may fight the battles of every country under the sun but his own, and the moment he speaks of the redemption of his own beautiful island he is met by bountiful reminders of his duties and obligations as an American citizen.” *The Irish American* 9 September 1865.

¹¹³ “We are the Fenian Brotherhood, skilled in the arts of war
And we’re going to fight for Ireland, the land that we adore
Many battles we have won, along with the boys in blue
And we’ll go and capture Canada for we’ve nothing else to do”

local, national, and international events over which they had little control or influence, the heady optimism with which the Fenians greeted the end of the Civil War would soon be replaced by the stark realism of the situation in which they found themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE

Many in the Irish American community viewed the conclusion of the Civil War with both relief and enthusiasm. It was hoped that the military training that they had gained on the battlefields of that conflict could now be used to good effect against the hated Saxon oppressor. Stephens' proclamation of "war or dissolution in 1865" encouraged the Fenians, as did their steadily growing enrollments and coffers. Unfortunately, the movement would devolve into a bitter and fractious society, thereby relegating the Brotherhood to the footnotes of subsequent historical treatments.

The Second National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood met in Cincinnati in January 1865. Attended by 348 delegates representing some 273 circles, the Brotherhood met to discuss the course of action that was to be followed at the close of the American Civil War.¹ The delegates listened to inflammatory speeches by John O'Mahony and to a report given by Phillip Coyne, special envoy to Dublin, who had just returned from a fact-finding mission of the IRB in Ireland.² Resolutions were passed expanding the central council from five to ten members, and John O'Mahony was unanimously re-elected Head Centre. A concerted and coordinated recruitment effort was pledged, and

¹ Proceedings of the Second National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, January, 1865 (Philadelphia: James Gibbons, 1865). Delegates represented twenty-one states, the United States Army and Navy, the British Provinces of Canada, and the territories of Oregon, Utah, Nevada, and Idaho. *The Irish American* of 11 February 1865 published a condensed report of the proceedings.

² The constitution adopted at the inaugural convention called for an assembly to be held each November; the second Congress was delayed so as to receive a full report from Coyne. Coyne's report was exceedingly positive, stating: "nothing shall be wanting if our American brothers do their duty." Stephens to O'Mahony, 11 December 1864, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Coyne's report echoed that of James Cantwell, who wrote from Paris on 28 April 1860, debunking any myths that the IRB was lackadaisical: "stories of alleged extravagance are pure calumnies; life here is most frugal. Our friend deserves generous support; had he obtained money from any source, everything which he promised would have been done." Cantwell to O'Mahony, 28 April 1860, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Other optimistic reports arrived on 25 May and 8 August 1860. Fenian Brotherhood Records.

the creation of 134 new circles was announced just five months later.³ In addition, the council was authorized to issue the “final call” and make available bonds of the Irish Republic— to be redeemed six months after the establishment of an independent Ireland at a rate of six percent interest— at their discretion.

Unsure whether Stephens was sincere in his call for “war or dissolution in 1865,” the American Fenians were hesitant to take this action. This is surprising, especially given the glowing reports emanating from Ireland. Acknowledging the receipt of some funds in March 1865, Stephens wrote to complain of the paltry sums being remitted, and to chide the Americans for their lack of focus.

“Ireland has never possessed such a power before— so large a number of men with so many of them trained to the use of arms and all of them bonded together by such a strength of rule and unity. To such a power there is wanting but a single essential to success—adequate funds. What do our American friends want of us? We have given them as great a proof as men should need that we are a great power with the right spirit. To give them such a proof we have subjected ourselves to risk and calumny of all kinds. Let no man for an instant forget that we are bound to action next year. To forget this and to try to check or evade the danger as if it might not be, would be not only the veriest imbecility, but the blackest crime...there is no alternative between battle or dissolution...who is so small as to say we don’t deserve support, and who is so traitorous as to put any obstacle in the way of its coming? Much more money has been devoted to business by the home partners, even considering their numbers, than by those abroad. Work on like men, fulfill your promises, and all Ireland will bless you. Would to God that the whole Irish race could understand these needs today and that every man of our bonded brothers would feel it a shame not to strive to supply them. If the friends of Ireland in America do not speedily prove themselves real friends, all our efforts have been fruitless and our race is doomed.”⁴

Wrote Stephens on another occasion:

³ *The Irish American* 20 May 1865.

⁴ Stephens to O’Mahony, 11 December 1864, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Similarly Stephens to O’Mahony, 18 January and 1 and 18 March 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Stephens’ penchant for haranguing the Americans for continuous financial contributions could be grating. Wrote John Mitchel: “All that he wanted was that I should publicly call on my fellow countrymen in America for money, and more money, and no end of money to be remitted to him for revolutionary purpose.” *Irish Citizen* 25 December 1869.

“One hundred and thirteen pounds from the whole American organization in a whole year! I should look on this as a small sum monthly...our friends at this side cannot understand their transatlantic brothers, and without a speedy and very marked improvement they will come to believe their hopes from America utterly delusive. Never has action been so imperatively called for...our safety depends on the speedy accomplishment of this work...if not speedily accomplished, our transatlantic brothers alone shall be to blame; should I be arrested and the cause lost the shame and remorse shall be at their door— they shall have outdone the Felon-setters, by abandoning us in our hour of need. In the name of Christ and of Liberty will our friends yonder ever rise to a sense of duty and the wants of the hour?”⁵

Edmund O’Flaherty, an American Fenian who had been traveling in Ireland earlier, seconded Stephens’ petulance. “I must tell you candidly (and let it be known throughout these States) that the Irishmen in America have not done their duty...their periodical fits of action and inaction have clogged the wheels of the movement in Ireland...I mean to say they have not proved themselves to be the ‘Tower of Strength’ which they ought to be, and might be, to our brethren in Ireland... if we are to redeem our country we must do it soon, or not at all.”⁶ Indeed, in an effort to keep the IRB coffers filled in the absence of any contributions from the American Fenians, the Irish revolutionaries had to resort to founding a newspaper, the *Irish People*, in November 1863.⁷

⁵ Stephens to O’Mahony, 7 April 1862, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Stephens referred to the lack of funds as “a pitiful weakness in our irresistible strength, an infernal cancer in the mighty tree so rich in leaf and blossom.” Stephens to O’Mahony 1 February 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁶ Edmund O’Flaherty, to O’Mahony, 5 October 1861, Fenian Brotherhood Records. O’Mahony lauded O’Flaherty, a Catholic priest: “As a Fenian Brother and the Centre of the State of Indiana, he labored with untiring zeal and indefatigable energy in bringing our organization to its present important position.” Proceedings of the First National Convention, 24. Church officials were less impressed. Bishop John Luers of Fort Wayne wrote to Archbishop John Baptist Purcell of Cincinnati that “O’Flaherty has done much harm in Indiana, and that unless he [Luers] dealt with the Fenians as Bishop Duggan had in Chicago, he would ruin that congregation.” Luers to Purcell 23 March 1864, John Baptist Purcell Papers, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁷ Stephens explained the rationale for establishing the *Irish People* in a letter to O’Mahony dated 18 January 1864, and maintained that the newspaper “opened up rich and important veins which it would have taken years and much money to reach.” Stephens to O’Mahony, 12 November 1864, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

Before issuing the “final call,” the American Fenians wanted to be absolutely convinced that their efforts would meet with success. To that end, the council sent a pair of envoys on separate tours of Ireland. The first, Thomas J. Kelly, was dispatched on 17 March; FF Millen joined him later that spring.⁸ Both men, working independently, supported the initial findings of Coyne. Indeed, Kelly was even more optimistic than his predecessor, adding: “The most bitter imprecations will be heaped upon the Fenian Brotherhood if they don’t perform their part...any other course would be criminal.”⁹ Millen corroborated these findings, and urged O’Mahony to issue the final call.¹⁰ An irate Stephens, feeling that the presence of so many envoys was raising the suspicions of British authorities, wrote the Americans a lengthy tirade:

“I considered Kelly’s mission the deadliest blow ever aimed against us. How earnest and intelligent men could have even contemplated such a move at such a stage of the work is the deepest mystery to me. Under any circumstances an inquiry of this kind would be offensive, but in our case it is particularly so. The blackest enemy of our race would not dare to brand us as a race of perjurers, yet you appear to do so when you would push your inquiry. The heavens as well as the earth seem to be working for us. Our numbers are increasing beyond all precedent; with anything like a fair supply of money I undertake not only to create such a power as no Irishman has ever yet created, but to hold that power in such subordination that all good Irishmen must marvel and rejoice at it. I beseech you once more, as you value your honor and the cause of your race, to give no more occasion to these doubts, but to set to work now... and make the final call.”¹¹

⁸ In later years Millen would serve in the Mexican army, “giving the deathblow to monarchy. I espouse their cause because of its similarity to that of Ireland, and I remain in Mexico in order to perfect my knowledge of the military arts, so that if God should ever permit me to draw the sword against oppression in my own dear native land, I may be able to do so in a manner worthy of the noble race from which I boast my lineage. Like other men of determined purpose and fixed resolution, I am prepared to wait and watch for a lifetime if necessary to accomplish the mission of my being.” Millen to O’Mahony, 1 August 1868, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁹ Kelly to O’Mahony, 21 June 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

¹⁰ Millen to O’Mahony, 24 June 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

¹¹ Stephens to Fenian Brotherhood Central Council, 24 June 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa delivered the twenty-eight-page diatribe to O’Mahony in July 1865. Letters from Stephens to O’Mahony often exceeded forty pages. Added Denieffe: “If, instead of sending us the

Still, not yet convinced of the efficacy of issuing bonds, O'Mahony and the central council sent two more emissaries— PW Dunne and Patrick J. Meehan— whose findings and recommendations were to be absolutely final— to Ireland in July.¹²

The pair recommended wholeheartedly the issuance of the final call, an action finally taken by the Fenians on 5 August. On that day, the Brotherhood held a “monster pic-nic” at Jones Wood, where they were treated to speeches by O'Mahony, orations by Roberts, and general English-bashing.¹³ This was not the first such gathering held by the Fenians in New York. On 26 July, the *New York Times* reported on a “monster gathering of Fenian Brothers at Jones Wood, complete with thirty thousand men and women dancing in the woods and shouting for Ireland” held the previous day. The meeting was marked by colorful speeches and colorful characters. Observed the *Times*: “We are becoming a nation of pic-nickians...joining the tremendous crowds, the actual processions of Fenian Brothers and Sisters and Fathers and Mothers, we heard talk of Monroe Doctrine, Ireland for the Irish, Yankee Doodle, Erin go Bragh, and all that sort of thing.”¹⁴ William Roberts, in a less entertaining fashion, addressed the crowd:

“We require facts not fancy, muskets not advice, and bullets in place of words. We need strong and determined men, and generous and brave hearts, who, when

means to fight, they only send men to inquire into our condition and report thereon the thing will never be done.” Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative*, 197.

¹² One letter from an unnamed correspondent was sent from Dublin on 3 August 1865. It read: “I am favorably impressed with their general appearance, bearing, and intelligence. Many of them possess soldierly qualities, a good education, an excellent understanding, and all of them are great enthusiasts for the cause of their native land.” The letter estimated that there were 145,000 Fenians in Ireland, who would be supported by another 40,000 Ribbonmen in Scotland. “If the people of Ireland be only assisted with the means of asserting their independence, the hour of their delivery is at hand.” T.W. Sweeny papers.

¹³ *The Irish American* 5 August 1865.

¹⁴ *New York Times* 26 July 1865. The reporter was surprised that the crowd was well behaved. Characterizing the attendees as “impulsive, and fond of whisky” he noted: “there were no rows. This will seem strange to those who regard our Irish friends as warriors, but the fact is many of them went to war, where they got all the fighting they cared for.”

the hour of trial comes, will prove their faith and love by deeds. Ireland shall be free and we must free her. You have begged long enough, you have prayed, you have fawned until you have made freemen all over the earth despise you; you have flattered until your sycophancy became disgusting to friend and foe alike: you have tried all these things and failed, miserably failed. Now step aside and let the earnest sons of toil, the bone and sinew of the land, the true representatives of the race...let them see what they can do. You have been in the balance and been found wanting; we will step on the scales and be weighed. We will try what virtue there is in rifle instead of parliamentary protests. We shall try powder and the sword shall be the arbiter of our destiny and our children. If we fail once with honor in a noble fight, try again and again; blood must wash out what blood and crime have stained. May God defend the right!"

Editorialized one journalist no less objective than his counterpart at the *Times*: "The time appears to be fast approaching when we must cease talking and commence to do our work...ere long there shall be an Irish army on the Irish hillsides, ready to do battle for Irish independence and drive back from the green and sacred isle of Erin those ruthless tyrants who have desolated our homes and driven us over the whole earth."¹⁵ Efforts to chide those Irish Americans who hedged against making contributions included publicly listing those who made contributions as "true patriots and friends of Ireland." Talk of outfitting Fenian privateers, which would "hoist the Irish flag and attack, seize, take and destroy the ships of Great Britain, sweeping English commerce from the seas" thrilled many.¹⁶ The central committee issued letters of marque and reprisal, adding: "There are four million Irish people in America. Four million at a dollar a head would fit out forty privateers with which every red flag could be struck down. If every Irishman would do his duty, the 17th of March would not be passed without the green flag being raised and the red one compelled to be hauled down."¹⁷ William Roberts added:

¹⁵ *The Irish American* 12 August 1865.

¹⁶ *The Irish American* 30 September 1865.

¹⁷ *Irish People* 10 February 1866.

“Is it not a fair supposition that the Irish Republican Government will find as liberal friends among the Americans— not to mention the Irish-Americans— as the South found in Canada and England? Nineteen-twentieths of the American people hate and despise England as thoroughly as ever the Irish did. I think the navy bureau alone will have its hands full in equipping cruisers like the *Florida*, the *Alabama*, the *Tennessee* and the *Stonewall*; the names will be different: we will have the *Robert Emmet*, the *Edward Fitzgerald*, the *Brothers Shears*, and the *Wolf Tone*... of course I expect that our practical common sense President Andy Johnson will follow the example of her most ungracious Majesty Queen Victoria, and declare the Irish Republic a belligerent.”¹⁸

The *Times*, for one, was less sympathetic:

“Is it not time that the Irish nation (that is to be) gave the world something better than ‘societies?’ Within the mere trifle of a thousand years they have undertaken a hundred revolutions, each one resulting more impotently or more ridiculously than the one preceding. And now in this latest attempt what better promise do we have? What right have they to organize rebellion against their own government in our neutral territory?”¹⁹

Responded *The Irish American*:

“May we not in our ports fit out Irish vessels of war, fully armed and equipped, for the purpose of chasing English commerce from the seas— may we not detain English vessels of war in our harbors, till the Irish privateers in the same harbors put out to sea and make their escape...may we not supply to the insurgents in Ireland the arms and munitions of war, and the men too, if need be, to aid and assist the rebellion there? Why not indeed? The measures that are being taken to revolutionize Ireland, and to assist the revolutionists by means of men from the United States, will go on undisturbed by the ill-natured snarlings of the *Times* and papers of that kidney.”²⁰

At a meeting at New York’s Cooper Institute, Roberts implored the Irish American community to “be not recreant to the cause”:

“The destiny of Ireland hangs trembling in the balance; every sacrifice should be made to turn the scales against her oppressors. The tide upon which we expect to float the gallant bark of Irish independence, freighted with the hopes and prayers of millions of Irish hearts, scattered all over the earth, is the great power and

¹⁸ *The Irish American* 26 July 1865.

¹⁹ *New York Times* 26 July 1865.

²⁰ *The Irish American* 5 August 1865.

ability of the Irish American element...Show why we place so much reliance on them...that great body of four millions of Irish exiles in America...At most we can but fail, nobly and honorably fail, and a few years, more or less, in the life of man, is of little consequence when compared with the chance of freeing his country.”²¹

The campaign was markedly successful; by the end of the year some \$228,000 had been raised and transmitted to Ireland.²²

Unfortunately for the Fenians, the money collected was intercepted by British authorities, who had ample knowledge of the affair. On 15 September, British authorities raided the Dublin offices of the *Irish People*, seizing subscription lists, gathering evidence, and arresting several leading IRB men.²³ Hoping to precipitate a conflict between Great Britain and the United States, *The Irish American* reported that among

²¹ Lecture by W.R. Roberts, delivered before The Fenian Brotherhood of New York, at Cooper Institute, on Wednesday, September 27, 1865 (New York: J.Craft, 1865), 30. *The Irish American* of 7 October 1865 reported that the meeting represented “the largest gathering of the Fenian Brotherhood that this city had ever seen” adding that thousands were unable to gain admission.

²² O’Mahony claimed that sales of the bonds realized over \$8000 per day in September, with total daily receipts— coming from bonds, dues, and similar contributions—ranging between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars. To the Senate and House of Delegates of the Fenian Brotherhood, 17. Sales were slow in the American South, where “people remember the fate of the Confederate bonds, and there is much bitterness against the Irish of the North on account of their being regarded by the southern people, Irish included, as the chief cause of the destruction of the Confederacy.” Patrick Condon to P.J. Downing, 31 March 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records. All members ordered to duty in Ireland were to be provided with transportation and would receive six months pay, half of which was in American currency, with the remainder to be paid in bonds of the Irish Republic. T.W. Sweeny, Report on Military Organization Presented and Adopted as Portion of the Constitution and Special Congress, 21 October 1865. T.W. Sweeny papers.

²³ The arrival of several recently demobilized American soldiers, “agents either of the Federal government or the Fenian organization, well supplied with money, and well qualified to drill the militarily unsophisticated native population” had so worried the British that they repositioned their Channel fleet to the west coast of Ireland, where they could intercept “the Fenian cruisers loaded with men, arms, and munitions of war.” *New York Times* 24 September and 1 October 1865. The *London Times* of 4 October 1865 editorialized “We are perfectly able to take good care of the Fenians at home, and if our brethren in America would come together in a fleet, instead of one by one in passenger steamers, it would save the police a good deal of trouble.” Lampooned that same paper on 13 October 1865: “The scheme proposed by Napoleon I for invading England by means of 100 balloons to carry 1000 men, two guns, and 25 horses each was a more promising and reasonable device compared with the scheme of the Fenian Brotherhood for invading England from America with staff officers disguised as steamboat passengers, carrying artillery in carpet bags.” IRB organizers suggested that their American brethren change their manner of dress prior to embarking for Ireland, lest their “square tipped shoes and felt hats” mark them as foreigners. Kelly to O’Mahony, 21 June 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

those arrested were several naturalized Americans, whose release was demanded by national honor.²⁴ Stephens, having fled to the surrounding countryside, was not among those apprehended. For years afterward, Meehan would be accused of helping to destroy the movement. During his tour of Ireland, he had lost a parcel of papers that many believed led to the raid. Stephens expressed the feelings of many when he wrote:

“Tell our friends that their skepticisms, inquisitions, hesitations, and not any imprudence on our part have brought us to this. Meehan, especially, is universally blamed here. Of course, I cannot say how much he has injured us; but I know that it is much regretted that our friends at your side ever saw the necessity of sending anybody here to know what we were doing and tell us what to do.”²⁵

In truth, the packet was inconsequential; spies and informers, of whom there was no short supply, were to blame.²⁶

The IRB was determined to convince their American brethren that the cause was far from lost, and that every effort should be made to continue the plans for an uprising in 1865. James Murphy a veteran of the American Civil War and Fenian envoy in Dublin, reported: “The IRB is still intact, and the recent arrests have made its members more impatient than ever to commence the intended insurrection.”²⁷ This report was

²⁴ “In their zeal to crush the Fenians, the minions of the English government have trespassed on the rights of those, round whom their American citizenship has cast a protective aegis.” *The Irish American* 14 October 1865.

²⁵ Stephens to O’Mahony, 16 September 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records. O’Mahony reinforced this view: “Their acquisition put the bloodhounds of the tyrants on the track of the Irish revolutionary leaders.” *Irish People* 8 February 1868.

²⁶ Both the Fenians and the IRB were riddled with informers and spies, including several high-ranking officials. Noted Thomas D’Arcy McGee, inveterate foe of the Fenians, “As sure as filth produces vermin, it is of the very nature of such conspiracies as this to breed informers. There ought to be no easier place in the world for a good secret agent to do his work than in New York.” D’Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, 92. O’Mahony was seen as a particularly easy target, “his trusting disposition creating a thousand vexations...his men are allowed a little too much liberty.” Patrick Downing to O’Mahony, 20 April 1864, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

²⁷ *Irish People* 8 February 1868. On 20 March, British authorities substantiated these reports by relaying news that the “number of arrests under the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, do not appear to have

substantiated by William G. Halpin, another American representative in Dublin who wrote: "the arrests have both added to the numerical strength and ardor of the people...the blood of the country is up and nothing is wanted but the implements of trade...be not cowed, everything is working well. It is then of the utmost importance that ample funds should be sent at once to provide the staff of life. The United States government should be stirred up by the press and every other agency against England."²⁸

One European correspondent believed that with the IRB in shambles it was up to their American counterparts to take up the fight. "Fenianism, checked here, looks to the American branch for action of one sort or another...the belief is widespread that the American organization must make some warlike movement immediately."²⁹ *The Irish American* echoed this sentiment:

"The real work is now to come; and it devolves upon the Irish people here, who have tasted the sweets of liberty, and have profited by the advantages it affords them, to sustain, with material aid and resources, those who are to prosecute that great work which is to extend the same blessing of freedom to their brethren at home...their appreciation of the value of freedom, and their fitness to enjoy it, by such sacrifices as were offered by the men of the American Revolution, created out of the despised colonies of Britain, the greatest nation which the world has ever seen."³⁰

To combat further loss of men and money, it was decided that a financial agent be sent to Paris; John Mitchel, the man chosen for this position, took \$60,000 with him when he left

produced the least effect on the numbers of that body in repressing their spirit or apparently disturbing their organization." Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations*, 96

²⁸ Halpin to O'Mahony, 6 October 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Halpin relayed the information that many in the IRB believed Meehan's loss was "more by design than by accident."

²⁹ *The Irish American* 7 April 1866.

³⁰ *The Irish American* 5 May 1866.

in November, and disbursed over \$17,500 within his first two weeks in Europe.³¹ Despite numerous logistical and strategic setbacks, contributions continued to arrive at Fenian headquarters. Not even the arrest of Stephens in November was deemed disastrous.³² More worrisome was the growing rift in the American Fenians, who were increasingly divided into those who sought immediate action against the British wherever they might be found, and those who chose to bide their time and strike only in Ireland.

The Third Annual Fenian Convention began on 16 October 1865 and was attended by 613 delegates.³³ The tone of the convention was decidedly warlike, although the Fenians' invective was aimed not only at Great Britain, but also at each other. In what was perhaps the most misguided piece of journalistic prognostication ever penned, the *New York Times* announced: "The Fenians had buried all personal animosities and local feuds which had heretofore prevented the liberation of Ireland, and they would not

³¹ Another \$45,000 in cash and \$30,000 in bonds was sent to Paris by mid-March 1866. See financial reports of Mitchel dated 7 April 1866 Fenian Brotherhood Records. Mitchel had moved South after his censure by New York's Archbishop and worked on the staff of two Confederate newspapers, the *Richmond Enquirer*, and the *Richmond Examiner*. Two of his sons had been killed while fighting for the Confederacy. Arrested on 14 June 1865, (in an editorial to *The Leader* four days earlier he had referred to Jefferson Davis as a "gallant soldier and statesman") he was imprisoned at Fortress Monroe for his activities during the war; *The Irish American* of 25 June 1865 announced the creation of a 'John Mitchel Defense Fund.' His release had been secured by the efforts of T.W. Florence and Bernard Doran Killian, a Fenian agent from St. Louis, who met with President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William Seward in the summer of 1865 and secured a promise of amnesty for that fall. True to their word, Mitchel was released the day following the adjournment of the Third Fenian Convention in October 1865. *The Irish American* of 28 October 1865 stated that the release of Mitchel was a "courteous compliment to the Fenian Brotherhood." Mitchel apparently agreed. Writing in his *Jail Journal*, he stated: "the language of Andrew Johnson to the deputation of that body respecting my release leads me to think that the United States Government may really contemplate the policy of permitting, or at least conniving at any enterprise that the Irish Americans may undertake." Mitchel, *Jail Journal*, 410. The administration indubitably recognized the impact that such a pardon would have on Irish voters in the upcoming elections, a fact acknowledged by many journalists. See also: *Irish People* 8 February 1868 and 16,23 January 1869.

³² Stephens was apprehended on 11 November 1865, but rescued from prison on 24 November. Halpin wrote on 14 November: "no ill effects resulted from Stephens' capture...the American expedition was still expected." Halpin to O'Mahony, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

³³ Delegates were present from thirty different states. A full copy of the proceedings, as well as the new constitution adopted by the Fenian Congress, were published in *The Irish American* of 28 October and 4 November 1865.

stop till they accomplished their end—the freedom of Ireland.”³⁴ The entire structure of the organization was revamped, resulting in dramatically curtailed power for O’Mahony. A fifteen-member senate chosen from among the delegates replaced the central committee; this body was given sole authority to raise funds, appropriate money, and make all legislative decisions.³⁵ The office of Head Centre was abolished and replaced with that of President; O’Mahony was chosen to fill this position, and was authorized to construct a cabinet, albeit beholden to the approval of the Senate.³⁶ After announcing that the “final call” was realizing some \$8000 per day, the Fenians decided to outfit a headquarters in New York City.³⁷ Located at 32 East Seventeenth Street, just off Union Square, Moffatt Mansion was rented for eighteen months (at a rate of \$1000 per month, plus a security deposit of \$6000, paid in advance) and flew the Fenian flag—featuring a harp and sunburst—from its front door.³⁸

³⁴ *New York Times* 18 October 1865.

³⁵ The Fenian Senate shared its legislative functions with a House of Delegates, each circle having one representative to that body, with each circle of over one hundred members granted an additional delegate.

³⁶ O’Mahony’s selections included Thomas Sweeny, Brigadier General in the United States Army, as Secretary of War, and Patrick Collins, entrusted with signing all bonds of the Irish Republic, as Financial Agent. On Sweeny, “the hero of the armless sleeve,” see Jack Morgan, “Whistle Up a Marching Tune,” *Working Papers In Irish Studies* 2 (1994): 1-32. On 9 January the *New York Times* reported that Sweeny had been dismissed from the service for his Fenian activities; the following day it asserted that his dismissal was the result of an unauthorized leave of absence. A letter from Blanche and C.C. Tevis to Sweeny announced that General Grant had extended Sweeny a leave to cover his absence. Tevis to Sweeny, 15 January 1866, T.W. Sweeny papers. Collins, who would later become the first president of the Irish Land League of America, served as a Congressman from Massachusetts (1882-1886), and became Mayor of Boston, serving in 1901 and again in 1903.

³⁷ *Irish People* 29 February 1868. Included in this figure was \$5000 contributed by the Fenians of California.

³⁸ *The New York Times* of 14 November 1865 upbraided the Fenians for their gratuitous spending, stating “we do not believe that the money is used for any other purpose than getting notoriety and patent leather boots for a set of idlers in this country...not one tithe is used for any other purpose than maintaining a set of scamps in idleness.” On 11 January 1866, the *Times* demanded an audit of the Fenian books, claiming that four million dollars had been subscribed, and most of the money was being used to support a top-heavy staff in ornate New York headquarters.

Besides this organizational reconfiguration, the Philadelphia convention was notable for its espousal of new military tactics. It was here that the Fenians first began to seriously contemplate striking at Canada, hoping to establish a base of operations for raids on British shipping while potentially attracting the support of the United States.³⁹ Whereas earlier Irish nationalists had dismissed the idea, it was now seen as the surest way of making war on England.⁴⁰ Fenian envoys to Washington had broached the subject with both Secretary of State William Seward and President Andrew Johnson during the summer, and had been led to believe that the government would acknowledge accomplished facts.⁴¹ Subsequent actions would thrust the relations between the Fenians and the Johnson administration into the national spotlight, but there were first other disputes to take place.

The resignation of Patrick Collins, O'Mahony's appointee as Agent of the Irish Republic, precipitated a split that would permanently fracture the Fenians. It had been Kennan's responsibility to issue the bonds, but in his absence O'Mahony affixed his own

³⁹ This is obvious from a letter dated 10 November 1865 from Mitchel to O'Mahony acknowledging the plan. Mitchel "looked upon the Canadian raid as a mere diversion...unless it bring the United States into war with England it can only end in defeat. But it is worth trying in the hope that it may lead to such a war." Fenian Brotherhood Records. A raid on Canada had long been contemplated. On 19 April 1856, *The Citizen* stated: "should the opportunity we long for occur across the Canadian frontier, how easy and pleasant the task for patriotic Irishmen to march over, burning in the desire to aid in humbling the foe who for ages has oppressed and trampled upon the rights of our native land."

⁴⁰ *The Irish American* of 13 May 1865 informed a journalist from Toronto: "By no Fenian in the States is his portion of the world deemed worth the trouble of annexing. If ever we have to take Canada, it will only be by way of diversion; which end being answered we should only be too glad to let her slip back into the provincialism to which the imbecility of her children in the present generation seems to have hopelessly condemned her."

⁴¹ *Irish People* 15 February 1868. Bernard Doran Killian had suggested to Seward that the United States might acquire the land south of the St. Lawrence, or that an Irish Republic might be established on the land between the American border and that river, thereby providing a solution to "all diplomatic embarrassments, a final and fitter arbitrage of the Maine boundary question, freedom of the lakes, et cetera." It was widely believed that possession of territory was a necessary prerequisite to any recognition of Irish belligerency.

name, arguing “I would have betrayed my trust had I not signed them in such an emergency.”⁴² The Senate, which had been looking for a way to oust the cautious O’Mahony, used this as an excuse to rid themselves of the guarded leader. Calling a special session (for it had adjourned after the convention and was not to reconvene until February 1866) for 2 December 1865, the Senate censured O’Mahony for not following the constitution of the Brotherhood. Branding the O’Mahony issued bonds as “invalid, illegal, issued in violation of the Constitution and a fraud on the organization,” the Senators impeached the president on several charges including: violation of the oath of office; calumniating the Chief Executive, Senate, and members of the Fenian Brotherhood; and perfidy in impeding the objects of the Fenian Brotherhood.⁴³ The Senate claimed that Secretary of War Sweeny “had been impeded in the perfection of his plans for immediate action by the imbecility and the dishonesty of men in whom we had, unfortunately, reposed our confidence.”⁴⁴ *The Times* sarcastically reported: “It strikes us as being a little too early in the history of the new republic to have the supreme legislative body thus laying charges of corruption at the doors of the Executive.”⁴⁵ Later,

⁴² *Irish People* 14 March 1868.

⁴³ *New York Times* 7 December 1865. See also *The Irish American* of 16 and 30 December 1865. That journal, published by Fenian Senator Patrick Meehan, supported the action wholeheartedly. (For a copy of the resolution see a circular issued by the Senate on 6 December 1865. Frank B. Gallagher Papers, Philadelphia Archdiocesan and Historical Research Center.) The Senate wing instituted a new oath of allegiance: “I solemnly swear that I will bear true allegiance to the cause of Ireland and that I will serve it honestly and faithfully against all its enemies and that I will obey all orders of the President, Secretary of War, and officers appointed over me according to the rules and regulations established for the government of the armies for the liberation of Ireland. So help me God.” T.W. Sweeny papers. For the text of the Senate’s findings, see Gallagher papers.

⁴⁴ Circular of the Senate, Fenian Brotherhood, to the Members of that Organization, 7 December 1865, Gallagher papers.

⁴⁵ *New York Times* 8 December 1865. The *New York Tribune* of 11 December trumpeted: “The Fenians in a Bog... Erin Arrayed against Itself... The Green Isle out at Sea!”

that same source surmised that the split would be permanent, as the accused would never admit any defalcations: "submission under such circumstances would be worse than disgrace to the deposed officials. It would be poverty, and possibly the necessity of doing something half honest for a living."⁴⁶

O'Mahony, for his part, responded to the attacks by branding the Senate an illegal assembly, as it had adjourned and therefore carried no real power.⁴⁷ Labeling the Senators "traitors to the Irish race," O'Mahony summoned a new convention for New York City.⁴⁸ The *Times* remarked: "The fierce circulars and proclamations, smelling

⁴⁶ *New York Times* 11 December 1865. The *Times* added; "The American people may ask whether the Fenian scheme, from beginning to end, is not the most audacious imposition that was ever perpetrated upon an intelligent people." One month later, the same journal suggested that the Irish were incapable of self-government. "Nature has wisely set barriers to miscegenation, and there are many classes and species that she forbids to intermix. This is manifestly true in the many efforts of the prolific Irishman to make an alliance with Liberty. There is a quarrel in every agreement of more than two Irishmen to do any particular thing." *New York Times* 15 January 1866.

⁴⁷ *Boston Pilot* 27 January 1866. O'Mahony blamed the Senators for the damaged reputation of the organization. "From having reached as high a position as any revolutionary organization ever held in power, extent and public estimation, the Fenian Brotherhood has been as far as the outside world is concerned, rent asunder. It has become the scorn of its enemies, and an object of contempt to the stranger. The true lovers of liberty everywhere mourn its sad and sudden fall. Its most vital secrets have been laid bare through the press to a scornful public. England may call home her army of spies and secret agents. Irish born men— Fenians— have done for her, through the New York newspapers— what ten thousand spies and millions of money could not accomplish in so short a time." To the Senate and House of Delegates of the Fenian Brotherhood, 34. Shortly after the split, *The Irish American* ran a series of letters penned by O'Mahony in which the ousted Head Centre aired his contempt for James Stephens and others. "Now that John O'Mahony, having by a coup d'état got rid of the Fenian Senate, Constitution, and everything that tied his hands...it may be interesting to take a look behind the scenes and see how he wrote and spoke of people about whom he enunciates somewhat discordant statements today." *The Irish American* 20 January 1866.

⁴⁸ The Senators termed this convocation "a revolutionary body, illegally assembled, and not by any means representative of the Fenian Brotherhood of America." Reply of W.R. Roberts, President, Fenian Brotherhood, to the Mis-statements of B. Doran Killian; with report of Gen'l. T.W. Sweeny, Secretary of War, F.B. (New York: J.Craft, 1866), 28. *The Irish American* of 13 January 1866 agreed: "To call this body a Congress representing the Fenian Brotherhood is a manifest absurdity; since more than one half of the circles in good standing have refused to send delegates to recognize its legality, and of the delegates who have come to obtain information, many are returning, thoroughly disgusted with the low tricking venality and mendacity of the self-styled patriots who consume the funds subscribed by our enthusiastic, hard-working people in heavy salaries and heavier expenses." Others suggested that the meeting cost the Brotherhood some \$7000, and that the expense of feeding and housing the delegates was paid by a Moffatt establishment that needed a huge turnout to justify its existence. Official Report of the Investigating Committee of the Department of Manhattan, Fenian Brotherhood. A Full and Complete

more of poteen than Irish blood, are growing stupid, and the general verdict is that the whole wrangling batch should be gathered in their 'Capitol' and given their choice to depart forthwith to Ireland, or be sent bag and baggage to the Lunatic Asylum. It is indeed, quite time to ring down the curtain upon this very stupid burlesque of the 'F.B.', alias 'Irish Republic'."⁴⁹ Meeting on 3 January, some 600 delegates readopted the original Chicago constitution, reinstating the positions of Head Centre and central council. Appeals for unity, voiced by Thomas Sweeny and Colonel Lynch— (who stated that "the Fenian organization was the best ever established to promote unity among Irishmen in America and to secure them the position to which their number entitled them")— on behalf of those Senators who saw schism as suicide, were rebuffed, as the Brotherhood reaffirmed its commitment to "war in Ireland and nowhere else."⁵⁰ On 10 January, the Senators, convicted of perfidy and violation of the constitution, were expelled from the Fenian Brotherhood. A new organ, *The Irish People*, was authorized to

Report of the Investigation of the Management of Affairs, Financial, Military, and Civil, of the Officials at the Fenian Headquarters, Moffatt Mansion Union Square, NY. Statement of Monies Received and Expended, Bonds Issued— Full History of the "CampoBello" fizzle (New York: J. Craft, 1866), 18. The Senate alleged that "two-thirds of its members were allegedly from the states of New York and Massachusetts," a charge substantiated by the *New York Tribune* of 16 May 1866, which maintained that "the Manhattan circles remained favorable to O'Mahony" when few others did. *The New York Daily News* of 31 July 1866 carried an article, "City Fenianism," that claimed the Brotherhood was still active in New York City, and still strongly attached to O'Mahony,

⁴⁹ *New York Times* 15 January 1866. On 1 February, the *Times* reiterated this point: "The obstinate Saxon cannot be lectured into surrender...this whole thing is as flat and uninteresting as a wake without whisky."

⁵⁰ *New York Times* 11 January 1866. The paper was indignant that a contingent from the 99th New York National Guard Regiment had been assigned to guard the convention hall from British spies and Senate crashers, observing: "How is it? Is it not contrary to the laws of the State of New York for members of a State regiment, like the Ninety-Ninth National Guard, of this city, to be stationed as a guard over the portals of the deliberative body known as the Fenian Congress; especially when arrayed in the uniforms ordered by the State government, and carrying arms and accoutrements issued to them from the arsenal of this state? Is it not, in fact, bringing the entire military organization of the State into utter and unmerited ridicule?" Six weeks later, reporting that the regiment had applied for new uniforms, the same paper wrote: "They ought to have the clothes and the arms now in their possession stripped from them, and be ignominiously dismissed from military service...if they want new uniforms they can buy them in Ireland at less than half the price charged on Broadway." *New York Times* 21 February 1866.

combat the aspersions heaped on O'Mahony by *The Irish American*, an influential paper published by Senator Thomas Meehan.⁵¹ The deposed leader could take solace in the fact that both James Stephens and John Mitchel, each of whom wrote encouraging letters to O'Mahony, wholly supported him.⁵² Mitchel, while noting that the split would "greatly injure our friends in Ireland who were expecting large supplies of money" congratulated O'Mahony "on having got rid of the constitution, the senate, the title of president: all Irishmen who desire the success of our cause will rally around you."⁵³ Stephens wrote that while he deprecated the split:

"To break with treason and baseness of all kinds, to brand it, smash it— was the policy, and I rejoice at your having made it yours. Ireland rejoices at it with me, for it indicates the justice of their judgment. Brand them without pity. Cut and hack the rotten branches around you without pity."⁵⁴

⁵¹ Despite the obvious affiliation, both O'Mahony and the editors of the new journal disavowed any connection. "We have all along maintained our independence of either or both branches of the Fenian organization, notwithstanding the reiterated assertions of professionally patriotic soreheads of each party to the contrary. Both of those Fenian parties are alike to us, except when the plans, policy, or public conduct of either calls forth our praise or censure." *The Irish People* 20 April 1867. One week later O'Mahony penned an editorial disavowing any connection with the paper, stating: "it is an utter falsehood to call it 'my organ.'" *The Irish People* 27 April 1867.

⁵² Mitchel to O'Mahony, 27 January 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records. The inaugural issue of *The Irish People* – a Fenian organ published in New York from 1866 to 1873— carried a letter from Stephens, appointing O'Mahony as financial agent of the Irish Republic in the United States, with "sole and exclusive power to issue bonds." *Irish People* 20 January 1866.

⁵³ Mitchel to O'Mahony, 27 January 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Mitchel hoped to stay above the fray, requesting later "that neither your branch nor that of Mr. Roberts use my name in any manner whatsoever." Mitchel to Mortimer Moynihan, 19 February 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Likewise 17 November 1866, where Mitchel informed Moynihan: "I will not put myself forward as a participant in any appeal to the Irish in America to contribute their money to the Fenian movement in its present organized, or disorganized, state. This merely wastes their means and patriotic enthusiasm." Mitchel to Moynihan, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁵⁴ *Irish People* 20 January 1866. Mitchel echoed the sentiments of many who felt the schism was disastrous. In a letter to John Martin published in the *Irish Citizen* 29 February 1868 Mitchel stated: "The moment was exciting (immediately after the Civil War), and many who had up to that time held aloof from these organizations, then joined them. I, myself, was one of these; but when the break up occurred here, and when I could no longer tell to which 'wing' I belonged I quietly withdrew myself from both. Many excellent Irishmen in the United States acted as I did." While serving as Financial Agent in Paris, Mitchel lamented the split, stating he had no hope of selling bonds once the schism occurred. Mitchel to O'Mahony, 10 March 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

This was not surprising. In a letter penned in July 1861, one of Stephens' IRB associates had informed O'Mahony "that we will recognize neither a man, nor a party, be they great or small, weak or powerful, which does not directly emanate from you, act with you, and over which you are not acknowledged to have supreme control."⁵⁵

Others saw in the split a fractious tendency too often associated with Irish revolutionaries. "You have always been too ready to run like a flock of sheep after anyone who held up their finger as a leader...when you get O'Mahony, O'Stephens, O'Roberts, or O'Somebody on the brain."⁵⁶ Commented James Roche, another disabused Fenian:

"I have witnessed with deep regret the divisions which have sprung up in the councils of the Fenian organization, and I regard with still deeper regret the attempt which is now being made to foist upon the necks of the Irish people an autocratic yoke which would be more intolerable than that of Russia or England... a yoke of imbecile domination, combined with malignant personal hostilities that threatens to turn free men into the basest of slaves."⁵⁷

British observers were cautiously optimistic that the feud would spell the end of the Fenian threat; wrote one: "I look for a great weakening of the movement in this country by reason of the rancorous feud which has sprung up between Roberts and O'Mahony. But the diabolical industry with which the machinations of the Fenian leaders has been carried on, testify to their sincerity and earnestness in their mad

⁵⁵ W.M. O'Carroll to O'Mahony, July 1861, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁵⁶"To My Fellow Countrymen and Brothers." By "an unknown Irish exile." T.W. Sweeny papers. The Fenians were sensitive to the claim that they were personality-driven. In an early document the Brotherhood proclaimed: "The Fenian Brotherhood had sprung from the people and was of the people. The people were the directors, the idea was their leader...the idea had taken the place of men, and it was no longer forgotten in men. Leaders might become traitorous, or die, or grow cold—but the people clung still more closely and gathered more firmly around their chief—regeneration." Proceedings of the First National Convention, 17.

⁵⁷ James Roche to T.W. Sweeny, 15 January 1866. T.W. Sweeny papers.

enterprise.”⁵⁸ Certainly there were some Fenians who saw in the split reason for concern; one member from Ohio reported nothing “but indifference among the members at the present on account of our late troubles...our circle is shattered, though we live in hope.”⁵⁹

While the O’Mahony contingent was meeting in New York, the Senate wing prepared to hold its own meeting. Convening on 18 January 1866, the Senate claimed to have the support of two-thirds of the Fenian body.⁶⁰ Preaching “before the sun of July shall gild the Emerald Isle with its rays a note of joy will thrill the heart of our native land,” the Senate wing appealed to those who wanted immediate action.⁶¹ Barnstorming across the country, Sweeny and Roberts spoke openly of their military plans, informing all who would listen that he had appropriated \$50,000 for the purchase of armaments from the Philadelphia firm of Jenks and Mitchell.⁶² Added Roberts:

“If you will purchase rifles for the arming of one hundred thousand men who are ready to march with General Sweeny at their head you can annihilate your

⁵⁸ Edward Archibald, British consul at New York, to Sir John Michel. D’Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, 108. This was premature. On 7 February 1866, the *New York Tribune* carried reports of a man apprehended in New York while transporting a truckload of weapons. He was discharged with a caution against violating the American neutrality laws, with the arms being released to O’Mahony after he proved rightful ownership.

⁵⁹ John Looby to O’Mahony, 22 January 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁶⁰ *New York Herald* 19 January 1866.

⁶¹ *Buffalo Morning Express* 27 January 1866. The schism that divided the Brotherhood resulted in the elevation of William Randall Roberts, president of the Fenian Senate, to the position of President of the Fenians. The Senate/Roberts wing was often referred to as “the men of action.” Roberts was a dry goods merchant from Brooklyn and proprietor of New York’s “Crystal Palace.” He would later serve as a two-term Congressman from Brooklyn and American Minister to Chile. His appointment was lauded by *The Irish American* of 11 April 1885, but decried by *The Nation* of two days earlier. Roberts was not unique in having a legitimate political career following his Fenian exploits. Fenian Senators John Quinn and Michael Nolan were later elected to the US Congress, as was Fenian supporter William Robinson. Thomas Kelly of Manchester fame became the postmaster of New York City. That activity in the Brotherhood did not preclude social advancement can be seen in the figure of John Linehan, Head Centre of New York State, who became the first Treasurer General of the American Irish Historical Society in 1900.

⁶² *Irish People* 29 February 1868. Civil War veterans could purchase their side arms and accoutrements from government quartermasters for a small fee of only six dollars, which meant that a good portion of the Fenian army— comprised of veterans— was well armed.

traditional and actual enemy...With 50,000 men we can sweep Johnny Bull into the sea. The plans are made, the line of march laid out, and it rests with you whether it will ever be taken up.”⁶³

At the Fourth National Congress, held in Pittsburgh on 19 February, Sweeny and Roberts reaffirmed their commitment to the Philadelphia constitution and outlined the basic military plan for the Canadian invasion.

“Irishmen see that we are working instead of talking...and in two months we will gain a foothold of our own, the Irish flag will be raised, and Ireland will be recognized among the nations of the earth. The green flag will be flying independently to freedom’s breeze, and we will have a base of operations from which we can emancipate Ireland and annihilate England.”

The representatives resolved to put an army in the field, and worked hard to keep up a level of support for their plans.

“Turpitude will bring decay; inaction is certain death. I realize the great moral influence of the organization both in America and Ireland; but it is based upon the supposition that we are preparing for work, and determined to try the cause of Irish independence versus English slavery on the field of battle, and accept a verdict only from the cannon’s mouth. It is a sound political maxim that no attempt at revolution is justifiable, unless there is a reasonable prospect of success. We accept the maxim and the responsibility, believing that if the Irish people in America are true to their native land there has not been for centuries, and there is not likely to be for centuries to come, so good an opportunity as the present one to free Ireland from a galling bondage, and place her as a brilliant star in the firmament of republicanism. The Irish people in America, learning democracy at the very fountain of true liberty, discard utterly and forever the last vestiges of feudalism which sought to supplant the manhood of the nineteenth century with the slavish and degrading prerogatives of the dark ages. It is to the future we must look; it is for the future of the Irish people at home we must work, and it is for Ireland, and her alone, that we must strike. On your shoulders, brothers, rests a great responsibility.”⁶⁴

Added Roberts:

“I am ready to give all for Ireland...I pledge myself to support, to my last dollar

⁶³ *The Irish American* 10 February 1866.

⁶⁴ Proceedings of the Fourth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, at Pittsburgh, PA, February 1866. With the Constitution of the FB and Addenda Thereto (New York: J. Craft, 1866), 20.

and the last drop of my blood, for our sacred cause... we have the honesty, the intelligence and the patriotism of the Irish people with us, and of the American people also; and knowing we are right, let us drive ahead. With the sword of the soldier alone can we hope to achieve the independence of Ireland, and save our cause from dishonor. In this solemn hour with a future before us so pregnant with the fate of our race I should be untrue to my manhood and false to my God were I to seek to influence your judgment by an appeal to your passions. The occasion demands cool and wise deliberation. Ireland calls to us; can we aid her? Our brothers are imprisoned; can we rescue them? Liberty is banished from the soil of Erin; can we restore it? Our country, our dear mother...raises her beauteous head, she stretches out her mothers arms— her voice, so fond, so loving, so entreating— comes over the trackless deep, calling on us, her sons— her exiled sons— her hope, her consolation, and her strength, not to desert her in the hour of her dire extremity. The eyes of the world are on us— and should we now prove recreant to our trust, the earth has no refuge deep enough to shield us from the scorn and contempt of mankind...the destiny of our native land is in our hands.”⁶⁵

To counter reports that some Senators would change their minds if it could be shown that Ireland was accessible by a military expedition, Sweeny discounted the wisdom of striking at England in Ireland.⁶⁶

“It is something worse than folly to talk of fighting in Ireland within the year. The sooner the Irish people are disabused of the idea of seeing armed aid, to any effective amount, from this country the better. Our patriotism, enthusiasm, and credibility may carry us far, but not to the extent of turning our fair island into a shambles through which one would have to march to defeat. To strike England through Canada is possible, is practical, and can be effected with the means at our disposal...to assail her in Ireland is impossible. The island is furnished by her army, every village is occupied by her police and infested by her spies, the coast is surrounded by her fleet and every inlet patrolled by her armed cutters so that even the introduction of a colt revolver would be a work of some difficulty. England has her base of supplies within three hours sail of Ireland...an undisciplined body of men, when armed, are more dangerous to themselves than to the enemy.”⁶⁷

During a tour of the United States, Sweeny implored his fellow exiles to match his

⁶⁵ *New York Tribune* 20 February 1866. The paper carried a full report of the proceedings, declaring that the delegates had “promised that material aid would be available for carrying out the war program.” A copy of the address and resolutions appeared in *The Irish American* of 17 March 1866.

⁶⁶ *Philadelphia Inquirer* 12 May 1866.

⁶⁷ Manifesto of General Thomas W. Sweeny 1 May 1866. T.W. Sweeny papers.

determination.

“Show it in deeds, not words. You should be as willing to fight as to talk for the liberation of your country. The only way the conflict can be successfully decided in our behalf is with strong arms, brave hearts, and sharp steel. I will pledge my name, and fame, and whatever honor I may have won as a soldier under that starry banner whose folds our oppressed countrymen have so long found a shelter and a home. If we falter now, how history will be right in branding us as imbecile braggarts, how the Saxon will laugh in his pride and insolence at the weakness and cowardice of the Celt. Let me implore you, my countrymen, to aid in preventing this stigma from resting on our name.”⁶⁸

Many were impressed by the talk of action at no distant time. *The Irish American* reported “extraordinary enthusiasm for, and energetic approval of, General Sweeny’s plan.”⁶⁹ James O’Sullivan, editor of the *San Francisco Irish People* wrote “Our state Brotherhood thought of remaining neutral, and sending the funds gathered here to John Mitchel, to be forwarded to the executive of the IRB by him...I think, however, that the Pittsburgh convention has decided things in your favor...the Irishmen of California, who are quite numerous and many of whom are quite wealthy, will be up in a blaze and will contribute money generously.”⁷⁰

To counteract this talk, O’Mahony implored his followers to maintain their contributions and to keep their focus on Ireland.⁷¹ Both he and James Stephens ridiculed any plan to liberate Ireland on the plains of Canada, claiming that the Senators who supported such a scheme “cared little about the Irish Republic, unless it were the Irish

⁶⁸ T.W. Sweeny, Address to the Fenian Brotherhood on the Western Tour, 1866, T.W. Sweeny papers.

⁶⁹ *The Irish American* 3 March 1866.

⁷⁰ O’Sullivan to Sweeny, 28 March 1866. T.W. Sweeny papers. Earlier, O’Sullivan had written: “If O’Mahony and his hangers on are got out of the way, confidence in the cause can again be restored here, and our State will do as much as any other to help dislodge the foreign tyrants from the old sod.” O’Sullivan to Sweeny, 29 January 1866. T.W. Sweeny papers.

⁷¹ *Irish People* 3 February 1866.

republic in Canada, or in the moon.”

“That Irish Republic which we believe in— and which can exist for us nowhere but upon the Irish soil— was founded, by James Stephens and his associates, in Ireland; but it was abandoned by your Senators— the would-be governors of Canada— for the sake of some other Irish Republic yet to be founded by them upon the St. Lawrence or the Great Lakes... The Fenian Brotherhood was never instituted for the purpose of establishing an Irish Republic in Duane Street, Broadway, or Union Square, or in any part whatever of Canada... What Irish soldier— except General Sweeny— ever entered the Brotherhood for a Canadian campaign? What Fenian ever contributed his money for that object? Banish the thought of Canada from your mind, if such a thought has ever been entertained by you. Don’t fancy it would cause a diversion here...Ireland first, Canada after, if the Canadians wish it.”⁷²

The O’Mahony wing held a mass meeting in New York, attended by politico Fernando Wood. Wood, who had made a political career out of catering to the Irish, spoke at length:

“My brother Patrick, my Fenian brother Patrick, let us strike hands and punish that naughty government that has afforded so much aid to our Confederate enemy... England is alike the enemy of Ireland and the United States of America. England then, my Irish fellow citizens, is your enemy and mine. It is not only preeminent upon us to maintain free government here, but to uphold it everywhere. This is the duty of the American citizen. I say we want war with England! I spit upon the idea that our government is to keep aloof from this war. I want it to take an active part in it. And I counsel acts, want acts, against the British government! So help me God, I would use all my influence, personal and political, for the furtherance of Fenianism.”⁷³

The suspension of habeas corpus in Ireland on 17 February made the plea all the more poignant.

The British suspended the act to coincide with the trial of the IRB leaders who had been apprehended the previous September. The result steeled the resolve of those nationalists on both sides of the Atlantic, but vitiated any sort of movement towards

⁷² To the Senate and House of Delegates of the Fenian Brotherhood, 4. O’Mahony added, “the very the idea of an Irish Republic in America looks ridiculous in itself.” *Ibid*, 11.

⁷³ *New York Times* 13 February 1866. Also, *New York Tribune* 13 February 1866.

Ireland.⁷⁴ When the news reached New York, O'Mahony seized the moment. In a circular issued 1 March, the Head Centre admonished his followers:

“Our compatriots are thrown into the field and are doubtless fighting as God gives them strength. They offer their life, shall we withhold our money? Remember your promises and be prompt in your assistance. Are you to betray the Brotherhood by deserting Ireland for Canada, allowing James Stephens and his associates to contend, unaided by men, arms, or money, with the hereditary enemy of our country and race? Success depends upon immediate action...Let every man do his duty!”⁷⁵

O'Mahony followed with an announcement of a grand rally to be held in Jones Wood the following Sunday. Despite the admonitions of Archbishop John McCloskey, who believed that such a meeting represented “an open profanation of the Lord's Day, an act of public scandal to religion and an outrage to the feelings of all good Catholics” some 100,000 attended and listened to the bellicose speeches of O'Mahony and others.⁷⁶

The rally had the desired effect, as huge sums began to pour into Moffatt Mansion.⁷⁷ Of equal importance was the publicity given the movement; for days, the secular and ethnic press was filled with reports of Fenian events, and of the support given

⁷⁴ “Every step in the proceedings adopted by Her Majesty's government to uproot the conspiracy in Ireland, serves only to increase the ardor and enthusiasm of the Brotherhood in this country, and to furnish fresh incentives to meetings, harangues, and contributions.” Archibald to Viscount Monck, 3 March 1866. D'Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, 122.

⁷⁵ *New York Herald* 2 March 1866. The *New York Tribune* of 3 March 1866 claimed that the circular was having the desired effect, as the Fenian headquarters was “thronged with visitors, and there was the appearance of renewed activity among the officers.”

⁷⁶ McCloskey had ordered a circular letter to be read at all Catholic churches on the day in question, stating: “such an act can hardly fail to provoke the anger of God and the sorrow and indignation of all good Christians.” The *New York Herald* of 5 March saw in the huge turnout evidence that the Irish were finally breaking free from clerical influence. The *New York Tribune* of the same day reported that the speaking platform collapsed under the weight of demagogues and special guests. The *Times*, while censuring the “misgovernment of Ireland which deserves all the denunciations that can be heaped upon it by liberals of every creed” applauded McCloskey's statement as reflective of Irish American sentiment.

⁷⁷ The *New York Herald* of 11 March 1866 placed the receipts at \$40,000. The *Irish People* of 10 March 1866 listed over \$5,000 in contributions. The *Times* of 5 March doubted these figures, claiming “There was no money collected save that by the railroads...the directors should make a handsome purse to the Fenian managers, to whom they are under such heavy obligation.”

to the movement by politicians of all stripes.⁷⁸ Alarmed by these developments, the British government appealed to the Johnson administration for some sort of action. Seward skillfully avoided the topic, stating that he thought the Fenian affair much exaggerated and that any proclamation or official correspondence would only serve to legitimize the movement.⁷⁹

At a central council meeting in mid-March, O'Mahony and his advisors decided upon a course of action that they hoped would both precipitate a conflict between the United States and Great Britain while preempting the bellicose Senate wing, which was still proclaiming their plans to attack Canada.⁸⁰ At the urging of Bernard Doran Killian, O'Mahony assented to a raid on Campo Bello Island for April 1866.⁸¹ The small island, situated in Passamaquoddy Bay off the coast of Maine, was disputed territory, claimed alike by Great Britain and the United States, though neither had established any clear title to its ownership. The Fenians proposed seizing the island, and using it as a base of

⁷⁸ *The Freeman's Journal* of 26 August was among the most vocal in condemning the proceedings. "These orators and missionaries show a great disrespect, and even hostility to the Irish Catholic clergy. This, of itself, is a damning token. The Irish, separated from their clergy, would cease to be Irish, in the sense that has made their nation the boast of Christendom. Down with the Fenians!" Those who opposed O'Mahony supported the denunciation. Wrote Senator Patrick Meehan "The Most Reverend Archbishop was doing no more than his duty when he issued the warning to his flock." *The Irish American* 10 March 1866.

⁷⁹ Seward linked any discussion of the movement with questions of naturalization. If the naturalized Irish jailed in Europe were to be treated as British subjects, then the Fenian agitation must be regarded as a British and not an American movement, thereby absolving the Johnson administration from any responsibility.

⁸⁰ *The Irish American* of 17 March 1866 carried reports of the Senate wing having formed the nucleus of a navy in Chicago, the purpose of which was "to sweep the lakes of British commerce, and raise the green flag on the Chicago River." A marine corps was similarly planned. A week earlier that same paper carried news of the "first Fenian naval demonstration," adding "the country as a whole is moving in support of General Sweeny's programme." *The Irish American* 10 March 1866.

⁸¹ Earlier O'Mahony had said; "Let Canada alone...we don't want her and no Irishman would consider a thousand acres of land on the banks of the St. Lawrence of as much value as a potato patch in old Ireland." *New York Times* 5 March 1866.

operations for the expected invasion of Ireland.⁸² Commented one journal: “Fenianism desires to be present at the very point where Great Britain and the United States are likely, if anywhere, to be in hostile contact.”⁸³ Echoed another: “It seems the design of Killian and his accomplices to provoke a breach of neutrality on the part of the native population, with a view to causing a war between Great Britain and the United States.”⁸⁴ While many believed the plan would never come to fruition, at least one observer was concerned: “These shrewd Fenians are cornered, and there is no telling what such desperate men may do. The sinews of war slacken. Biddy and Patrick are clamorous for results, and becoming chary of nickels.”⁸⁵ By the first week of April, several hundred Fenians departed for Eastport, Maine while armaments were shipped via the *Ocean Spray*, a ship purchased at government auction the previous winter.⁸⁶ The affair was far

⁸² This was a view shared by the Senators, who recognized the need for a base of operations. Wrote Roberts: “The Irish Republic is yet an ideal without a local habitation. We must have some place for our government to raise a flag, build ships, issue letters of marque...England could surround Ireland with a cordon of ships, but if we had a country with sea ports, we could send out ships to prey on her commerce, run blockade runners to Ireland, and get other nations to recognize our belligerency. If we haven’t a country, our ships would be condemned as pirates.” *Cincinnati Enquirer* 1 February 1866.

⁸³ *New York Herald* 12 April 1866.

⁸⁴ *London Illustrated News* 5 May 1866.

⁸⁵ *New York Times* 15 March 1866. A short time later, the paper blamed sensationalistic news agencies for giving the movement life. “It is not too much to say that if the New York press had simply told the truth about this business, just given the real facts and no more, the Fenian excitement would today have been a thing of the past, and many hundred thousand dollars, taken from the hard earnings of Ireland’s generous but credulous children, would have remained to their credit in the Savings bank.” *New York Times* 24 March 1866.

⁸⁶ The vessel carried a cargo of five hundred weapons. *Irish People* 12 May 1866. The *New York Herald* of 5 April 1866 reported that the ship was bound for Bermuda. Some Fenians were incredulous that the ship would be the representative of the Irish Republic. “A target for artillery practice could not be more successfully painted— black hull and straw colored wheel house. Her rigging is in a miserable condition, her sails in a worse. Doubtless full of bilge water. She is ... in fact, a mere shell. Her machinery and steam generated powers untested; coal-bunkers and magazines empty. Seriously, is it intended to put this vessel on the ocean as the representative of the Fenian Navy?” An investigatory committee found conditions on board the vessel in as bad a condition as the ship itself. “The affairs on board the vessel are conducted very badly— the officers being drunk nearly every night... I have seen Captain Barbot come on the vessel three times in such a condition that he was not fit to take care of himself ...there have been from three to five

from secret; the *New York World* of 5 April carried a full report of the planned invasion, complete with a proposed restructuring of New Brunswick into “The Republic of Emmetta, with four provinces, after the manner in which Ireland is divided.”⁸⁷ On 13 April, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles ordered the steamer *Winooski* from Philadelphia so that “the arms and the Fenians should not meet.”⁸⁸ Three days later, General George Gordon Meade was ordered to the front “to prevent any hostile operations against a nation with which we are currently in a state of peace, and to take such measures as may be proper to enforce the neutrality of the United States.”⁸⁹ Barred from exercising their grand scheme, the proposed raid on Campo Bello devolved into a face-saving descent on nearby Indian Island, where the Union Jack was seized from a customhouse, and the following proclamation was read:

“Citizens of New Brunswick! English policy, represented in the obnoxious project of Confederation, is making its last efforts to bind you in effete forms to monarchism. Annexation to the United States is not, necessarily, the only means of escape. Independence for the present is the best one, and will assure you the supreme and sole management of your affairs.”⁹⁰

The venture cost the Brotherhood some \$40,000 and the respect of almost all observers;

tons of lead removed rather suspiciously from the magazine within four weeks. There have been copper pipes removed. I saw the carpenter cut the lead up and pile it in sheets. The lead pipes and heaters running from the engine-room aft have also been removed. A large ice-box has very strangely disappeared. The pumps on the steamer have been broken through neglect and every time the pumps were broken it cost \$150 to repair them. I believe Mr. Henderson does not understand the engines. I have had seven years experience as a fireman, and am familiar with the workings of engines.” Official Report of the Investigating Committee of the Department of Manhattan, Fenian Brotherhood, 34, 40.

⁸⁷ *New York World* 5 April 1866. The provinces were allegedly to be named Mahonia, Killiana, Stephanian, and Fenia.

⁸⁸ Gideon Welles, Diary of Gideon Welles 3 vols., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 2: 486.

⁸⁹ Meade informed the Fenians “any breach of the neutrality laws would be instantly followed by the arrest of every one of them.” W.S. Neidhardt, Fenianism in North America (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 48.

⁹⁰ *New York Herald* 16 April 1866.

the Roberts wing was particularly gratified by the fiasco, and was quick to rebuff all attempts by O'Mahony to reunite the movement at this juncture.⁹¹

Immediately following the laughable exploits in Maine, the Fenians of Manhattan called a convention to determine who was most to blame for the fiasco.⁹² O'Mahony counseled patience, observing "mighty revolutions are not perfected in a day: this is not the age of miracles when Jericho could be blown down with rams' horns."⁹³ Representatives from each of the city's 132 circles met to investigate the affairs, financial and otherwise, of O'Mahony, Killian, and all others associated with Moffatt Mansion.⁹⁴ The findings were damning and damaging; henceforth, any hopes for reconciliation would be crushed by the acrimonious feud that resulted from the inquiry.⁹⁵

⁹¹ *Irish American* 28 April 1866. On 20 April, O'Mahony had sent an envoy to Roberts, stating "It will take all our united efforts to overthrow the enemy we have to contend with and lift our oppressed nation to freedom and happiness...I much fear the result of either party attempting anything on their own account, while united they can smite the enemy at different points." Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative*, 232. The weapons seized at Campo Bello were released to the Fenians on 25 May, with the understanding that they "will not be used in violation of the Neutrality Laws." Gallagher papers.

⁹² The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of 17 May 1866 reported that the investigation stretched to members of that city's organization. "The Fenian Movement...defalcations in the funds...committee appointed to examine accounts at headquarters...alleged frauds by prominent Brooklyn Fenians...terrible day of reckoning coming...troublous times for dishonest Fenians."

⁹³ *New York World* 25 April 1866.

⁹⁴ Earlier, Roberts had quipped: "John O'Mahony and B.D. Killian are very fond of calling Irishmen traitors, who can be purchased at any time, but the white-washing committee and officers-in-general of Moffatt Mansion need plaster of Paris to hide the cracks and fissures in their financial transactions...a gross sum of over \$56000 spent for the support of a government in Union Square left a balance of \$17000 for poor Ireland, to fit out ships, purchase arms, equip soldiers, and keep the revolution at home alive...\$60000 for domestic comforts but not one dollar sent to aid the men at home on the eve of a bloody revolution! Who will be to blame for the murder of defenseless men with empty hands?" *Reply of W.R. Roberts, President, Fenian Brotherhood*, 19-20.

⁹⁵ The *Irish American* of 28 April 1866 held out the hand of friendship "to any still in the O'Mahony ranks who really love Ireland, and are willing to fight for her— not to draw pay for villifying their countrymen— let them understand that the door of reconciliation is always open to them and that nothing divides them from their brothers, who are laboring in the same cause." The same paper carried an announcement of the founding of an Irish Sanitary Commission by the Fenian Sisterhood. The ISC would be soliciting donations of "bandages, medicines and such matters as the experiences of the late war have taught the women of America to prepare for those who, in the struggle for the achievement of liberty, may fall sick or wounded."

The findings painted a picture of financial impropriety and labelled several leading Fenians as traitors to the cause. B. Doran Killian was singled out for special retribution.⁹⁶ He was accused of being the sole person responsible for the raid, and for being untrue to James Stephens and the cause of Irish independence. One deponent quoted Killian as saying:

“I want to know what Mr. Stephens has done in Ireland before I can say what could be done to restore us to our former basis. I don’t think it would be for the benefit of the Fenian Brotherhood to give Mr. Stephens a public reception. I think it would be a crime. If every one else throws up his hat, I will stand with folded arms and demand to know what he has done for Ireland. If the affair is hollow and hopeless, say so; if it have hope in it find out how and why and say so”⁹⁷

Others suggested that Killian had directly disobeyed orders when he moved upon Eastport:

“Mr. Killian was always in favor of using the money of the Brotherhood for a Campo Bello movement...any opposition I received in my efforts to have an expedition start for Ireland came from the Treasury Department, presided over by BD Killian. Killian was to go to Eastport, look around, and be prepared to move only when Mr. Stephens arrived. He was distinctly told not to move. I told Mr. Killian that he had exceeded his orders, and there were grounds to suspect treachery. The entire cost of the expedition was drawn from a treasury at the time almost depleted. This was expended on an experiment, which has since entailed disaster and disgrace upon the cause, arising entirely from the criminal mismanagement of the leading officials who ordered it. In going to Campo Bello, and then not taking it, he showed cowardice, and stood before the world a traitor to the cause of Ireland.”

O’Mahony was depicted as a noble-hearted man, but one who had been bamboozled by the “St. Louis swindler” and that in consenting to Killian he committed a grave mistake,

⁹⁶ Some were less abusive. “I find even among the Roberts and Sweeny men no railing against O’Mahony or Killian...they imagine a raid into Canada a necessary affair and are very eager for it.” L. Reynolds to Denis Downing, 28 March 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁹⁷ Official Report of the Investigating Committee of the Department of Manhattan, Fenian Brotherhood, 15.

but no crime.⁹⁸ The final conclusions of the committee, however, were harsh.

“After a careful examination of the affairs of the Brotherhood, your committee finds in almost every instance the cause of Ireland made subservient to individual gain. There was no unanimity among the leaders on any point in which the interests of Ireland were concerned— but the sole aim of each and all being to have the disbursement of the Fenian funds. Never in the history of the Irish people did they repose so much confidence in their leaders; never before were they so basely deceived and treacherously dealt with... men who were lauded as patriots sought every opportunity to plunder the Treasury of the Brotherhood. The Head Centre and Secretary of the Treasury were working harmoniously to relieve the Brotherhood of their finances... Since the inauguration of the New Constitution, there has been a continuous attempt to prevent the sending of money to Ireland. ... These paid patriots and professional martyrs, not satisfied with depleting our Treasury, connived at posting the English authorities in advance of our movements...the general administration of affairs has been conducted in a most reckless and criminal manner...nearly all— if not all— the frauds perpetrated on the Brotherhood by the various officials at Headquarters were indirectly, if not directly, the result of the incapacity, imbecility, and total unfitness of the Head Centre for the responsible and honorable position to which the respect and confidence had exalted him... to his integrity the Brotherhood entrusted the cause of Ireland’s redemption; he has proved recreant to that trust, and to the Brotherhood he is responsible ...The committee cannot express too strongly their condemnation and indignation at the flagrant treachery and dishonesty by members of the Central Council, who perverted the trusts reposed in them, and the almost unlimited power given them, to the gratification of their own base and selfish ambition and vanity... The present lamentable condition of the Fenian Brotherhood compels every man to exert himself to the utmost of his ability in wiping away the odium and disgrace attached to the Irish name through the treachery, malfeasance, and imbecility of those to whose custody we have hitherto entrusted the wealth and hopes of the Irish race...Your committee finds that from what they have seen and heard, that the only salvation for the Brotherhood in the future is the speedy and perpetual removal from all positions of trust and honor of all parties who have been connected with the management— or mismanagement— and control of affairs at the Moffatt mansion.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸ “Since Adrian IV, Pope of Rome, issued his Royal Bull, handing over Ireland without any form of law to his countrymen...no such crime against Ireland and Liberty has been perpetrated as that of Campo Bello. Read an account of the tricks of Doran Killian and those of John O’Mahony and ponder if two more brazen wretches can cumber the Earth.” *The Irish Republic* 1 June 1867.

⁹⁹ Killian was accused of having grown fat on the funds of the Fenian Brotherhood, becoming a leech on the Treasury. Killian had “placed, not used” a cousin on the Moffatt staff, even ordering his wages increased from \$10 to \$12 weekly, though his services were “unnecessary.” Killian reportedly confided in one associate “the Fenian Brotherhood is not doing much anyway, so the least it could do was help a poor man’s family.” Official Report of the Investigating Committee of the Department of Manhattan, Fenian Brotherhood, 43.

The investigating committee recommended

“That all the effects of the Fenian Brotherhood available at present be turned into cash and be placed in the bank... that each district be authorized to elect five trustees to receive from each circle their respective dues, donations, etc and deposit the same in bank. That no trustee or other officer shall receive any salary or emolument for services to the cause of Ireland... that no district shall elect to any position of trust or honor any man who in the past has proven faithless to the cause of Ireland, or who has heretofore been a paid officer under the Moffat Mansion regime. In conclusion we would state that Ireland’s redemption can be obtained only by unity perseverance, and action.”

Roberts, at least, saw cause for optimism.

“The great incubus which checked the vital action of the organization has been removed... There is a vitality in our cause which cannot die; it will live as long as an Irish heart remains to cherish the holy love of country, and a tyrannic power exists on Irish soil to call it forth. Let our resolve, therefore, be as tenacious as our patriotism is undoubted. Be firm, brave, dauntless and determined; a resolute will can accomplish wonders, and there are few obstacles which brave arms, when well directed, cannot strike down.”¹⁰⁰

The Eastport fiasco also served to lull British, Canadian, and American authorities into a false sense of security and complacency.¹⁰¹ The *London Times* expressed this view when it wrote: “The Fenian Conspiracy has been rendered harmless for the present by the proved imbecility or roguery of some of the ringleaders...who are eating green turtle and drinking Madeira at the expense of stupid servant girls and waiters of New York and other cities.”¹⁰² The *New York Times* playfully answered rumors of another expedition by

¹⁰⁰ Reply of W.R. Roberts, President, Fenian Brotherhood, 29.

¹⁰¹ Evidence of this complacency can be found in comments made by one Canadian authority who stated: “I cannot conceive that Sweeny will attempt any demonstration upon Canada now. I think that he row between Stephens and he puts an end to the whole affair. Fenianism may be considered as virtually dead.” Gilbert McMicken to John Macdonald, 17 May 1866, D’Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, 157-158. McMicken was a stipendiary magistrate appointed to head a special Canadian intelligence force, formed to keep the government abreast of Fenian activities. The *New York World* of 2 June 1866 reported: “The abortive movement of the Fenians against New Brunswick had so covered their order with derision, that it was deemed safe to dismiss the Canadian volunteers to their homes, and it will require some time to recall them.”

¹⁰² The *London Times* 22 May 1866.

commenting: “whispers of contemplated movements are rife but nothing tangible can be got at. Another Quixotic expedition under General Sweeny is said to be in the course of preparation, but whether the objective point be Campobello or the Fejee islands is not disclosed.”¹⁰³

In an effort to save the floundering movement, James Stephens sailed for New York on 26 April 1866.¹⁰⁴ Fearing the impact he would have on his counterparts in this country, the *New York Times* warned: “There need be no apprehensions that the Fenian leader [Stephens]...will disturb the peace of this country, or embroil us in a foreign war after he gets here.”¹⁰⁵ One week later, that same journal mocked the organization, trumpeting “There are a million Fenians and they will...hold a convention! Every man that sucked an Irish mother to be a rebel against British tyranny!”¹⁰⁶ Early in May, *The Times* sardonically reported that Stephens was wasting his time:

“We rather think that when Head Centre Stephens arrives here from Ireland he will find Fenianism dead and altogether beyond recognition. Not only does it

¹⁰³ *New York Times* 19 May 1866. The *Cleveland Leader* of 28 May 1866 interpreted the Eastport raid as a carefully constructed screen for some deeper swindle “just as a storehouse is sometimes burned to cover fraud.”

¹⁰⁴ Following his escape in November 1865, Stephens had taken up residence in Paris. It was his intention to effect a reunion of the two wings, stating: “I desire to bring unity in the Brotherhood, and will put no obstacle in the way to bring such a state of affairs about. I know no such thing as deceit and difficulties must go down before me...every Irishman who stands in our way will go down. If I regret anything it is not to have nobler adversaries. But noble or ignoble, able or incapable, I pledge my word that every Irishman who stands in our way shall go down.” Stephens to ‘My Dear Friend’ 26 April 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Stephens claimed to arrange for his own capture, so as to prove the ease with which he could escape. Upon hearing of Stephens plans to visit America, Mitchel penned O’Mahony, saying: “In God’s name, under no consideration permit him to obtain control of, or rule, the Fenian organization in America.” Mitchel to O’Mahony, March 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Stephens was less confident than his letters showed. In an interview conducted by a Mr. Davis, Stephens acknowledged “after that mad and inglorious fiasco (Campo Bello) it was impossible for me— it would have been impossible for an archangel— to do anything with the Irish in America for the Irish in Ireland.” Fenian Brotherhood Records.

¹⁰⁵ *New York Times* 11 April 1866.

¹⁰⁶ *New York Times* 18 April 1866.

exhibit no signs of life, but its renewed vitality would be against the established nature of things, and the fixed laws of humbug. In ten or twenty years Irish discontent may again organize itself, but it may be considered settled that it will not be in the form of Fenianism. Had Stephens come here a couple of months since, he would have had a very high time; but with that doleful fizzle in Ireland, and the ridiculous fizzle here, the mercenary motives of the leaders and the irremediable deficiencies of money, the fights of the factions against each other and their harmlessness towards the common enemy, all that the Head-Centre will find himself invited to will be the baked meats of the funeral.”¹⁰⁷

Later, the same paper asked:

“It may be well enough for the great body of those concerned— the Irish laborers and maid-servants of the country, to reflect upon the curious fact that the principal object of this visit of Mr. Stephens is to raise more money. Would it not be well for them to inquire, as a preliminary step, what has been done with the enormous sums already raised? Thousands and tens of thousands of this class of our industrious fellow-citizens surrendered a large share of their slender earnings, and what has it accomplished? New hats and patent leather boots are the only visible results of the Fenian movement up to date.”¹⁰⁸

Ten days later, commenting on the moribund condition of the organization, the *Times* speculated that since Stephens “could not be a conqueror, he would become a martyr.”¹⁰⁹

Stephens was not deterred. Decrying the split as well as the Campo Bello invasion, Stephens was irate with O’Mahony: “You not only gave proof of weakness, but committed a crime less excusable in you than in any other man; for you should have known that your project would have resulted in our ruin.”¹¹⁰ The *Philadelphia Inquirer* carried an open letter from Stephens to O’Mahony in which the former claimed: “No man worth the name questions your honor and devotion to Ireland; but the united action

¹⁰⁷ *New York Times* 4 May 1866.

¹⁰⁸ *New York Times* 15 May 1866.

¹⁰⁹ *New York Times* 25 May 1866.

¹¹⁰ *Irish People* 19 May 1866.

we desire so much would be impossible while you directed activities here.”¹¹¹ Taking the reins of the O’Mahony wing in his own hands, Stephens reaffirmed his pledge of war in Ireland and nowhere else, and reiterated that an Irish army would take the field before the year was out.¹¹² While the Campo Bello venture had perturbed Stephens, it also made the Senate wing hasten to action; many feared that unless some definitive blow was struck soon, the entire Irish nationalist movement would be crushed by association with the O’Mahony fizzle. A special session of the Roberts wing met in New York City on 9 April and called for action. Though he disagreed with the timing, Sweeny assented, and plans to put an Irish Republican Army in the field were made for later that summer.¹¹³ The obligatory calls for financial contributions resulted in substantial requisitions.¹¹⁴ The haste with which the plans were made meant that Sweeny’s original proposal— calling for a winter invasion of Canada, a full complement of artillery, and a minimum war chest

¹¹¹ *Philadelphia Inquirer* 12 May 1866.

¹¹² *New York Herald* 13 May 1866. At a mass meeting in Jones Wood on 15 May, Stephens called for union, imploring Roberts to follow O’Mahony’s lead and resign his position. Fewer than 2000 supporters paid the fifty-cent admission fee to listen to Stephens harangue. *New York Tribune* 16 May 1866. After Stephens became the acknowledged leader of the O’Mahony wing, Mitchel “declined any longer even to be the medium of transmitting money to Ireland” and returned to his Richmond, Virginia home.

¹¹³ *The Irish American* 14 April 1866. Sweeny felt that the movement was premature, but was convinced “unless he took the field at once, the dissolution of the Brotherhood was inevitable... I preferred the chance of an honorable failure to the disintegration of the organization which would have entailed on this section of the Fenian Brotherhood the odious reputation which has attached itself to the O’Mahony officials. In my opinion, the real reputation of the Fenian Brotherhood in America can be revived only by striking a blow and making a fight. I know of no man who could be placed at the head of the Brotherhood in America who can revive us unless there is a fight” His requirements were that he be furnished with a force of 10,000 and three batteries of artillery. Furthermore, the men and material would need to cross “during the season when lakes and rivers are bridged with ice” or else the required force would have to be doubled. T.W. Sweeny papers.

¹¹⁴ “Do not stand idly by while England fills her jails with patriots...come forward to fight the common foe in the only war in which military aid can reach them. Not a moment is to be lost.” *Cincinnati Enquirer* 3 March 1866. *The Nation* of 15 March 1866 questioned the ability of cooks and washerwomen to support an army, adding that “this swindle is probably the greatest in our history, and Irishmen of influence and common sense ought to expose it for the sake of the poor.” *The Nation* 2, 322.

of \$450,000— had to be shelved. Negotiations to purchase artillery at a government arsenal fell through (Sweeny hoped that the necessary weapons could be captured from the enemy, “by the gallantry of my soldiers”), and by 10 May— when orders were given to begin preparations for the attack— only \$100,000 had been raised.¹¹⁵ The following day, Sweeny delivered an impassioned “Plea to his Fellow Countrymen”:

“ I will shortly take the field to try Irish prowess once again against the hereditary enemy of our Country. My army, though not as strong as I could wish, is nevertheless well disciplined, patriotic, and eager for the contest. The unhappy and ridiculous fiasco at Eastport, which has bought the blemish of shame and indignation to the face of every Irishman and woman, needs to be wiped out by some gallant deed, which will enable us to lift our heads and look our fellow citizens in the face. I now call on you, my countrymen, and invite you in the name of the dear old land to shoulder your musket and fall into the ranks of my battalions. Remain deaf to this call and I march without you for thank heaven I am prepared to show to the world that Irishmen are not the contemptible braggarts and hollow boosters which recent events may lead our fellow citizens to suppose.”¹¹⁶

About the only result of this plea was the formation of a female auxiliary, “obtained through the patriotism and cooperation of our lady friends, who pledged their active energies to forward the noble cause.”¹¹⁷

Despite these shortcomings, the Senate wing pushed ahead with plans for a complicated three-pronged attack to commence 1 June. Sweeny’s plan called for the left wing of the Irish Republican Army to proceed from Chicago to Milwaukee, and then via

¹¹⁵ T.W. Sweeny papers. Of this sum, each Senator contributed \$5000, with Roberts submitting twice that amount. *New York Herald* 28 April 1866. Sweeny’s hopes of noninterference by Canadian residents— he was convinced that “with the single exception of Quebec the whole of the British provinces will fall in a single campaign” — were supported by Bill McNamee of Montreal, who wrote “A grander and more auspicious opportunity never presented itself to Ireland than the present...what a disgrace it will be if we are forced to abandon it. 10,000 regular troops (whom he characterized as ‘feather-bed soldiers’) spread all over Canada is poor defense...there will be no Irish Catholics to oppose you...nine-tenths of our people here know nothing of the use of firearms; in fact very few know anything of drill.” McNamee to Sweeny, 24 and 26 March 1866. T.W. Sweeny papers. A letter of 9 May 1866 told of the formation of a circle of 150 men in Quebec. Richard Slattery to Sweeny, T.W. Sweeny papers.

¹¹⁶ 11 May 1866, T.W. Sweeny papers.

¹¹⁷ *The Irish American* 12 May 1866.

Lakes Michigan and Huron to Stratford, Ontario. It would then rendezvous with a contingent from Detroit and capture London, Ontario. A second group of Fenians would cross from Cleveland and attempt to take Guelph and Ontario. A larger contingent from St. Albans, Vermont would target the Grand Trunk Railroad and threaten Montreal. Unfortunately for the Fenians, logistical and institutional logjams hampered the plan; officials for several northern railroads refused to transport the Fenians to their destination; likewise, no vessels could be chartered to ferry the men across the lakes. Most of the promised men never made it to the Canadian border, and many of those who did were unable to procure any weapons or accoutrements.¹¹⁸

The best that the Fenians could manage was to cross the Niagara River from Buffalo with 800 men on the night of 31 May, occupying the village of Fort Erie. This did not stop *The Irish American* from gleefully and triumphally proclaiming victory.¹¹⁹ The invaders delivered the following proclamation, "To the People of British America":

"We come among you as the foes of British rule in Ireland. We have taken up the sword to strike down the oppressors rod, to deliver Ireland from the tyrant, the despoiler, the robber...we have no issue with the people of these Provinces, and wish to have none but the most friendly relations. Our weapons are for the oppressors of Ireland. Our bows shall be directed only against the power of England...We do not propose to divest you of a solitary right you now enjoy...we are here neither as murderers, nor robbers, for plunder and spoliation. We are here as the Irish army of liberation; the friends of liberty against despotism, of democracy against aristocracy, of the people against their oppressors, of the ballot against the privilege of class...Our war is with the armed power of England, and not with the people, not with these provinces...To Irishmen throughout these

¹¹⁸ "Of the 600 men promised by the state of Vermont only 80 reported; the 1200 promised by Massachusetts shrunk to 30." John O'Neill, Official Report of the Attempt to Invade Canada, May 25 1870. Also a Report of the Battle of Ridgeway, Canada West, Fought June 2 1866 (New York: J.J. Foster, 1870), 39-40. When Sweeny traveled to St. Albans on 4 June only 1000 of the expected 16,800 Fenians had shown up.

¹¹⁹ "The British troops defeated by the Fenians...great excitement among the Irish population...large contributions of money and supplies...men still thronging to the frontier." *The Irish American* 4 and 8 June 1866.

Provinces we appeal in the name of seven centuries of British iniquity and Irish misery and suffering...to stretch forth the hand of brotherhood in the holy cause of fatherland, and smite the tyrant where we can."¹²⁰

On 2 June the Fenians successfully defended their position against an onslaught from Canadian militiamen, but the imminent arrival of British regulars threatened the entrenchment.¹²¹ John O'Neill, commanding officer of the Irish Republican Army, called for reinforcements from Buffalo, but with the *USS Michigan* now patrolling the waters, it was a futile request.¹²² Running low on supplies, O'Neill decided to retreat to safety across the American border; he and approximately 700 of his men were apprehended by the *Michigan* and held for several days, pending further instructions from Washington.¹²³

The response of American authorities to the events along the northern frontier was

¹²⁰ *Brooklyn Daily Union* 4 June 1866. The paper termed the speech "more temperate than the average Fenian utterance."

¹²¹ The Canadian volunteers— many of whom came from the University of Toronto— suffered twelve killed and forty wounded, the Fenians eight and fifteen. Sixty others were captured during the retreat. O'Neill, *Official Report*, 42. For a list of those captured, see *The Irish American* 16 June 1866. For a detailed look at the military engagement, see: P.G. Smith, "Fenian Invasions of Canada," *Military History* (February 2000): 50-56.

¹²² Interestingly, one of the mates on board the vessel, William E. Leonard, had been in correspondence with Sweeny. On 16 February 1866 he had written to tell the General that a circle of seventeen men had been formed on board, and that they had sent \$100 to New York via Patrick O'Day of Buffalo. On 19 April, Leonard sent a letter with a map of Lake Erie, and with information concerning the Welland Canal and troop movements in Canada. T.W. Sweeny papers. The Fenians suspected the *Michigan* would be employed against them, as evidenced in a letter from Senator A.L. Morrison to T.W. Sweeny on 13 May 1866: "The US vessel *Michigan* is now lying in Buffalo harbour; it is said to be watching our movements." On 21 May 1866, commenting on the presence of the *Michigan*, Morrison wrote to C.C. Tevis "Don't you seriously think that the dog's dead? I candidly confess that I cannot see much chance at all for a successful movement now." T.W. Sweeny papers.

¹²³ O'Neill enlisted as a Sergeant in the 1st US Regular Cavalry rising to 1st Lieutenant. He resigned and joined the Indiana 5th Cavalry as a 2nd Lieutenant. He later rejoined the 11th US Regular Cavalry as a Captain. Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, he resigned in November of 1864. A reporter for the *New York Times* wrote "Shortly after my arrival in this city the gunboat *Michigan*, under command of Captain Bryson arrived having in charge two tugboats, on board of which were about four hundred Fenians, who had surrendered to the *Michigan* after entering American waters." 4 June 1866. *The Irish American* of 9 June reported that the vessel was "said to be commanded by an Englishman," adding "nothing is more calculated to inspire, both in Celtic and American breast, so much hostility to the administration as this policy of toadying to the British lion." In an article titled "The Fenian Folly", the *New York Times* of 4 June carried a list of those Fenians killed, wounded, or captured by Canadian authorities.

swift and unambiguous. Despite Fenian claims to the contrary, the policy enacted by federal authorities represented not a perfidious betrayal of their plan, but the steady application of a policy enacted in the preceding weeks and months.

Reports of the invasion were widely disseminated, and many Fenians who had stayed behind now rushed to the battlefield.¹²⁴ Roberts, imploring his followers to “pay no attention to what may seem defeats,” proclaimed:

“Brothers— Arise! The green flag has waved in triumph over England’s hated emblem. Onward is the order...let Ireland and victory be the watchwords...if you discharge your duty to your native land our triumph is certain. God and justice are on our side. Have iron wills and brave hearts, and Ireland will once more be great glorious and free!”¹²⁵

A week later Roberts declared:

“Arise my countrymen and nerve yourselves for the struggle so nobly commenced. The cheers which arose from the Irish soldiers at Limestone Ridge, as the English foe went fleeing before their advancing steel, found a responsive echo in every Irish heart, and made us one in love, purpose, and resolve. Stand firm by the cause. Be not dismayed by obstacles. You must surmount them, and you will. Let cowardice and ignorance desert and denounce you. The true men are still a legion, and the struggle must not be abandoned. There is no turning back for us, my countrymen; our movement must, and shall advance. Retrogression would entail eternal infamy and bring a deeper stain of slavery upon your country and race...cast aside every consideration that would darken the dawning hopes of your enslaved countrymen. Be true to liberty, your country, and your God, and your native land, instead of being a house of slavery, will be a garden of freedom.”¹²⁶

One paper reported that the actions of the United States government “do not

¹²⁴ “The Fenians have drawn first blood and have shown that they will strike the Saxon where they can most conveniently find him.” *New York Herald* 3 June 1866. The *New York Commercial Advertiser* of 5 June 1866 reported that some Fenian prisoners had been summarily shot, and that vengeful Canadians had scalped others. *The Brooklyn Daily Union* of that same day reported that Fenian stragglers had been shot by British volunteers. The *New York Herald* of 5 June carried corroborating accounts: “Fenian prisoners being tried by court-martial...one shot yesterday, and another to be shot today.”

¹²⁵ *New York Herald* 5 June 1866.

¹²⁶ To the Fenian Brotherhood and Irishmen in America, 12 June 1866, Gallagher papers.

appear to have checked the ardor of the Fenians, who cheerfully enlist, without bounty or pay.”¹²⁷ A recruitment station was established at Tammany Hall, and companies of Brooklyn Fenians were seen parading through the streets of Williamsburg.¹²⁸ Hundreds converged on St. Albans and similar towns along the frontier, but quick action by American authorities prevented any recurrence of the events of 1 June.¹²⁹ On 4 June General Meade arrived in Ogdensburg, New York and began to seize arms and round up the Fenian leaders. Informing the state authorities to call out the militia so as to prevent hostile expeditions from leaving the United States, Meade was authorized to “use the force at your command to preserve neutrality by preventing the crossing of armed bodies, by cutting off reinforcements, and taking all measures, precautionary and otherwise, to prevent violation of law.”¹³⁰ Two days later, Johnson issued a neutrality proclamation forbidding further hostile movements by the Fenians and instructing government officials to “arrest all prominent, leading, or conspicuous persons called Fenians who you may

¹²⁷ *New York Evening Post* 6 June 1866. The *Brooklyn Daily Union* of 2 June 1866 reported a large group of Fenians had departed from Williamsburgh for the seat of war; they returned several hours later, having missed the train.

¹²⁸ A delegation of African American soldiers offered their services to fight for Irish liberty in the Fenian army. The chairman of the delegates stated that a detachment was ready to proceed to Canada, and that, in fighting for Celtic independence, they would be able to avenge the outrages their people recently suffered from the British authorities in Jamaica. Roberts thanked them cordially for their kind offer, but informed them that they were too good to fight against the British. *New York Herald* 5 June 1866. An unnamed correspondent had earlier suggested such an alliance. “Cultivate the friendship of the men you have liberated, and they may do the same. If they are rude and unfriendly to the cause it is not their fault, but the fault of those events that have kept them in such ignorance.” T.W. Sweeny papers. This was not the only time that black soldiers offered aid to the Fenians. On 3 September 1867, William Cleary, MD, wrote from New Orleans to report “5000 colored men of this city had offered to fight for Irish freedom.” He was informed “The Fenian Brotherhood will accept the services of every man who truly loves liberty and is willing to fight for Ireland, without distinction of race, color, or nationality.” Sixth National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood, 14.

¹²⁹ On 7 June a small force of Fenians under Samuel Spear crossed from St. Albans and captured a British flag; no casualties were reported on either side. Canadian officials apprehended over forty Fenians before they could return to the sanctuary of American soil.

¹³⁰ *New York Tribune* 4 June 1866.

have probable cause to believe have been or may be guilty of violations of the neutrality laws of the United States.”¹³¹ Johnson declared:

“Whereas certain evil-disposed persons have, within the territory of the United States, provided and are still engaged in providing a means for a military expedition against the colony of British North America...I, Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, warn all good citizens of the United States against aiding said unlawful proceedings; and I exhort all officers in the service of the United States to employ all their lawful authority to arrest and bring to justice all persons who may be engaged therein. I do further empower Major-General George Gordon Meade, Commander of the Military Division of the Atlantic, to employ the land and naval forces of the United States and the militia thereof to prevent the expedition and enterprise aforesaid.”¹³²

Following this proclamation, Grant cabled Stanton asking for permission to implement the directive. Receiving a positive response, Grant authorized his subordinates to use “any and all force” to crush the Fenians.¹³³ The following day Roberts was arrested in New York City.¹³⁴ By 10 June Meade reported the expedition at an end, and urged the government to transport the stranded Fenians to their homes.¹³⁵

¹³¹ A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, ed. James D. Richardson, 10 vols., (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 6: 2079.

¹³² *The Nation* of 7 June 1866 surmised that the only thing gained by the proclamation was letting the Fenians know what Andrew Johnson thought, a thing they would have known long ago had he not foolishly released Mitchel. *The Nation* 2, no. 55: 721.

¹³³ Grant to Major General Edward Ord, 7 June 1866, The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, ed. John Y. Simon, 26 vols., (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 16: 219. Grant had cabled Stanton on 5 June asking that orders be issued for the arrest of Sweeny, Roberts, and a few others of the leading Fenians engaged in the present breach of our neutrality laws. “It seems to me that this course is demanded by a proper respect for our laws and our national dignity.” Stanton responded affirmatively: “you are authorized under the neutrality act of 1818 to employ the land and naval forces to break up the expedition against Canada and are directed to arrest and prosecute Sweeny, Roberts, and all engaged with them. This operates substantially as martial law.” *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Fearing an attempted rescue by the Fenians, municipal authorities paroled Roberts the same day. He was quickly rearrested on the advice of Attorney General Speed, although proceedings were dropped on 15 June. *The Irish American* of 21 July 1866 editorialized that there was no way Roberts would be convicted in the charged political atmosphere surrounding Reconstruction.

¹³⁵ Meade estimated that there were 7000 Fenians on the border, with the largest concentrations at Malone, NY (2200), Buffalo (2000), and St. Albans, Vermont (1200). They were paroled after promising to respect the neutrality proclamation and to return directly to their homes. Meade suggested that the government pay the fare of the stranded Fenians, as the railroad would no doubt carry them at reduced rates

Hopeful that the government would reconsider its stance, Fenian Senator Michael Scanlon of Chicago urged his followers to remain close to the scene of action: "Congress will in a few days repeal the neutrality laws or extend to us belligerent rights. Let no Fenian disgrace himself by accepting ignominious terms attached to proffers of governmental transportation."¹³⁶ *The Irish American* mirrored the call, proclaiming: "Ireland must and shall be free! The hour has come!"¹³⁷ But Scanlon's plea fell on deaf ears; by 15 June the border, if not the Fenian leadership, was quiet.

The Fenians were disheartened by the activities of the government, and argued that it was only through the treachery of the administration that they had failed. Sweeny was unrepentant. "Were it not for the interference of the American Government officials no power which England could bring to bear could have impeded the triumphant advance of our brave boys."¹³⁸ Echoed *The Irish American*: "If the attempts of the Fenians to gain a foothold in Canada have been temporarily postponed, thanks are due less to the conduct of the British troops than to the treacherous attitude taken by our Secretary of State."¹³⁹

so as to be rid of them. George Gordon Meade, Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Major-General, United States Army 2 vols., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 2: 288. Mayor Hoffman and Boss Tweed of New York City paid for the transport of many of these stragglers. *The Brooklyn Daily Union* of 9 June 1866 reported: "The United States government has flanked Sweeny by offering free transportation to the demoralized Fenians—a movement which will be more effective than regulars to stop the 'invasion'."

¹³⁶ *Cincinnati Enquirer* 15 June 1866. Roberts, meanwhile, had urged his followers: "In view of the unexpected and repressive measures of the United States Executive at Washington, to crush the cooperative movement for the liberation of Ireland, to return to their respective homes until such time as a fresh campaign can be inaugurated. Although the campaign just closed has not carried the banner of your native land to the capital of the British Provinces in North America, it has demonstrated to mankind that you had the bravery, patriotism, and skill to accomplish it. You have proved yourselves good citizens and brave soldiers." To the Officers and Soldiers of the Irish Republican Army, 13 June 1866, Gallagher papers. O'Mahony referred to Scanlon as "the evil genius of the Fenian movement." To the Senate and House of Delegates, 14.

¹³⁷ *The Irish American* 9 June 1866.

¹³⁸ *New York Tribune* 6 July 1866.

¹³⁹ *Irish American* 23 June 1866.

The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* carried the following report:

“There is great excitement and trepidation in some, hesitation in others, and considerable indignation moving in the biggest part of the Fenian Brotherhood, and their sympathizers, at the recent action of the government. The thinking portion, while feeling that the action was necessary, still think that the President could have observed the forms of neutrality sufficiently to save the credit of the government without resorting to matters so sudden and so fatal to the movement after allowing it to go on so far. On the other hand, the rank and file, those accustomed to act rather than think, are absolutely indignant at the interference of the government and wherever they meet, take no pains to conceal their sentiment that after fighting for four years for this government, they should be given a chance now to fight for one of their own.”¹⁴⁰

The Irish American concurred, blaming the fiasco on the administration, and chastising American politicians:

“The Fenian organization has been in existence in this country for a number of years. It was no secret combination; its aims and objects were fully avowed. It received the direct encouragement of officials of high standing in the civil and military service of the country, and was aided and assisted by the direct interposition and connivance of the government. Large quantities of arms and all kinds of ammunition and supplies were sold, below cost price, by the United States and its officers, to the Fenian leaders with the full knowledge on the part of the government that such arms and munitions were to be used against England. It was held *in terrorem* as a last striking argument against England’s meddling in our domestic war. If the President’s proclamation were to be issued at all, why was it not issued in time, before a single drop of blood were shed or a single life imperiled? It was, we suspect, because of the peculiar statecraft of Mr. Seward, who was using the Fenians in the claim negotiations with England and who held back his hand until he should play his last trick.”¹⁴¹

Both Roberts and Sweeny were vehement and vocal in their protests. Wrote the Fenian Secretary of War:

“Our muskets were purchased at government arsenals. In selling these stores to my agents, the government was perfectly aware of the purpose for which they were intended, and their willingness in allowing these sales to be made, together with the sympathy expressed by individuals in Washington, caused me to be

¹⁴⁰ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 8 June 1866. The same paper quoted one Fenian as stating, “William Seward and other prominent men at Washington were said to have belonged to the order.”

¹⁴¹ *The Irish American* 16 June 1866.

totally unprepared for the treacherous seizure of our arms and ammunition which rendered a successful movement into Canada hopeless.”¹⁴²

The Fenians vowed to continue their activity and to remember this treachery at the next election. As Roberts fumed: “If the present men in office— Billy Seward and the rest— acted in antagonism to the Fenians, we would not forget it the next time we went to the polls. And the First has made every Fenian a Republican!”¹⁴³

This sentiment was seconded in an editorial in *The Irish American*:

“Look out, then, Messieurs Politicians, at Washington and elsewhere— you who laugh at the ‘defeat of the Fenians’— as you deem it— and champion the policy of England’s minions; the day of reckoning is coming, and we know your worth...you shall see that we do not forget you or your deeds. Be assured that we will remember how each of you has acted on this neutrality question.”¹⁴⁴

The Fenians calmly assured their followers that they would press the fight at a more auspicious moment. “We are not one particle dismayed,” wrote Roberts, “we are more determined than ever... our organization will be much more determined in character than the old one. We are going to keep within the bounds of the American law, and make such preparations that when we do move it will be like the lightning flash.”¹⁴⁵ The encouraging words obviously had an effect, as another observer commented: “notwithstanding the failure of the first Canadian campaign, there are many who are yet sanguine of ultimate success. Drilling is still going forward at several places, and recruits

¹⁴² 6500 arms had been issued from and stored in Philadelphia, with an additional 2000 in New York City. See letter from Fenian Major of Ordnance William O’Reilly to T.W. Sweeny, 3 May 1866, T.W. Sweeny papers.

¹⁴³ *Brooklyn Daily Union* 6 June 1866. Roberts chided those who saw only the fractious nature of the Fenians: “It had been said that the Irish would fight among themselves. Had not the Americans just finished cutting each other’s throats?”

¹⁴⁴ *The Irish American* 30 June 1866.

¹⁴⁵ *New York Times* 4 July 1866.

are daily arriving.”¹⁴⁶

Astute politicians recognized the implications of the Fenian raids. With the impending Congressional elections, demagogues of all stripes expressed sympathy for the Brotherhood’s ideals. As early as 4 June, Representative Reader Clarke of Ohio proposed an extension of belligerent rights to the Fenians; although the motion was tabled— it would be defeated in the House on 2 July— it was merely the first of many such resolutions.¹⁴⁷ One week later, Representative Sydenham Ancona of Pennsylvania proposed repealing the neutrality proclamation under which the Brotherhood had been prosecuted. Representative Robert Schenck of Ohio amended this resolution with a rider that wedded Clarke’s and Ancona’s respective statements.¹⁴⁸ On 18 June, Senator Henry Wilson of Pennsylvania introduced Roberts, fresh from his stay in jail, to the United States Senate, “in order that he might have an understanding with some officials in high places on their promises versus their late action.”¹⁴⁹ Later that evening, Speaker of the House Schuyler Colfax accompanied Roberts to dinner; it seemed everybody was lining up to fete the Fenians, who were promising their votes to those who proved themselves most worthy.¹⁵⁰ That same day, an imposing funeral was held in New York City for

¹⁴⁶ *New York Times* 23 June 1866.

¹⁴⁷ Commented the *London Times* of 28 June 1866: “The Radicals are making most strenuous exertions to use the Fenians against the President. He is now abused almost as heartily for his vindication of neutrality as for his friendship towards the South.” The same paper noted that the Fenian leaders were not above playing the political game, and that William Roberts was making every possible effort to convert the Fenian business into a political lever against the administration, procuring Radicals as speakers for his mass meetings and getting resolutions of sympathy for Fenianism passed by the ruling Congressional faction. This could lead to renewed cause for trouble with Great Britain” *London Times* 3 July 1866.

¹⁴⁸ *House Journal*, 39th Cong, 1st sess., 790, 816-819.

¹⁴⁹ *New York Tribune* 23 June 1866.

¹⁵⁰ *New York Times* 4 July 1866. In August, Roberts remarked that “Irishmen ought to be strangled” if they voted to support the administration. *New York Tribune* 18 August 1866. Similarly, *New*

Eugene Corcoran, a nineteen-year old Fenian killed in the raid.¹⁵¹

The summer campaign was marked by mass meetings and public protests, many of which included elaborate re-enactments of the battle of Ridgeway.¹⁵² On 28 July, the Fenians held a rally on Washington and passed a severe resolution attacking the administration.¹⁵³ Representative Nathaniel Banks of Massachusetts, who had issued a pair of resolutions urging the repeal of the neutrality laws, was singled out for special recognition.¹⁵⁴ On 15 August, at a Fenian picnic attended by more than 10,000 near Chicago, Colfax joined Governor Richard Oglesby in decrying the actions of Johnson and Seward, and in pledging their continued support of the Fenians.¹⁵⁵ On 4 September

York Tribune 20 June, 12 July and 29 August 1866. In an effort to explain why the Irish should support the Republican ticket— which stood for African American rights— the *New York Tribune* explained: “The old Irish burned the colored orphan asylum...chased poor, frightened Negro children through our streets, seeking to kill them because of their color. But the Irish now comprehend that the direct and sure way to win liberty and opportunity for their race is to concede that there are natural, inalienable rights, not of superior races, but of every race.” *New York Tribune* 25 August 1866. On 23 June, that same journal first reported on this perceived “political adultery,” commenting: “even those who have always been ‘Democrats’ are now among the most violent anti-administration men. They say they were foolish to believe that men who have no sympathy for the loyal slave would evince any for the crushed Irish people.”

¹⁵¹ *New York Herald* 18 June 1866. Corcoran’s casket was draped in the green flag of Ireland.

¹⁵² *The Irish American* of 7 July 1866 carried reports of a grand Fenian Demonstration in Union Square, attended by forty thousand, vehemently demanding repeal of the neutrality laws. The flags captured at Ridgeway, Frelighsburg, and Pigeon Hill were displayed as “the lovers of freedom discussed the conduct of our government in its late repressive action towards the Fenians on the border.” Eminent speakers addressed the crowd, taking into consideration “the anti-American policy of the United States government in its late interference with the cause of Irish independence.” *New York Herald* 24 June 1866.

¹⁵³ Of one such meeting, *The New York Times* observed, “nothing Irish was lacking, save whisky and fighting.” *New York Times* 29 October 1866.

¹⁵⁴ At the Fifth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, the following was passed: “in the opinion of this Congress, General N.P. Banks, and others who exerted themselves in behalf of our cause, are eminently entitled to the gratitude of the Irish people, for their eloquent and manly defense of the cause of Ireland in the National Legislature, and for the masterly exposure of the infamous neutrality law.” Proceedings of the Fifth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, at Troy, New York, September 1866; with message of Wm. R. Roberts, President of the Fenian Brotherhood (Philadelphia: James Gibbons, 1866), 17. Among those voting against Banks’ resolution was Henry Raymond, editor of the *New York Times* and Congressional representative from New York City.

¹⁵⁵ *New York Tribune* 16 August 1866. Said Oglesby “Go to the polls with liberty loving people and vote against Andy Johnson. Andy Johnson fooled you and he fooled us, but he won’t fool us again.”

the Roberts wing held a general convention in Troy, New York, attended by 150 delegates. Resolutions thanking O'Neill and his men for "gallantly upholding the honor of our flag and vindicating the traditional heroism of our race" were passed unanimously, and overtures were made to General Phillip Sheridan, hoping to secure his services as Secretary of War.¹⁵⁶ Roberts was unanimously re-elected President, and claimed the support of some 620 circles; the treasury supposedly contained over \$125,000 and several hundred dollars worth of ammunition.¹⁵⁷ A special assessment of ten dollars per Fenian was passed, with half that amount required of each member by 25 January 1867.¹⁵⁸ The organization kept up its assault on the administration for its perceived disingenuous conduct during the June raids. Asserting that the movement "had been conducted according to American theories of republican government," the organization exclaimed:

"I trust that you will give expression to the just indignation you, in common with every adopted citizen of this Republic, must feel at the pusillanimous and un-American conduct of the United States executive towards adopted citizens abroad...men who shed their blood to maintain the honor, power, and unity of this Republic are left to pine in English dungeons, at the caprice of a despotism whose

Another speaker maintained that the President "encouraged poor servant girls and day laborers to give half their earnings to buy arms and equipment and to put troops into the field only that he might confiscate those arms and equipment and imprison these patriots." *Chicago Tribune* 16 August 1866. Added Colfax: "I was humiliated when our forces were sent to act as detectives on the part of the Canadians." Speeches of Hon. Schuyler Colfax and General J. O'Neill, Delivered at the Great Fenian Pic Nic, Chicago, August 15, 1866 (n.p., n.d.).

¹⁵⁶ Sweeny was not reappointed when it came out that he supported the administration and objected to having the Brotherhood used for political purposes. *New York Tribune* 10 September 1866. *The Irish People* of 29 September 1866 claimed that Roberts got rid of Sweeny because the latter opposed throwing the entire Fenian vote to the Republican Party. When Sheridan could not be coerced, Samuel Spear was elevated to the position. Sweeny had suggested Sheridan as his successor months earlier, offering to serve as second in command should the offer be accepted. *Cincinnati Enquirer* 8 January 1866.

¹⁵⁷ *The Irish American* 15 September 1866. A circular issued on 1 January 1867 stated that the money on hand was slightly more than \$40,000 with some 20,000 men and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of arms and ammunition. These numbers support the thesis that the Fenians represented a formidable expression of Irish nationalism.

¹⁵⁸ To the Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood, n.d., Gallagher papers. It was suggested that circles hold New Year's Eve balls to raise the money for this "special war fund."

authority they gladly renounced, when they swore allegiance to the American Republic...The just and dignified laws which guarantee the rights of the citizen are ignored, while the odious and tyrannic acts, miscalled neutrality laws, are enforced against us, not alone with rigor, but with a spirit that plainly indicated the desire to crush us with ignominy if possible.”¹⁵⁹

Roberts and others hoped to capitalize on the political pandering, and contemplated another raid on Canada, thereby forcing the parties to support or denounce the Brotherhood.¹⁶⁰ Many in the community saw the political maneuvering for what it was. John Mitchel linked the attacks on Fenianism with assaults on the defeated Confederacy: “This electioneering trick is intended to win Irish votes for a party that used Irish bayonets during the war. Now they wish to use Irish ballots to keep the South crushed.”¹⁶¹ Roberts maintained that the Fenian Brotherhood would remain above the political fray:

“The members of the Fenian Brotherhood, no doubt, like the rest of their fellow citizens, have their private opinions in regard to the two great parties which seek for supremacy in American politics; but to assert that, as a body, they cast their influence with either party, is to assert a wicked and malicious falsehood... If there are men in our ranks who hope to use the organization as a stepping-stone to political preferment in America, all I can say is that they will find themselves most woefully disappointed, and, instead of their mounting on the shoulders of the organization, they will find themselves consigned by a unanimous voice of the Brotherhood to lower depths than they ever occupied before... the only government that has, or ever will, use the Brotherhood is the Irish republic!”¹⁶²

At the Fourth National Convention, Roberts disavowed any notion that the Fenians were

¹⁵⁹ Proceedings of the Fifth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, 30-31.

¹⁶⁰ On paper editorialized that the Radical Republicans had promised Roberts “personal and political aggrandizement” if he would get up another demonstration against Canada before the election in order to compel the administration to intervene and thus increase its unpopularity with Irish voters. *New York Herald* 22 August 1866.

¹⁶¹ *New York Tablet* 15 September 1866. The pandering was not limited to American politicians, as the appearance of former Mexican dictator Santa Anna at several Fenian rally attests. *New York Herald* 10 September 1866. Also, *The Irish American* 20 October 1866.

¹⁶² Lecture by W.R. Roberts, 24.

political opportunists.

“This congress in the name of the Fenian Brotherhood, in the most solemn and emphatic manner, disclaims any intention, desire or inclination to use the power of this organization for the purpose of influencing, in any form, party politics in America, such policy being entirely foreign to our aims and repugnant to our patriotism; and those who would attempt to traffic on the sacred impulses of Irish hearts, deserve, and should receive, the scorn and detestation of all true men.”¹⁶³

Echoed James Stephens, “The Fenian Brotherhood recognizes no party and must be used by none.”¹⁶⁴

The administration, no less than the opposition, was aware of the power of the Irish vote, and refused to be upstaged. On 22 June Seward applied to the British for the release of those American citizens who had been imprisoned in Ireland since the suspension of habeas corpus in February, and for leniency in the case of those who had been arrested in Canada. The British eagerly assented, fearing that any sort of harsh punishment would only make martyrs out of those sentenced.¹⁶⁵ The American authorities followed this lead. By 20 August, the administration abandoned proceedings

¹⁶³ Proceedings of the Fourth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, 16.

¹⁶⁴ *Irish People* 4 August 1866. Stephens was to be introduced to the House of Representatives on 20 June by Colfax, but declined the invitation when he learned that the Speaker planned to fete Roberts that evening. The centers of Manhattan, Long Island, and Jersey City, then in convention, sent Stephens a telegram, congratulating him for “having triumphed over traders in the Irish vote.” *National Intelligencer* 21 June 1866.

¹⁶⁵ “Severity will increase rather than diminish Irish animosity against Canada, and produce on this continent that antagonism between the Irish race and British rule from which we suffer in Great Britain.” Sir Frederick Bruce to Lord Clarendon, 18 June 1866, D’Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, 177. Those Fenians imprisoned in Ireland were released on the condition that they return immediately to the United States. Those who refused this offer did so at the cost of removing themselves from US protection. Of the 98 individuals who had been arrested in Ireland since the suspension of Habeas Corpus on 17 February 1866, 38 claimed American citizenship. *The New York Times* of 5 March advocated leaving the men in jail. “Their folly was in abandoning the comforts and happiness of their American homes for the insane project of aiding revolution in Ireland...All the while they will be laboring to embroil this Government with that of Great Britain, to bring about some collision that may make England’s necessity Ireland’s opportunity.”

against those Fenians still held in the United States.¹⁶⁶ Late in the campaign, Johnson ordered the return to the Fenians of all weapons seized in the June raids, as well as the removal from office of the man responsible for their confiscation, William A. Dart, the District Attorney for the Northern District of the State of New York.¹⁶⁷ While the administration was hopeful that such actions would retain for the Democrats the usual Irish vote, even these maneuvers failed to placate the Fenians or save the beleaguered administration as the radicals rolled to an impressive victory on 6 November.¹⁶⁸

The election apparently confirmed many assumptions concerning the political strength of the Fenian Brotherhood. In New York State, Reuben Fenton, the Republican candidate for governor, won by a majority of 13,789; in 1864 he had won by 8,293. The Republicans also won a 20-11 congressional majority in the Empire State, giving them a commanding 42-11 lead in the Senate and 143-49 in the House. One senior Democrat attributed the loss of New York State to the defection of the Irish vote.¹⁶⁹ The *New York*

¹⁶⁶ Wrote one Connecticut supporter to President Johnson: "I do think you ought to do something to soothe the Fenians. How would do to pardon all the Fenian Prisoners? I wish you would. The radicals are making some capital on that point." James Dixon to Andrew Johnson, 8 July 1866, *Papers of Andrew Johnson*, 16 vols., (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 10: 655.

¹⁶⁷ The weapons were released in mid-October, two weeks before New York's polling day. The Fenians had to post a bond for twice their stated value, a sum easily realized by the Senate wing, which posted \$246,000. (Of this sum, the Fenians of Buffalo subscribed \$172,000, with the rest coming from Rochester.) Gallagher papers. Indications seemed to confirm the administration's fears that the Fenians were pulling enough votes from the Democrats to cost them the election. The *London Times* of 27 October, commenting on early returns from New England, stated "The Fenian vote is to a large extent responsible, it having been generally noticed that ardent Fenians who had all their lives been Democrats voted at this election with the Radicals."

¹⁶⁸ As the election neared, the partisan press reminded Irish voters of Johnson's alleged duplicity. In an editorial of 31 October, the *New York Tribune* argued: "We held, and still hold, that the President of the United States was to blame. A weak policy is always wrong at both ends, and bad in the middle; the President has failed to satisfy Irishmen, Canadians, and Americans." A week earlier, the same paper assailed Johnson for his legalistic response, recalling that he had opposed sending relief to Irish famine victims in 1847 on grounds that such aid was unconstitutional. *New York Tribune* 24 October 1866.

¹⁶⁹ "My apprehensions and yours have been realized... we were beaten by the Fenian vote— we had the state by 25,000 if we had our accustomed Irish strength." Sanford Church to Samuel J. Tilden, 10

Herald stated that the Fenian vote defeated John T. Hoffman for governor and elected Fenton on the grounds that the Republican state government, by refusing to interfere with the raids upon Canada, had done more to help the Irish than had ever been done by the Democrats with all their professions of sympathy.¹⁷⁰ Despite the fears of many that the New York Irish would abandon the Democrats, this was not the case. The *Herald* surmised that Fenton received many Fenian votes from workers along the lines of the canals and railroads; the victor must have secured his support from quarters other than Gotham, as he earned only 33,000 votes there to Hoffman's 79,000.¹⁷¹ This situation was repeated in many municipalities, where the Republicans actually lost votes in districts where the Irish vote was pivotal. The *Cleveland Leader*, observing this phenomenon, remarked:

“The result of the fall elections demonstrate two things; first, that the Union party cannot get low enough in the dirt to obtain the Irish vote...In this city a special effort was made to obtain the Fenian vote but the Irish wards of the city gave heavier majorities for the Democrats than before...On the other hand the Union party, with the Irish vote as usual solidly against it, has carried every northern state and retained a two-thirds majority in Congress. If it cannot obtain the Irish vote, it can at least do without it.”¹⁷²

Shortly before the pivotal Congressional elections, the trials of those Fenians still imprisoned in Canada began. Of the one hundred seven captured during the June raids, eighty-five remained in custody. The trials had been delayed so that the highly emotional

November 1866, Samuel J. Tilden papers, NYPL. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* of 17 October 1866 suggested that “a large number of those lately naturalized would vote Democratic and thus offset the Fenian renegades who had gone over to the Radicals.”

¹⁷⁰ *New York Herald* 17 July 1866. Hoffman confirmed these suspicions. In a 7 November 1866 letter to Samuel Tilden, he wrote: “It looks as if the Radicals have succeeded in capturing by their false statements a large number of Fenian voters and that accounts for our losses.” Tilden papers, NYPL.

¹⁷¹ *New York Herald* 9 November 1866.

¹⁷² *Cleveland Leader* 9 November 1866.

atmosphere that had attended the June raids would dissipate. Even the *New York Times*, which on 4 June had hoped that “every ruffian who crossed the frontier might be hanged,” had softened its stance, claiming by 23 June that a “sanguinary policy in dealing with the Fenian prisoners will work a fatal change in the popular mind. It will furnish a provocation for renewing the conflict, and with a united determination on the part of their countrymen to avenge their execution.”¹⁷³ On 26 October Robert Lynch, who claimed to be a reporter for the *Louisville Courier*, and John McMahon, a Catholic priest from Indiana, were sentenced to death for their participation in the raids.¹⁷⁴ The reaction among American Fenians and politicians was immediate and severe. Speculated the *New York Herald*:

“The invasion of British territory by the Fenian Brotherhood was a legitimate act of war on the part of an oppressed people...we look on the trials, convictions, and sentences passed on Lynch and McMahon as a challenge to the Irishmen of America, and we accept it in the spirit intended, and we pledge our lives, liberty, and sacred honor to meet the issue.”¹⁷⁵

Echoed the *New York Daily News*:

“Every drop of blood in the veins of the condemned man will breed a Fenian soldier. His martyrdom will be worth armies to the cause of Ireland’s independence. As the sacrifice of Lucretia wrought the overthrow of the Kings of Rome, may the immolation of that single Fenian soldier bring war and desolation to the soil of Canada.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ *New York Times* 23 June 1866. On 3 June that same paper pointed out that of those fifty-nine Fenians detained in Toronto, sixteen were Protestant.

¹⁷⁴ On McMahon, see Joseph King, “The Fenian Invasion of Canada and John McMahon: Priest, Saint, or Charlatan?” *Eire-Ireland* 23, no.4 (Winter, 1988): 32-51. Continually claiming his innocence, McMahon stated: “If I was guilty, I would submit, but if you execute me, my blood will cry to heaven for vengeance upon those who are the cause of my death.” George R. Gregg and E.P. Roden, *Trials of the Fenian Prisoners at Toronto* (Toronto: Leader Steam Press, 1867), 135. *The New York Times* of 9 November 1866 reported that radical agents were stationed outside of New York polling places to remind voters that the pair was still awaiting execution. McMahon was released on 12 August 1868.

¹⁷⁵ *New York Herald* 31 October 1866. Similarly, *The Irish American* 8 December 1866.

¹⁷⁶ *New York Daily News* 30 October 1866.

On 29 October there was a special meeting in Tammany Hall, over which William Tweed presided. A number of resolutions were agreed upon, and a committee of five was appointed to bear these to President Johnson, insisting that he intervene to secure the release of all Fenians held in Canada.¹⁷⁷ The following day, the *New York Herald* threatened that unless the sentences were commuted, “Irishmen with American bayonets will throw themselves into the breach under the approving smiles” of the United States government.¹⁷⁸ Many of the objections revolved around what were perceived as improper judicial procedure. There was not a single Roman Catholic on the jury and the defendants could not avail themselves of crucial witnesses, such as O’Neill, who would be arrested upon re-entering Canada. Despite these complaints, by 17 November, five additional Fenians had been sentenced to death, with 26 others acquitted. The executions, initially set for 13 December, were postponed until the following March, at which time they were commuted to twenty year sentences. Upon hearing of the reprieve, an incredulous Roberts wrote Lynch: “I regret to tell you that you will not be hanged. So great a crime would make every Irishman in America a Fenian.”¹⁷⁹ The relative leniency was doubtless a reflection of the government’s desire not to make martyrs out of those convicted.¹⁸⁰

Against this background of trials and commutations, Stephens continued to preach that the Fenians would take the field before the year was out, and he set out on a

¹⁷⁷ *Cincinnati Enquirer* 30 October 1866.

¹⁷⁸ *New York Herald* 30 October 1866.

¹⁷⁹ *Cincinnati Enquirer* 15 December 1866.

¹⁸⁰ In all, twenty-five Fenians (out of ninety-five captured) had been convicted and sentenced to death. All of the condemned were eventually pardoned, some serving little more than a few months behind bars, and all were released by July 1872. One prisoner, Thomas Maxwell, died while in custody. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, 107-108.

fundraising tour that lasted the entire summer; the Fenian Sisterhood even inaugurated its First Annual Ball in order to raise money.¹⁸¹ At a rally in Jones Wood on 28 October, Stephens announced that “the final struggle will soon be inaugurated...the oppressed will meet the oppressor to battle for the very existence of our nationality.”¹⁸² When it was obvious that no such rising would take place in 1866, Stephens still being in New York on 15 December of that year, those who were furious with the interminable delays deposed the Head Centre.¹⁸³ The *Times* saw in Stephens’ dilatory policy the death of the movement, commenting: “We should think that by this time the most sincere and devoted of Fenians must be convinced of the utter folly and hopelessness of the whole scheme of Irish liberation.”¹⁸⁴ Thomas Kelly, who was determined to push ahead with the plan for an insurrection in Ireland as soon as practical, replaced Stephens and departed for Europe on 12 January.¹⁸⁵ While many were disappointed by the turn of events, they were still

¹⁸¹ Proclaimed Stephens: “The day for which we have yearned and toiled is imminent. Let no man be mistaken: we fight for freedom on Irish soil this very year. The men at home have resolved to fight this year, and fight they will.” *The Irish People* 4 August 1866. Stephens repeated his promise of war or dissolution at numerous gatherings across the country throughout the summer and fall of 1866. *The New York Herald* of 29 October 1866 upbraided Stephens for making his plans public, “thereby proving the insincerity or the foolishness of the designer and insuring the failure of any attempt thus heralded.” Reports vary widely as to Stephens’ success in raising money during this tour. *The New York Tribune* of 10 January 1867 estimated the amount at “about \$250,000”; *The Irish People* of 24 August 1867 stated that \$37,000 was raised. Thomas J. Kelly, Stephens’ chief of staff claimed that only \$12,000 was realized. *New York Tribune* 4 January 1867. On the Sisterhood’s efforts, see *New York Tribune* 29 October 1866.

¹⁸² *Irish People* 1 December 1866. The *New York World* of 27 November had erroneously published a report that Stephens was in Ireland, and at the head of a Fenian revolt.

¹⁸³ The *New York Herald* of 22 December 1866 reported that Stephens had been living in disguise at 308 East Thirteenth Street, his hiding place known only to his closest associates. Stephens’ raised \$57,000 during his seven- month tenure. Another \$5300 was raised in the two months following his replacement. These amounts, while small, show the continued commitment of Fenian rank and file to the cause despite numerous setbacks. *Irish People* 15 April 1871. John McCafferty was so irate at Stephens’ dilatory policy that he threatened to shoot him on the spot; thankfully, Kelly restrained him. Stephens was so fearful of his associates that he moved to a more secret location (11 West Eleventh Street) following his removal from office. *New York Tribune* 1 January 1867.

¹⁸⁴ *New York Times* 23 December 1866.

supportive of the movement. *The Irish People* in a regularly featured column titled "The Spirit of the People" observed:

"No failures or disasters seem to quench their devotion and love for Ireland. No amount of abuse, and sarcasm, and slander deters them from pursuing the path of duty. No faltering or procrastination on the part of their leaders chills the warm feelings of their hearts. The people are true to Ireland under all circumstances."¹⁸⁶

The *New York Tribune* agreed:

"You may depend upon it that Fenianism would survive in the country in any event until British policy toward Ireland should have undergone a radical change...the social and political influence of the American nation on the Irish people inspires and sustains them in the effort to obtain their political rights, and forbids them to despair of ultimate success."¹⁸⁷

Hoping to keep the organization afloat, *The Irish People* editorialized:

"The Fenian organization is the most formidable antagonist British tyranny has ever met with. It must not be allowed to die. But in order to save it, the reins of guidance must be placed in enlightened, pure and patriotic, as well as influential hands. This it never can be by the circles of Manhattan and its vicinity alone. They have been tried and found sadly wanting upon all the recent occasions where wisdom, firmness of purpose, fidelity, and discretion were warranted."¹⁸⁸

The plans to invade Ireland were seriously hampered by a lack of funds; the

¹⁸⁵ *The Irish American* of 12 January 1867 reveled in Stephens humiliating fall from prominence. "Exit the Chief officer of the Irish Republic! Stephens is deposed by his own partisans!" Two weeks later the same paper reported that Stephens had finally set off for Europe: "Stephens carried with him a bill of exchange; his wife will thus be enabled to continue without interruption her shopping excursions in Dublin and Kingstown while the wives and families of the men who James Stephens duped, and then left in English dungeons, may live 'from hand to mouth' on the charity of strangers." *The Irish American* 26 January 1867. Mortimer Moynihan was chosen to head the organization in America in Kelly's absence. He was replaced on an interim basis one month later by John M. Gleeson. Anthony Griffin was elected Chief Organizer of the Irish Republic in the United States at a convention in New York in February 1867.

¹⁸⁶ *The Irish People* 26 January 1867. A week earlier, that same journal offered: "The Fenian Brotherhood must not be allowed to go down, no matter what reverses it may meet in the present or the future, until it shall have bravely won and established the complete freedom of Ireland." *The Irish People* 19 January 1867.

¹⁸⁷ *New York Tribune* 18 January 1867.

¹⁸⁸ *The Irish People* 19 January 1867. The editors saw cause for optimism: "The Fenians throughout the country are beginning to arouse themselves from the apathy which they allowed the members of the New York circles to arrogate to themselves the control of the whole movement for now more than nine months. This is as it should be."

Brotherhood was in such dire straits that they liquidated most of their assets, including the *Ocean Spray*, to keep from going bankrupt.¹⁸⁹ At least one ranking Irish nationalist recognized the futility of the situation. Writing from Richmond, Virginia, John Mitchel noted:

“Stephens has been deluding you all. He may be partly deceiving himself, as men of sanguine temperament are so apt to do. He certainly deceives himself in supposing there are sufficient men available in Ireland to give the enemy serious trouble. Let Stephens say what he pleases about his influence in Ireland...the wretch is incapable for telling truth. He lies deliberately as to the extent of his following. His list of ‘centres’ in Ireland, England, and Scotland are centres as every bounty jumper in the States is a colonel, major or general. The Fenian Brotherhood is a sham and a fraud. I do not believe there is any formidable organization in Ireland or in England. Invasions and insurrection would be in vain while England is at peace with America and France. Those who undertake such warfare at present, whether civilized or uncivilized, must perish, and perish in vain. You may show this to the old villain, or to any of his fools that you may wish to accommodate.”¹⁹⁰

Mass meetings and the usual bellicose rhetoric greeted news of a Fenian rebellion in Chester Castle, though the uprising was soon found to be futile.¹⁹¹ By this time, though, many had begun to tire of the movement. As the *New York Times* stated: “Fenianism was buried at Campo Bello Island...to carry on this Fenian foolishness is manifest false pretences.”¹⁹² Added the usually favorable *New York Tribune* “Most people had come to the conclusion that Fenianism was on its last legs— that it had done its best and worst— and that, as a disturbing element in the body politic, the British Government had no

¹⁸⁹ *New York Herald* 2 February 1867. The vessel fetched \$14,000.

¹⁹⁰ Mitchel to Mortimer Moynahan. 28 January 1867, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Stephens claimed there were 200,000 Fenians in the British Isles. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, 5.

¹⁹¹ *New York Herald* 19 February 1867. *The Irish People* of 23 March 1867 used the incident to call for a union of all Irishmen. It carried reports of a grand mass meeting attended by 15000 at Union Square. “New York was alive for Irish independence...Harmony and union were the order of the day as pledges and resolutions to support the men in Ireland were enthusiastically received.”

¹⁹² *New York Times* 27 February 1867.

reason to apprehend any more serious trouble from its influence.”¹⁹³ These reports were premature, as there was another rising in early March, which was greeted with the requisite proclamations in New York. A mass meeting was held in Union Square, and some ten thousand attended, where they were urged to supply the money and weapons needed to support the revolution.¹⁹⁴ One observer commented that the meeting signaled a new start for the Brotherhood, adding, “Had similar caution been used in past meetings of the organization many of the disasters and nearly all of the scandals that have befallen it would have been avoided.”¹⁹⁵ Mayor Hoffman of New York addressed the crowd, which was composed of representatives from every circle in the city, who attended despite a constant, chill, rain: “I do not counsel, nor will I countenance any violation of the laws of my country, but...I feel no restraint in expressing as an American citizen, the most earnest sympathy in the struggle which is now taking place in Ireland, and my hope is in its ultimate success.”¹⁹⁶ In Congress, Fernando Wood and Ignatius Donnelly each introduced resolutions of support and sympathy, which contrasted the activities of British sympathizers during the Civil War to those of the Brotherhood.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ *New York Tribune* 18 February 1867.

¹⁹⁴ *New York Herald* of 11 March 1867 reported that 10,000 persons braved a steady downpour to attend the gathering. The *Tribune* was tiring of Fenian affairs. On 25 March 1867 it surmised: “We cannot be far wrong in saying that more blood was shed in one street in New York on St. Patrick’s Day than has been expended during all the Fenian insurrections of which any account has yet reached us.”

¹⁹⁵ *The Irish People* 9 March 1867.

¹⁹⁶ *The Irish People* 13 March 1867. The same paper saw in the rising a precondition for unity: “We do not want to hear any further platitudes of ‘patriotic’ humbug from Roberts; we want no crocodile tears from the Senate; we will not have the proposition smothered under loads of ‘whereas’ and ‘resolutions’...we want a plain and square ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, and we want to see the whole thing over and done with before another week is wasted.” *The Irish People* 20 April 1867. Similarly, *The Irish People* 27 July 1867, which published “An Appeal to Fenian Unity.”

¹⁹⁷ *Congressional Globe*, 40th Cong., 1st Sess., 36, 67.

Griffin's calls for contributions were met with a muted response. In correspondence from his compatriots in Ireland, Griffin is excoriated for the paltry submissions. Wrote Kelly:

"The most we expected to accomplish was to hold our ground until aid would come from America. Woe to the Irish in America if we are again laughed at for having failed! What are the rich Irish of America doing? What do our countrymen want? Will they wait before our last man shall be slaughtered before sending aid? If we sink before aid arrives, the wails of our men through prison bars should haunt the bed of every Irishman in America."¹⁹⁸

Faced with mounting criticism, buoyed by vague political statements of support and succor, and seething with discontent, the American Fenians finally determined on a course of action. The Brotherhood determined to outfit a vessel with the long awaited sinews of war and set sail for Ireland. Shortly after the ill-fated revolt in March, the Brotherhood acquired a schooner of 138 tons. The *Jacmel Packet*, commanded by Colonel James Kelly, set sail on 12 April with a complement of forty-eight Fenians and five thousand stands of arms. On Easter Sunday, 21 April, the vessel was re-christened *Erin's Hope* and it steamed for a rendezvous in Sligo Bay. Apprised that the rising had been suppressed weeks earlier, the crew voted overwhelmingly to return to the United States, albeit with a considerably lighter load.¹⁹⁹

The trials of those arrested for their roles in the abortive Irish uprisings of February and March commenced later that spring. The ubiquitous informers and government agents aided the cases against the conspirators, which resulted in a number of

¹⁹⁸ Kelly to Griffin. 19 March 1867, Fenian Brotherhood Records. IRB leaders were so disaffected that many severed their ties to the Brotherhood, forming in its stead The Sacred Legion of Irish Exiles in the wake of the failed rising. *New York Herald* 14 March 1867.

¹⁹⁹ Thirty-one members stayed in Ireland; of these, twenty-eight were apprehended within twenty-four hours. On the voyage of the *Erin's Hope*, see *The Irish People* 13 November 1867. Also, *The Irish People* 12 February 1870.

death sentences being handed down. The sentences were later commuted, in the usual fashion and for the usual reasons, to lifetime penal servitude. Among those implicated were Gustave Paul Cluseret and Octave Fariola. Cluseret was a Frenchman who had served on John Fremont's staff during the Civil War; at the close of hostilities he was approached by the Fenians and offered the position of chief military officer in Ireland. He accepted the offer and was given letters of introduction from both Mayor Hoffman of New York City and Governor Fenton of that state.²⁰⁰ By February 1867 plans for an insurrection were being drawn up, though even those most closely associated with the project considered it as having little chance of success.²⁰¹

While the Kelly wing was grabbing most of the headlines, the Fenian Senate was making plans for another foray into Canada. At a series of state convocations Roberts and his colleagues discussed the possibility of such a venture.²⁰² Journalists and editors made impassioned pleas that the flame of nationalism not be extinguished. "Incompetent and selfish men may have prostituted and debauched Fenianism, but the living principle is as true as ever. What we want now is a small number of men, as leaders, who will embody the patriotism, intelligence, honor, and talent of our race. This is our crying want to-day."²⁰³ Another journal asked a similar question.

²⁰⁰ The letters that Cluseret presented to the American consul in Dublin ostensibly gave him permission to inspect British troops so that he could make recommendations for improving New York's militia.

²⁰¹ "The plan if it had at all been attempted, might not have been successful at once on account of the scarcity of officers and, particularly, of the want of money, but it was the only one practicable in the eyes of approved military critics and...it would have enabled the Irish insurgents to hold on at least three months which ought to have been sufficient to rouse the patriotism of the Irish in America and determine them to more energetic action." Fariola to Griffin, 29 March 1867, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

²⁰² At a state convention in Troy, New York attended by 115 delegates, the Senate claimed a war chest of some \$25,000 and 40,000 weapons. *New York Herald* 27 February 1867.

²⁰³ *The Irish People* 20 April 1867.

“When will the blow be struck? Although the mind may be anything but well-informed, the heart is in the right place. The true metal— out of which free men and nations are made— is still there, and that, if worked with energy and guided with wisdom, might eventually be made to accomplish with success the Herculean task of righting an infernal wrong.”²⁰⁴

Echoed *The Irish Republic* in a column labeled “The Irish Race on its Trial”:

“The Irish race occupies at present a very prominent, as well as a very trying, position. It has, on this continent, increased in numbers and in wealth, beyond what the most sanguine imagination could have conceived half a century ago...the world is watching us. Our enormous power on this continent is well known everywhere. If this generation passes away without witnessing either the resuscitation of Ireland or the destruction of England we are almost afraid even to imagine the position we will occupy in the eyes of the world. Men will not excuse us when they talk of England’s enormous wealth and our own comparative poverty. They’ll simply say ‘You had the opportunity of raising your native land from it’s bondage, and of humbling, perhaps destroying, your enemy as people never had before. You got a foothold in the freest and most liberty-loving nation in the world; your enemy was also the enemy of the land of your adoption, but you carried your old world littleness about with you— you paraded them until you became a by-word and an astonishment; you ministered to your petty spites and passions. You will be slaves forever, because you are unfit for liberty.’ We are on trial before the world; the time has come that tests what stuff we’re made of.”²⁰⁵

With the Griffin wing moribund following the failed rising, the Senate saw an opportunity. Recognizing that the IRB was in danger of collapse, Roberts made overtures to that body; in July, representatives from the Senate and the Irish Directory met in Paris to discuss a reorganization of their respective bodies.²⁰⁶ Following these negotiations, Roberts’ organization was recognized as the true Fenian Brotherhood, and was entrusted with supplying material aid for an insurrection in Ireland.²⁰⁷ *The Irish*

²⁰⁴ *The Irish Republic* 18 May 1867.

²⁰⁵ *The Irish Republic* 11 May 1867.

²⁰⁶ The Irish Directory was composed of IRB men who favored immediate action. Apparently, Roberts chose to forget his belief that those Fenians working for the cause in Europe had a tendency to waste the Brotherhood’s funds on “fast horses and faster women.” *New York Tribune* 11 September 1867.

²⁰⁷ See, Basis of Union, n.d., Gallagher papers.

Republic carried the news to America: "Glorious news! Complete Union of the Fenian Brotherhood in Ireland and America! Our great national organization will be more united and powerful to do its glorious and arduous work than even in the boasted era of 1865, when knaves had it all their own way. But that day is gone, never to return again."²⁰⁸

Roberts announced the union in a missive of 5 November, offering to "extend the hand of Brotherhood to those from whom we have become estranged."²⁰⁹ When the alliance crumbled shortly thereafter, journalists rushed to put a positive spin on the devolution:

"Too many Irishmen are to be found talking about the 'failure of Fenianism.' These half-souled creatures are more criminal to the cause of their country, and do Irish nationality more real injury, than all the writers that ever slandered the Irish race in the columns of the *London*, or *New York Times*. They look only on the dark side of the Fenians, and say that, because a few thieves have turned up, the whole affair is a humbug and a swindle. We think that we could prove that Fenianism— call it a failure, call it swindle, or what you will— has been the means of saving the Irish race on this continent. It is unfortunately too true that some thieves and some traitors have turned up; but to prove that Fenianism owes its origins to a profound national sentiment— a sentiment uprooted and eternal as the foundations of the earth— we have only to remember that it lives still; lives after shocks that would have overthrown any other political combination that ever appeared; it not only lives but it is full of life. The existence of Fenianism today is, perhaps, the most extraordinary fact of the age. The powers that have been brought to bear against it would have been more than enough to crush an empire. It has been assailed in every possible manner, by every possible class of men. It has been pronounced dead one hundred times in the past two years."²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ *The Irish Republic* 6 July 1867. Two weeks later, that same journal reported that the union had collapsed. "Honest men will always differ with thieves, and those who insist on a union of purity with corruption, for the sake of appearances, are worse than the knaves from whom the honest men have separated. The days of professional patriotism are gone— these unemployed leaders are not wanted by the Fenian Brotherhood. They have been tried and they cost too much...no reconstruction with knaves!" *The Irish Republic* 20 July 1867. Commenting on the failed union, the *New York Times* of 12 July 1867 wrote: "For once we should be half-disposed to overlook the swindle and to look only at the humor of the thing. There can be but one feeling among good people respecting the matter: a swindle is a swindle."

²⁰⁹ To the Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood, 5 November 1867, Gallagher papers.

²¹⁰ *The Irish Republic* 20 July 1867.

On 3 September, the Roberts wing held a national convention in Cleveland.²¹¹ Among other orders of business was the election of John O'Neill to the Senate, and a commitment to invading Canada in 1868.²¹² The organization chastised those Irish who were seemingly ready to fight every battle but their own.

“We are ever, as a people, looking here, and hoping there, and always groping after shadows instead of trusting to the power within ourselves, and marching in serried ranks, shoulder to shoulder, and heart to heart, cool, patient, and resolved, turning neither to the right nor to the left, to take up the quarrels of others. The men who, on the battle-fields of this republic, have learned the soldier’s glorious trade, must initiate the struggle for Irish independence, and lead the van of Ireland’s avengers.”²¹³

Overtures by Griffin and others to affect a reunion of the American Fenians fell on deaf ears, though a rapprochement was finally reached in December.²¹⁴ The basis of that union was the execution of the Manchester Martyrs.

On 17 September, Thomas Kelly, leader of the abortive raids in March, was finally apprehended in Manchester. The following day, in a daring rescue, Kelly was

²¹¹ *Irish American* 14 September 1867. Spear reported that the Fenians had over 9000 men under arms. *New York Tribune* 11 September 1867. The Fenians’ penchant for picnicking continued unabated. *The Irish Republic* of 31 August 1867 carried reports of a meeting attended by 10000 in New York City the previous day.

²¹² Members pledged \$167,450 to put an army in the field by the summer; only \$40,000 had been subscribed by the following July. By the end of 1868 the Senate could claim less than \$5000 in its possession, and O’Neill had to resort to a speaking tour to raise funds.

²¹³ Sixth National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood, 34. Delegate John Hamil, the state center of California, aired the view of many of his contemporaries when he stated: “The patriotism of the men of Ireland commands our unbounded admiration, their devotion to the country our increased respect, their want of wisdom our deep regret.” *Ibid.*, 41.

²¹⁴ John Savage had replaced Griffin as Head Centre in August. From then until March 1871—the time of the Tenth National Convention—this wing raised an additional \$59,000 dollars for the cause. The reunion of the rival wings was on the basis of the Philadelphia convention, with the Presidency tendered to John Mitchel, who refused the position, commenting that the movement had been founded on a false premise, that it “could never succeed while England was at peace, and that the United States would not allow any organization to upset its neutrality legislation.” Some opposed the choice of Mitchel: “Is John Mitchel to be the leader of the Fenian Brotherhood?” asked *The Irish Republic* of 10 August. “His civil war writings make him as obnoxious to the American people as Jefferson Davis. His desire for a plantation lifestyle belies his republican airs. Place him at the head of the Fenian Brotherhood and the organization would not be tolerated for a week, nor would it deserve to be.”

sprung from a prison van; during the struggle, a police sergeant was killed. Following a brief investigation and trial, five Fenians were sentenced to death. On 23 November three of the accused were executed, leading to widespread public outrage, and a proposed reunion of the schismatic American Fenians.²¹⁵ A week later, expressing sentiments shared by *The Irish People*, John Mitchel editorialized "The English government has declared war on Ireland!"²¹⁶ For weeks the Irish American press called for revenge and for union between the rival Fenian wings.²¹⁷ *The Irish American* carried a "eulogy" by Fenian John Savage, expressing this desire:

"I here implore union among Irish Nationalists for the cause. Let the men of rival parties here bring their personal rivalries under the scaffold of these martyrs, and issuing thence be the simultaneous propagandists of united faith, in united hope for united charity to each other. In a word, let them be the preachers and soldiers of a united action, for the sake of Ireland."²¹⁸

Despite earlier statements by both parties that such an event would never come to pass, the wings were united in December. In a self-serving editorial, *The Irish Republic*

²¹⁵ Among those executed was Michael O'Brien, a naturalized American citizen. *The Irish People* of 30 November 1867 publicized this fact. "Captain Michael O'Brien requested Minister Adams to interfere for him. Adams refused! O'Brien, an American citizen, has been hanged. Adams could have saved him! Adams murdered him! Remember Adams!" The paper further demanded "The Irish soldiers of New York demand their rights...are we American citizens or subjects of Great Britain? Let us know at once whether we have been swindled by the American government or not!"

²¹⁶ *The Irish Citizen* 30 November 1867. The same paper of 7 December carried an excerpt from the *Dundalk Democrat* analyzing the effect the executions had on the IRB: "There seems to be no prospect of the termination of the Fenian movement. Like the Irish shamrock, the more it is trodden upon the more prolific it becomes. They seem determined to go in the path they have chosen. There is not a bad landlord in this country, who plunders and then exterminates his tenants, who is not a recruiting sergeant for the Fenian movement. It is injustice to the Irish that has begotten this unfortunate Fenian confederacy, and those who perpetuate and abet that injustice are morally guilty of the deeds of the Fenians." *The Irish Republic* of 30 November 1867 reminded its readers "liberty springs from martyrs blood."

²¹⁷ *The Irish Citizen* 21 December 1867. Also *The Irish American* 21 December 1867. Admitting that such a union was "a moral impossibility," *The Irish Republic* of 30 November 1867 urged an attempt be made nonetheless. "Away with men who stand in the way of union. Let those who think more of self than of their country be swept aside. The man who, under any earthly pretext opposes the union of the Irish nationalists of America is the enemy of Ireland, and most probably the paid emissary of England. We call upon our countrymen to mark that man."

²¹⁸ *The Irish American* 7 December 1867.

congratulated itself: “notwithstanding all the bitterness and bad blood which faction engendered...they had magnanimously flung the past to the winds and, like long estranged brothers, rushed into each others arms. We knew it would come to this. We have endeavored as far as we could, to bring the striking tableau about.”²¹⁹ The reunion, alas, was short-lived. Chronicled the Senate wing:

“The Senate, while neglecting no necessary steps to carry out the war policy, which experience has proved to be the only true programme for any organization aiming to achieve the liberation of Ireland, left no effort untried to unite all men calling themselves Irish nationalists in this sacred crusade for the redemption of our country. To effect this object, no overture was omitted; every concession, short of the abandonment of principle and violation of the Constitution and laws of the Brotherhood, was offered; but offered in vain, as far as some were concerned, who arrogate to themselves the position of leaders. These men, while clamoring for ‘union’ showed by their action that their only object was to grasp the money and resources which, under the prudent management of your officers, had been accumulated for the cause of Ireland. While professing to be patriotic Irishmen, they have shown that in reality they were only speculators in American politics, trading on what capital they could make out of the wrongs of our unhappy country and the credulity of our unsuspecting countrymen. These are dangerous enemies who, under the false pretence of friendship, sought to bring discord and ruin in to the national ranks, and to degrade your organization into a mere tool of partisan politics. The ends to which they would have diverted the national organization may be judged from the position they occupy today, as the tools and attaches of some political clique or other, who offer them, not sympathy and assistance for Ireland, but office and pay for themselves in exchange for their pretended influence with the Irish people.”²²⁰

Despite the failed union, *The London Times* was worried that the executions would reinvigorate a moribund movement, and it saw in the calls for unity a severe threat:

²¹⁹ *The Irish Republic* 28 December 1867. Earlier that same organ had done much to impede union. “Much has been said of late regarding an attempt to unite the Fenian Brotherhood with the successors of James Stephens. I rejoice the attempt has failed, for union with Manhattan would produce disunion amongst honest men.” *The Irish Republic* 4 May 1867. With such a track record it is no surprise that the union dissolve within a month. *The Irish Republic* 25 January 1868. *The London Times* of 29 January 1867 knew that this did not necessarily mean the end of the movement. “So long as party feeling runs high in the States, and the Irish vote retains its power, it is impossible to be certain that unprincipled partisans might not revive agitation.”

²²⁰ To the Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood, 25 July 1868, Gallagher papers.

"Nothing else is wanted to make Fenianism, which is now only troublesome and vexatious, serious and formidable."²²¹ The *Tribune* opined that the British had made a grave error, adding that the execution was:

"...the most important reinforcement that Fenianism has yet received. The cause wanted nothing so much as a martyr, now it has three. The Manchester prisoners will inspire their countrymen with a bitter hostility toward England by their deaths than they could have inspired by their lives...Irish rancor has been intensified, and the three men in their graves are more dangerous than ever before."²²²

Mass meetings and popular protests were common in many American cities; in New York, Mayor Hoffman and the city council attended mock funerals, and listened as speakers at the Cooper Institute drew up resolutions that called for the American government to intervene; among the speakers was Horace Greeley, who delivered an emotional address on behalf of "poor, suffering Ireland."²²³ Even those who had ridiculed the Brotherhood now expressed sympathy. As the *New York Times* wrote:

"Thousands on both sides of the Atlantic believe that the dead had not a fair trial, and this conviction prevails widely even among those who have always condemned the Fenian movement. Very nearly the whole population of this country demanded a mitigation of the punishment. Looking at the black record of Ireland's wrongs for centuries, we cannot but join in avowing a certain sympathy with, and commiseration for those who have been goaded into violence by the accumulated crimes of the British Government."²²⁴

Irish American journalists were among the most vocal in their denunciations:

"The old hunger of blood has once more seized our enemy, and the first meal has

²²¹ *London Times* 17 January 1867.

²²² *New York Tribune* 25 November 1867.

²²³ *New York Herald* 29 November 1867. *The Irish People* 30 November 1867. *The Irish American* 30 November and 7 December 1867. *The Irish Citizen* 7 December 1867. *The Cleveland Leader* of 28 November 1867 was alone in upbraiding the politicians for their grandstanding. "Greeley was making his ninety-ninth effort to get the Irish vote...Hoffman joined with him in giving éclat to the demonstration by attending the meeting, thus giving the movement the moral support of their presence, if they have any morality left, which is doubtful." Apparently the platitudes worked.

²²⁴ *New York Times* 25 November 1867. One day earlier the same paper editorialized that the executions were a "grave blunder."

been taken. Blood once tasted, who can say where the meal will stop? Three of our brothers have been murdered, but...blood will not make the Irish heart grow pale. The blood of the dead of Manchester will give vigor to our organization that 40,000 orators could never instill in its veins.”²²⁵

The positive image of the Fenians did not last long. The day after the executions, British authorities apprehended Kelly’s acolyte, Ricard Burke in London. Two weeks later, an ill-fated attempt to rescue Burke from Clerkenwell prison resulted in the deaths of three innocent civilians and injured scores more. Where the Manchester martyrs had garnered the Brotherhood the support of even hostile editors, the Clerkenwell explosion meant an end to popular support for the Brotherhood even among its staunchest supporters. The *New York Herald* branded the Fenians a “cutthroat organization”, and reported that many members had dropped their association with the group.²²⁶ The 7 April assassination of Canadian Parliamentarian Thomas D’Arcy McGee, a former Irish revolutionary who openly denounced the Brotherhood, further damaged the reputation of the organization. There was, however, an element of the group that welcomed the radical departure and pledged itself to the continuance of terror.²²⁷

The majority of the Fenians distanced themselves from such radicals.²²⁸ On 1

²²⁵ *The Irish Republic* 7 December 1867.

²²⁶ *New York Herald* 29 December 1867.

²²⁷ William E. Robinson, Brooklyn Congressman who had earlier edited a number of journals catering to the Irish immigrant population (and who, in February of 1882 sought to have the American minister to Great Britain recalled for neglect of duty) later opined: “I thank God for the invention of dynamite. Why shouldn’t we use dynamite? It’s no worse than gunpowder— only, thank God, it’s a good deal stronger. We don’t want to raise money now for molasses, nor for taffy, but for war, for slaughter.” *United Irishman* 5 December 1885. Added George Francis Train: “Look at Clerkenwell! What if twenty innocent people died? We have killed a million for the Negro!” *Irish People* 4 January 1868. Robinson authored a number of resolutions asking Congress to impeach the American minister to Great Britain (Charles Francis Adams) and the consul at Dublin (William West) for their failure to protect American citizens. *House Journal*, 40th Cong., 1st sess., 778,787. The *Cleveland Leader* of 23 November reported that the resolutions were gravely received and considered, as there were “500,000 Irish voters whose support the Democrats are anxious to retain and the Republicans are foolishly trying to cajole.”

January 1868 the Brotherhood proclaimed that “they neither employ the secret weapon of the assassin nor the torch of the incendiary,” going so far as to blame the Clerkenwell explosion on British authorities who had hoped to tarnish the newfound reputation of their organization, thereby “bringing odium upon the national cause.”²²⁹ Roberts resigned his position as President, and was succeeded by John O’Neill, who immediately set out to build a union with the Savage wing of the Fenians, to no avail.²³⁰ Despite the backlash from the Clerkenwell explosion and their fruitless efforts at reconciliation, the Fenians remained the darling of the political set during the presidential election year.²³¹

Fenian influence on local, state, and national politics would be witnessed in the 1868 elections. The Fenians were not unaware of the political chicanery taking place and used the situation to their own advantage. Recognizing the strength of the Irish vote they pledged their support, as they had in 1866, to the political party that supported them most fully. Whereas the Fenians had claimed to be above political maneuvering in earlier times, they now openly embraced their influential role. As delegates to the Brotherhood’s Seventh National Congress mentioned, “under the present favorable

²²⁸ As early as September 1866, the Brotherhood had disavowed assassinations as “foreign to our country and repugnant to the chivalrous, Christian character of the Irish people.” Proceedings of the Fifth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, 24.

²²⁹ *New York Herald* 2 January 1868. The Fenian Senate declared “Between the people of England and those of Ireland there is no quarrel. Both are oppressed and kept down by the same aristocratic powers which support their feudal state that has robbed them of their manhood.” *New York Tribune* 1 January 1868. Also, *New York Herald* 3 January 1868. In later years, British agents would be blamed for such incidents as the Orange and Green riots in New York City. See *The Irish American* 23 July 1870.

²³⁰ *Irish People* 18 January 1868. See also, *The Irish Citizen* 11 April 1868.

²³¹ One obvious result was the Republicans nominating Schuyler Colfax, champion of the Fenians, as Grant’s vice president in the 1868 election. His Democratic counterpart, Frank Blair, was sullied for his anti-Fenian stance as expressed in a speech made during the campaign. “Gentleman, I am with you heart and soul. I shall bless the day when Ireland is governed by Irishmen and I will do all that I can to assist you. But whether or not you shall succeed in this endeavor, you may each and all remain in Ireland, or elsewhere, and never again set foot on these shores! You are wanted there and we can get along without you.” *New York Tribune* 19 August 1868.

condition of a national election, a large amount of money could be procured from American politicians.”²³² One attendee lamented the meddling interference of Irish American journalists: “We are satisfied that as was done by the Democratic State committee of New York, in presenting to the Brotherhood \$5000— so also the Republican National Committee would have given to the organization the sum of \$25000 or some such amount, were it not for the fact that the parties of *The Irish Republic* and *Irish People* newspapers interposed an adverse influence against it.”²³³ John O’Neill, for one, recognized the political games and counseled the Irish to use their influence to good advantage. “For the next three or four weeks the politicians of the country will be loud in their professions of love for Ireland, and desire to see her free. Let, then, a committee appointed for the purpose, from each circle in your district, wait on those parties and on all others likely to aid us, and put them to a practical test by soliciting their personal subscriptions towards procuring the necessary means to place an army in the field.”²³⁴

In March the Fenian circle of Washington, DC invited the Speaker of the House and others to a meeting. The invitation claimed: “The boys in the field are fighting for freedom, land, and life, and they look to America as their natural friend and ally. The Irish American race is counted by the millions, and ingratitude is not among their characteristics.”²³⁵ *The Irish People* of 8 July promised the Republicans enough votes to win Pennsylvania, Ohio, and possibly New York, where the Democrats had a plurality of only 927 votes in 1867.²³⁶ *The*

²³² Among the delegates was Reverend James O’Leary, who represented the Nebraska Circle. The continued support of clergymen seriously hampered any attempts by the Catholic Church to denounce the Brotherhood.

²³³ Seventh National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood. Proceedings of the Senate and House of Representatives of the Fenian Brotherhood in Joint Convention at Philadelphia, PA, November 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29, 1868 (n.p., n.d.), 17.

²³⁴ O’Neill to Gallagher, 6 October 1868, Gallagher papers.

²³⁵ *House Journal*, 40th Cong., 1st sess., 60.

²³⁶ *Irish People* 8 July 1868. The editor later claimed that he had been offered \$5000 if he would support the Democrats, but “\$500,000, no not all the plunder of the Tammany Ring, could win us from the path duty points out.” *New York Tribune* 30 September 1868. The *New York Herald* of 24 June 1866

Irish Republic, a Chicago publication edited by Michael Scanlan, was so damaging to the administration, that the Democrats sought to counter its influence with their own organ, *The Irish Democrat*.²³⁷ The Irish Republican Club of New York City repeatedly urged all Irishmen “to vote the Republican ticket, the only one deserving the support of citizens of foreign birth.”²³⁸

In June, that body told the Irish that in their blind subservience to the Democrats they had taken the side of “conservatism and tyranny over the downtrodden... and had given their influence in America to the very forces they were fighting in Ireland.”²³⁹

Some saw in American politics the bane of their existence. “I beg to state that some of the Fenians are too much engaged in American politics to have the cause of Ireland much at heart. It is deemed right to warn the organization against these hounds, who for self are ready to sacrifice the cause of Ireland...vote for men who will work for Ireland and not for truckling, plodding politicians.”²⁴⁰

Fearing another invasion of Canada, British officials relied extensively on reports furnished by private detectives and paid informers. Reports that the Fenians had joined forces with disaffected Southerners to annex Canada were widespread, as were tales of

concurrent, speculating that the Fenians might decide the political vote of Pennsylvania as well as that of New York City... “without doubt many of the congressional districts are in their hands... the whole number of electors likely to be influenced by the Fenians does not fall far short of a million”

²³⁷ *The Irish Republic*, founded in Chicago in March 1867, by Scanlan and David Bell was originally a voice for the Senate wing; it relocated to New York in April 1868. It was joined in September of that year by *The Irish People*, both of which campaigned for Grant and the Republicans in the 1868 campaign. *The Irish People*, in the hands of Dennis O’Sullivan, advised its readers to “free themselves from the thrall of the Tammany ring.” *Irish People* 10, 17 October 1868. For more information on O’Sullivan and *The Irish People*, see the *New York World* of 1 October 1868. The *New York Tribune* of 27 July 1868 welcomed the change. *The Irish Democrat* was edited by Fenians D.P. Conyngham and Stephen Meany

²³⁸ *New York Tribune* 8 August 1868. Similarly, *New York Herald* 31 October 1868.

²³⁹ *New York Tribune* 15 June 1868. Of course, these comments were rebutted by *The Irish American*. See 15, 22 August, 26 September, 3, 17 October

²⁴⁰ James Keenan to P.J. Meehan, 21 February 1870, Gallagher papers.

Fenian encampments and ammunition warehouses along the American border. With few resources available however, the Fenians decided to shelve their planned invasion until 1869; O'Neill made this announcement at the Seventh National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, held in Philadelphia in November 1868.²⁴¹ O'Neill blamed the disheartening effect of the aborted 1867 risings for the delay, but counseled adherence to the cause.

“The attempt at revolution in Kerry, and the subsequent and more general effort in March 1867 had, in their failure, not only the effect of dampening the spirits of the men, but in many other ways tended to produce an almost general disbanding of the circles. Yet for a firm purpose, a reverse is but a lesson in organizing success— a lesson always useful and often needed. We are the only hope of our suffering brethren at home, and the only object that inspires the enemy of our race with the fear of retribution due to her crimes against the Irish people. So it has been accepted by our organization, and so is assured our final success.”²⁴²

Fundraising continued, as did preparations for war. The Senate counseled action and promised that subsequent contributions would be spent solely for martial purposes:

“Every dollar we receive will be able to show double its value in the implements of a fight for Ireland. Only in whistling bullets and solid shot shall we expend any more of our resources upon our enemies. No cunning knavery or bad ambition shall be permitted to rob you of your money and cheat Ireland of your aid, by diverting your generous contributions from the struggle with the British foe into a defense fund against their assaults. We leave them to your care, and henceforth shall husband all our resources for the one grand fight, on a fair field, under the old flag, for Ireland’s liberty and independence.... Be patriots because you have a country, with wrongs to be righted, and a flag to be restored. Do this and the swords of Ireland’s soldiers will soon scintillate in the blaze of a victory to our arms, and the Irish nation will be established upon the free hearts of her emancipated people, who will send up one long eternal prayer for you— their brothers and deliverers from oppression”²⁴³

²⁴¹ 180 circles sent delegates.

²⁴² Seventh National Congress, 39. O'Neill laid the blame for the fiasco squarely on Stephens. “Deception as to numbers and resources was the continued practice of James Stephens and those inspired by him. Everywhere and among all classes, I found a strong and outspoken feeling in favor of independence; but it stopped short of positive and concerted action, though a want of confidence in their present ability and power to win it.” *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁴³ To the Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood, 8 April 1869, Gallagher papers.

Plans continued and several thousand pieces of ammunition— muzzle loaded weapons that had been converted to breechloaders at a Fenian factory in Trenton, New Jersey— along with one hundred forty tons of ammunition, were transported to the frontier in November 1869.²⁴⁴ O'Neill spoke optimistically of a time, not far off, when the "sacred work" could begin again:

"No sacrifice is too great that will help to achieve the liberation of one's native land; the proud satisfaction of having co-operated in breaking the shackles from her limbs is abundant recompense for all labors undergone, all hardships encountered. The sky of our future seems bright with hope; the clouds of opposition are disappearing, one after the other, from the horizon!"²⁴⁵

Others were equally ebullient:

"It remains only for us to complete the work...to ensure the speedy triumph of that cause for which you have already sacrificed so much. The experience of the past teaches that England has never yielded anything to moral right, unless backed by armed power sufficiently strong to wrest from her fears what she would deny to justice. We have today that power within our reach. We exercise a larger influence in the affairs of the world than was ever before yielded by any body constituted like ours. We have at our disposal an army of tried veteran soldiers, means of arming them equal to those possessed by many governments which are recognized amongst the powers of the earth, and superior to anything ever held by a revolutionary organization heretofore. Those resources and their applicability to the cause of our native land, are a portion of the grand results of your patriotism and self sacrifice, and of the zeal and fidelity to Ireland of those to whom you entrusted the management of your affairs. The present helpless position of your enemy— unable to raise enough of troops to defend her enormous extent of territory, and trembling at every complication in European politics— invites you to take advantage of the opportunity offered you to right the wrongs of your unhappy fatherland and strike the last link of the foreigner's chains from the limbs of your people. With our men ready to take the field, we can dictate terms to England in the name of the Irish Nation. Our duty to our native land commands

²⁴⁴ *New York Times* 25 May 1870. In March 1869, O'Neill asked for every Irish American to subscribe one dollar to the cause— of the anticipated four million dollars, only eight thousand materialized. The Fenian treasury contained some \$20,000 in October 1868, but less than \$4000 in April of 1869. The failure to extract more money can be interpreted as a lack of confidence in the movement, or as an indication that upwardly mobile Irish Americans were seeking to distance themselves from the movement.

²⁴⁵ Message of General John O'Neill, President, Fenian Brotherhood, to the Seventh National Congress (Philadelphia: n.p., 1868).

us to act with courage and determination, and to act at once.”²⁴⁶

Even the Savage wing, which held its annual convention in New York that August, contemplated an attack on British North America.²⁴⁷ Others considered military action in Ireland a nonstarter: “While England is at peace with the great powers of the earth and has, consequently, all her immense resources unbroken, and at her command, the independence of Ireland cannot be accomplished on the soil of Ireland.”²⁴⁸ Still, reports and rumors of Fenian forays into Canada continued for years, and were used by Irish nationalists and American politicians to great advantage. It seems that political expediency warranted grandstanding on all parts.

O’Neill, unlike others, was committed to an invasion of Canada as soon as practicable. He had pledged himself to such a course of action in both 1868 and 1869, and was well aware of the fate that had befallen Stephens when he was unable to live up to his bellicose proclamations. The Senate was more cautious in its approach to the situation, but the impetuous O’Neill was determined to press ahead, calling for a convention to be held on 8 March. Arms and ammunition were channeled to the Canadian border, and plans were drawn up to have a contingent of 3000 Fenians on Canadian soil within twenty-four hours. O’Neill was confident that his tactics would be countenanced, as Governor Hoffman of New York had pledged not to interfere with the

²⁴⁶ To the Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood, 10 July 1869, Gallagher papers.

²⁴⁷ *New York Times* 25 August 1868. Also, *The Irish People* 5 September 1868.

²⁴⁸ *The Irish Republic* 8 June 1867. In prior weeks, in a column headed “Questions which ought to be answered,” the editors had advised against any action in Ireland, believing that the condition there was the result, “not of English strength, but of Irish weakness...the monstrous position of England in Ireland would otherwise be untenable for a week.” *The Irish Republic* 25 May and 1 June 1867.

proposed invasion.²⁴⁹

The Convention was marked by violence and yet another schism. One of O'Neill's lieutenants, Patrick Kennan, shot Senator Patrick Meehan, an event that was used as a pretext for the Senate to withdraw from the proceedings.²⁵⁰ Calling its own convocation for 11 April in Chicago, the Senate disavowed any connection with O'Neill, who hoped to take the field before his Fenian opponents could take any decisive action.²⁵¹ Confident of his chances, O'Neill appealed to the Irish American community to bankroll his venture, promising that the contributions would be used immediately.²⁵² Later that month the British Minister in Washington provided American diplomats with information pertaining to these plans. A cabinet meeting on 15 April discounted the veracity of the claims, while President Grant refused to seize the Fenian weapons, stating unequivocally "The British did not seize the *Alabama*!"²⁵³

The O'Neill faction met on 19 April and re-elected the general as President.

²⁴⁹ Hoffman was asked to provide state militia to augment federal troops in stopping any violations of the neutrality acts. Hoffman assured the Fenians that he "would be very tardy in fulfilling such requests, as he wishes success to the movement and would do nothing to injure its progress." D'Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, 335.

²⁵⁰ *Irish American* 12 March 1870. To the Officers and Men of the IRA, 7 March 1870, Gallagher papers. The Senate declared: "assassination is no part of our national character," but saw in the event some hope. "These difficulties prove that the path to liberty is not strewn with flowers: America had her Arnold in her early struggles, her Booth in her late war. In the upheavings of an oppressed people, if knaves or assassins or selfish men turn up from time to time, they are but the scum that floats upon the cauldron of revolution...Remember, the nation or organization that cannot stand trials within as well as without, is not prepared for liberty." Address of the Executive Committee of the Senate, F.B., 23 March 1870, Gallagher papers.

²⁵¹ At the convention, the office of President of the Fenian Brotherhood was abolished, the executive authority of the organization being vested in an Executive Council; invitations to O'Neill to join with the Senate in its plans met with a muted response. *New York Times* 18 April 1870, *The Irish American* 23 April 1870.

²⁵² Several prominent New Yorkers contributed to the cause. Sheriff O'Brien subscribed \$500, Senator Boadley \$100 and Judge Ledworth \$2500. D'Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, 344.

²⁵³ The fact that the cabinet meeting was not convened until five days after receiving this communication proves how seriously the administration took the Fenian threat at this juncture.

Fifty-four delegates attended and voted to replace the defunct Senate with a nine-person council to advise the impulsive O'Neill. Reports show that the membership was tiring of the expense and factionalism of the movement: between September 1869 and March 1870, over 150 circles had fallen into arrears on their dues payments. Many observers saw in the empty coffers and bitter internal struggles the end of the movement, but O'Neill was determined to carry on the struggle.²⁵⁴ In an impassioned plea to the officers and members of the Fenian Brotherhood, he argued:

“Fenianism yearns after success; it is panting to break the chains which centuries of effort have failed to sunder. It lives and grows on the hope of winning the laurel crown of Freedom for Ireland in the desperately-contested fight, amid the peal of musketry and the roar of artillery... As patriots and Fenians— as men anxious to deliver their country from the thrall of the oppressor, we can be possessed of but one desire— to strengthen our hands for successful resistance: and there is no other way of making them strong than by acquiring a perfect knowledge of the art of war. Ours is a movement whose success must be sought through the sword. It is confessed that Ireland’s Independence can be achieved only on the battlefield. Public meetings, addresses, establishment of circles, perfecting of organization have all for their ultimate aim and object, one thing— war.”²⁵⁵

O'Neill chose 24 May, the birthday of England’s Queen Victoria, as the date for his advance. The Fenians hoped that the festivities planned for that day would draw attention away from their schemes, and that troops ordinarily assigned to border patrol would be absent, participating in one of many holiday parades and festivals. A scaled down version of the 1866 raid, with two columns of Fenians advancing from Malone, New York and Franklin, Vermont was planned; one ranking Fenian was so enthusiastic

²⁵⁴ One report places the holdings of the Fenian Treasury at only \$4746.36 at the end of 1868 and just \$1129.58 by end of November 1869. Neidhardt, Fenianism in North America, 113.

²⁵⁵ Letter from John O'Neill to the Officers, and Members, Civil and Military, of the Fenian Brotherhood, April 26, 1869, Gallagher papers.

that he mortgaged his home for \$10,000 that could be used to purchase ammunition.²⁵⁶ The border was alive with excitement, as even the staid *New York Times* wrote glowingly of the Fenian preparations.²⁵⁷ Some were less impressed. George Templeton Strong wrote derisively of the attack. "It is unpleasant to believe that certain squads of semi-humanized gorillas, with the outward aspects of unwashed Celtic Christians, and with faculties so far developed that they can use phosphorus and gunpowder, are crawling about trying to blow things up...this bodes very bad for the hen roosts of northern Vermont!"²⁵⁸ Despite not having the full complement of promised troops, and facing Canadian fortifications that had been supplemented by militiamen called out to meet the threat, O'Neill crossed the border on 25 May with 176 men.²⁵⁹ Suffering one casualty to Canadian Home Guard sharpshooters, the invaders fell back immediately, to the horror of their commander and the delight of the defenders.²⁶⁰ During the ensuing retreat, federal

²⁵⁶ One finds dozens of such examples in the historical record. The fact that individuals were willing to lose their fortunes, reputations, and lives for the Fenian cause proves that this was far from "patriotism as pastime."

²⁵⁷ *New York Times* 25 May 1870: "The whole frontier has been thrown into commotion...it is evident that the details of the raid, have been carefully and deliberately arranged, and that the leaders have been very successful in maintaining secrecy." Two days later, the same paper estimated that some 30,000 Fenians had left New York City for the border.

²⁵⁸ Strong, *Diary*, 4: 180.

²⁵⁹ O'Neill, *Official Report*, 51. O'Neill claimed that some 600 to 700 Fenians were waiting at St. Albans, but most arrived too late to join the invasion. Of the expected 1000 troops from Massachusetts, only 50 showed up; from New York and Vermont, only 100 of the promised 600. John MacDonald, *Troublous Times in Canada: A History of the Fenian Raids of 1866 and 1870* (Toronto: W.S. Johnston and Company, 1910), 160 places the number of attacking Fenians at 400.

²⁶⁰ The following report of the battle appeared in *The St. Louis Republican* of 30 May 1870: "Malone, NY, May 28. — Gen Spear of Cincinnati, at 7 am, crossed the Trout River and advanced with his command, numbering not more than 300 stragglers, proceeded about 500 yards when he deployed on the right and left of the road, his extreme right resting on the Trout River. It had not occupied this position long when the British troops and Canadian militia emerged from the woods a little in front and on the other side of the Fenians. A line of battle was at once formed by the British, and a sharp, steady fire was opened on the Fenians. There was at the time a small rail fence in front of the latter, which was immediately converted into a sort of stockade for the Fenians, who had been told by Spear to keep up a steady fire for ten minutes or less, and stop the advance of the British. Before the expiration of the ten minutes, the

authorities arrested O'Neill on charges of violating the neutrality laws, seizing the arms that had been stored along the border.

The following day, nearly five hundred Fenians led by Owen Starr crossed into Canada from Malone; again, the force, which resembled "a mob more than a military organization," was repelled with little consequence.²⁶¹ President Grant decided that enough was enough, and warned "all good citizens of the United States and all persons within the territory and jurisdiction of the United States against aiding, countenancing, abetting, or taking part in such unlawful proceedings as were presently being undertaken;" if they continued in their efforts to undermine the laws, they had to be "prepared to forfeit all rights to the protection of the government, or its interference on their behalf to rescue them from the consequences of their own acts." Furthermore, Grant refused to release the weapons that had been seized, or to parole those rounded up in the raids. O'Neill and several of his compatriots were tried, convicted, and sentenced to terms ranging from six to twenty-four months.²⁶² As was the case four years earlier, those stranded on the border had their fares paid by Boss Tweed of New York.²⁶³ O'Neill explained the collapse of the invasion as the result of "people so often deceived and disappointed in the past could not believe that we were in earnest, and thousands of

Canadian troops, far outnumbering the Fenians, made a movement as if they intended to outflank and capture the invaders, when Spear formed a rear guard and a retreat was ordered. The British continued to fire and press the Fenians, who managed to maintain good order until they reached the United States line, when a parting volley was given the British, and the battle of Trout River was over. Killed 1, wounded 1, 1 missing."

²⁶¹ *New York Herald* 28 May 1870. It was reported that 20000 rounds of muzzle-loading ammunition lay on the ground for the use of troops with breechloaders. It was later revealed that Fenian informer Henri Le Caron deliberately engineered this snafu.

²⁶² On 12 October 1870, shortly before Election Day, Grant unconditionally pardoned all persons implicated in the invasion.

²⁶³ O'Neill, *Official Report*, 54. The Fenian coffers were so depleted that a small sum had to be borrowed to pay for a telegram from the front on 31 May.

good men who were anxious to be with us kept indulging their doubts and fears until it was too late.”²⁶⁴ The *Tribune* lamented the invasion:

“There is something so noble in the heroism of the honest Irishmen who have offered their fortunes and their persons for the cause that we cannot speak of their enterprise without respect, but the folly of the whole affair has been so stupendous and the failure so inconceivably absurd that we can hardly speak of either without indignation and amusement.”²⁶⁵

Others were less forgiving. On 26 June, *The Nation* wrote:

“The attack was simply the culmination of a gigantic but vulgar swindle protracted through several years and attended with a success such as no swindle has ever had before. If we look at the O’Neill’s and Starr’s from this angle they are not failures. They stand at the head of their profession. They have succeeded in securing the payment to them, their predecessors, and confederates during a period of six or seven years perhaps \$2,000,000 in aid of an enterprise wilder than any scheme set before the gullible public.”²⁶⁶

Disavowing any connection with O’Neill, the Senate convened in Cincinnati on 23 August. The Senate decried O’Neill’s action as “moblike” and confessed with sorrow that O’Neill “has proved himself totally unfit, and by sowing the seeds of distrust, rancor, and discord, given ample evidence that he possesses all the elements necessary to lead a faction.”²⁶⁷ The outcome of this meeting was that one wing of the Brotherhood ceased to exist; abolishing the name Fenian, the Senators took the name United Irishmen and sought unity with John Savage’s contingent.²⁶⁸ Savage, meeting in New York on 30

²⁶⁴ O’Neill, *Official Report*, 27. A partisan account, “by a reporter present at the scene” derisively commented that IRA stood not for “Irish Republican Army,” but “I Ran Away.” See, *The Fenian Raid of 1870* (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1870).

²⁶⁵ *New York Tribune* 26 May 1870.

²⁶⁶ *The Nation* 10, no. 257: 347.

²⁶⁷ *To the Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood*, 7 April 1870, Gallagher papers. The Senate added: “These are the reflections of men who understand the situation, and who say to you now, guided by the light of experience, that we should never have had a Campo Bello, and that one Ridgeway is enough in this generation.”

August, refused this overture, preferring to link up with the jailed O'Neill.²⁶⁹ A committee that included John O'Mahony approached O'Neill in Windsor Prison and secured the commitment of the jailed general in their scheme.²⁷⁰

The Brotherhood lost a bargaining chip in July 1870 when the United States and Great Britain ratified a treaty that resulted in the release of most Fenians held in British jails. With the negotiations over the outstanding *Alabama* claims drawing to a close, it seemed as if the Fenians would fade from the collective consciousness of this nation.²⁷¹ Much as had been done in 1861, the Fenians needed to capitalize on a public spectacle if they wanted to remain in the spotlight. Where they once held grand funeral processions for Terrence Bellew McManus, they would now fete the Fenian exiles that had been released from British jails. The arrival of the "Cuba Five" in New York on 19 January

²⁶⁸ *New York Times* 25 August 1870. See also: *The Irish American* 3 September 1870; and *Irish People* 19 November, 9 December 1870. Many hoped that the Franco-Prussian War would soon escalate to include Great Britain, and that Ireland's opportunity would finally be presented to her nationalists. The constitution of the United Irishmen pledged the society to co-operation with the IRB, and provided for a directory of seven members, three of whom were to be chosen by the Savage wing.

²⁶⁹ Savage was having trouble maintaining his hold on the organization. Wrote Michael Cavanagh to O'Mahony on 13 February 1870: "What a falling off from John O'Mahony to John Savage, a man who has been undermining you with his selfish intrigues. He hasn't any redeeming qualities, and cannot survive unless some American politician intends to make use of him. Savage and his confreres shall not with impunity reap much profit from the fruits of your labor, money, and name if I can help it." Fenian Brotherhood Records.

²⁷⁰ Proceedings of the Ninth General Convention of the Fenian Brotherhood (New York: n.p., 1870). O'Neill was pardoned by executive order on 13 October 1870, just before electionday. Unfortunately for Savage, most of O'Neill's constituents had by this time joined the United Irishmen. O'Neill subsequently led a band of forty men in a raid on Manitoba on 5 October 1871.

²⁷¹ The final arbitration was \$12 million dollars, the value of ships lost to Confederate depredations; some, like Senator Charles Sumner sought an indemnity equal to the cost incurred by the Federal government for fighting the final two years of the war, some \$120 million. *The New York Tribune* of 26 January 1869 was disappointed with the rumored settlement. "No mere list of ships actually destroyed by English built privateers can cover our claims; the commerce of the United States was swept from the seas by British agencies and that is the measure of British liabilities."

1871 proved that the work of Irish nationalists in New York was far from over.²⁷² Astute politicians recognized in the exiles the potential for continued votes and headlines. Tammany Hall, “pledged as it was to the cause of freedom all over the world,” tendered a cordial welcome and bestowed a gift of \$15,000 on the exiles. *The Nation* of 2 February astutely commented: “Providence could have provided no worse fate for the Fenians than to deliver them into the hands of American politicians.”²⁷³ Boss Tweed acted as grand marshal of a parade, but could not corral the Fenian vote.²⁷⁴ Of this the *Herald* was glad:

“O’Donovan Rossa and his companions in exile deserve credit and compliment for the good, sound sense and modest, manly dignity with which they have turned deaf ears to the voice of the political charmer...such tricks of local politics bear no more relation to the dignity of an earnest purpose than do the squibs and firecrackers of a schoolboy’s holiday to the guns that cleared the path of independence at Yorktown, and in later years swept back the stars and stripes to

²⁷² The exiles were John Devoy, John McClure, Henry Mulleda, Charles Underwood O’Connell, and Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa. The *New York Tribune* of 23 January 1871 welcomed the newcomers, but advised them to “beware of politicians who woo them and use them for base and unscrupulous purposes.” This was sage advice. The *New York Evening Post* of 20 January 1871 referred to their arrival and reception as a “Kilkenny cat-fight.” Devoy wrote an autobiography, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, the introduction to which is titled “All Irish History points to the necessity of a separation from the British Empire.”

²⁷³ *The Nation* 12, no.292: 66. Both the New York State Legislature and the US House of Representatives passed resolutions of support and sympathy for the exiles. On 22 February they were received by President Grant. See *New York Tribune* 31 January 1871. Also, *New York Times* 23 February 1871.

²⁷⁴ *New York Herald* 31 January 1871. Rossa, who likened Tammany Hall to Orangemen, decried the disunity of New York’s Irish community as threatening the cause of Ireland’s freedom, and campaigned unsuccessfully on the Republican ticket against Tweed for the New York Senate later that year. (He was defeated by 13000 votes to 7000). The *New York Tribune* of 10 February 1871 tried to minimize the part played by Tammany by stating “the Irish public was unwilling to have the demonstration end in coarse electioneering and ignored Tammany except as a convenience in footing the bills.” The same paper downplayed the festivities, arguing, “Parades are for victors and Irish patriots are not and seldom have been triumphant. They might have been spared the ovation...Parades are ordinarily a nuisance; in winter, they are an abomination...this business ought to stop.” *New York Tribune* 11 February 1871. The *New York Sun* of 31 October 1871, reprinting an editorial from the *Irish Canadian* commented: “We fear that Mr. O’Donovan Rossa, in spite of all he has suffered for Ireland, is not made entirely of pure metal. Egotism, we are certain, enters largely into his composition, and the desire to appear necessary to the Irish revolutionary movement has elevated him above his natural sphere. The superabundant homage and praise lavished upon him in New York after his advent to this country must have affected his understanding somewhat...the idea of elevating himself to any social or profitable position in the United States is preposterous.”

the battered ramparts of Fort Sumter.”²⁷⁵

Many viewed the arrival of the Fenian exiles as a chance to reinvigorate the sagging fortunes of the Fenian movement. *The Irish Citizen* of 18 January saw the public receptions as proof of American hostility to Great Britain. Amid elaborate receptions and public parades, John Savage suggested that the exiles could be used to affect a union of all Irish nationalists in the United States.²⁷⁶ The plan was embraced by the exiles, whose: “Aim it will be to create an Irish party in this country, whose actions in American politics will have for its sole object the interests of Ireland.”²⁷⁷ The five proposed a new organization, an Irish Confederation, which would unite all in a common cause.²⁷⁸ Fenians, Hibernians, Revolutionaries, and others would retain their individual identities but remit a percentage of their revenue to the new organization. While many welcomed the plan—the United Irishmen being subsumed by the new organization—the Fenians

²⁷⁵ *New York Herald* 21 January 1871. The paper referred to the public reception and raucous celebration as a “grab game.”

²⁷⁶ *Irish People* 28 January 1871. See also To the State Centres, Centres of Circles, and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood, n.d., Gallagher papers. The Fenians held their tenth general convention in March 1871. Attempts to fuse the Brotherhood with the nascent Irish Confederation were rebuffed at that time.

²⁷⁷ *Boston Pilot* 4 February 1871. Not everyone wanted the exiles to take up the mantle of Fenianism. Wrote John Boyle O’Reilly to John Devoy on 28 January 1871, “I hate that name— Fenian—that meanly sounding word, with its association of defeat, dissension, and trickery has been a millstone on the neck of our nationality for years past.” Devoy’s Post Bag, 54. Devoy replied, “Most of us are sick of the very issue of Fenianism, though as resolved as ever to work for the attainment of Irish independence.” Former Fenian Senator James Gibbons, who commented that he felt as if he had “Given up his time and wasted his energies under the delusion I was serving Ireland,” seconded these sympathies. Gibbons to Gallagher, 28 March 1870, Gallagher papers.

²⁷⁸ The Irish Confederation held its first convention in May. *Irish American* 25 May 1871. Its constitution provided for a directory of twelve members, five of who made up the executive committee. The Confederation campaigned for Irishmen to join either its own organization or the Fenians. “Now is the time to join the national ranks and commence the preparation for the struggle...let our countrymen of every city, town, and hamlet in the Union join and form companies of the Legion of Saint Patrick.” *The Irish American* 28 October 1871.

remained aloof.²⁷⁹ At its tenth national convention, held on 21 March, the Brotherhood underwent some cosmetic changes, but refused to countenance any connection with the Confederation.²⁸⁰ Many former staunch supporters now blanched at the name Fenian; the *Boston Pilot* counseled the Brotherhood to rethink its ambivalence towards union: "A bright hope is better than a sad memory. Fenian, to strange ears, is a word of mean sound...which the Irish revolutionists will do well to bury with all the honors due its venerable antiquity."²⁸¹ Five months later, the Brotherhood held its eleventh annual convention, and returned John O'Mahony to the seat of power he once enjoyed. One paper editorialized that the Fenian Brotherhood "returning in it's decrepit age to John O'Mahony, is rattling its old bones a bit and hopes for rejuvenation under the old man's banner. The move is proof of the present weak condition of the movement, and the uphill task that will be needed to keep it alive."²⁸²

Despite these aspersions, the Fenians were to outlast even the Irish Confederation,

²⁷⁹ John Savage had resigned as Chief Executive of the Fenians to effect the union, but was overruled at the convention when he counseled reconciliation.

²⁸⁰ At the convention, the office of chief executive was abolished and a twenty-one-member executive council elected. *Proceedings of the Tenth General Convention of the Fenian Brotherhood* (New York, n.p., 1871). *The Irish People* of 1 April 1871 castigated the Brotherhood for refusing to be subsumed into the Irish Confederation, writing: "We deliberately and emphatically pronounce John O'Mahony and John Savage to be the enemies of all Irishmen in America. This is the curse of our race...let us differ on anything and forthwith the difference assumes the appearance, and in most cases the reality, of personal hatred." In September a brief union was realized, but it quickly collapsed. *Irish People* 9 September 1871.

²⁸¹ *Boston Pilot*, 10 September 1871. Among the leading Irish American periodicals, only Stephen Meany's *Irish Democrat* supported O'Mahony. The *Irish American*, *Irish Citizen*, *Irish Republic*, *Irish People*, and *Irish World* all castigated the Brotherhood.

²⁸¹ *Boston Pilot* 10 September 1871.

²⁸² *Boston Pilot* 12 October 1872. Others cautioned O'Mahony not to abuse his power: "Keep up your spirit and subdue the Celtic devil of revenge within you." Charles Kickham to O'Mahony, 28 September 1869, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

which collapsed in the spring of 1873.²⁸³ The hoped for union of all Irish nationalists into one umbrella organization was replaced by the usual split into those who favored constitutional agitation, and those committed to a violent resolution of their problems. The former coalesced into a Home Rule movement that was committed to legal and constitutional agitation, while the latter wedded themselves to the Fenians, and, increasingly, the Clan-na-Gael.²⁸⁴ At the twelfth national convention, the Fenians pledged that the Brotherhood would never be dissolved, until their object had been fully attained.²⁸⁵ At the thirteenth convention, held in August 1874, the Brotherhood pledged itself to securing the release of those Fenians still in British prisons, announcing that the organization would embark on a campaign to secure the rescue of “their brothers still incarcerated in British dungeons and to render pecuniary assistance to their family.”²⁸⁶ Unrepentant physical force nationalists were impatient with all halfway measures and wished to use force and dynamite to compel England to free Ireland; to this end the

²⁸³ *Boston Pilot* 7 June 1873. Thomas Clarke Luby blamed the economic downturn of that year for the collapse of the movement, claiming that most Irish Americans were more concerned with their own plight than with alleviating suffering in Ireland. For the contention that the attention of working-class Irish Americans was reoriented to labor issues in the spasmodic economic atmosphere, see Eric Foner, “Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism in the Gilded Age” in Eric Foner, ed., Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 150-200.

²⁸⁴ The forerunner of the Clan-na-Gael, which in the long run supplanted the Fenians and became the American arm of physical force nationalism, was the United Brotherhood. The UB, sometimes referred to as the VC because of an archaic code whereby each letter was represented by the one immediately following it in the alphabet, was founded by Jerome Collins in New York City on 20 June 1867, the anniversary of Wolfe Tone’s birthday. Collins was a scientist employed by the *New York Herald*. He lost his life in the ill-fated *Jeanette* expedition to the North Pole in the 1870’s. For more on Collins and the United Brotherhood, see Sean O’Luing, The Freemantle Mission (Tralee: Anvil Books, 1965).

²⁸⁵ Constitution and By-Laws of the Fenian Brotherhood. (New York: n.p., 1873). Savage published an influential tract, American Citizens Prisoners in Great Britain: Extract from Proceedings of the Ninth General Convention of the Fenian Brotherhood (New York: n.p., 1870) The bulk of the document contains correspondence from the Fenians to President Grant to secure the release of imprisoned members of the Brotherhood.

²⁸⁶ Minutes of the Thirteenth Convention, Fenian Brotherhood Records. The Brotherhood held its fourteenth convention in January 1876. *New York Herald* 29 January 1876.

Brotherhood announced the establishment of a “skirmishing fund.”²⁸⁷ Monies collected would be used to finance terrorist activities— such as the dynamiting of bridges, gas works, and arsenals— and to bankroll rescue operations.²⁸⁸ Some journalists warmly embraced this idea: “We want some band of men to pioneer the way— sometimes to skirmish, sometimes to act as a forlorn hope, sometimes to give martyrs and confessors; always acting, always showing that we have still amongst us brave men ready to do or dare.”²⁸⁹ Some even counseled a return to a long forsaken plan of earlier Irish nationalists:

“Many years ago, if I am not mistaken, you were one of those who had some negotiations with the Russian minister in Washington. Would it not be well to try

²⁸⁷ The fund was the brainchild of Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, who later established a newspaper *The United Irishman*, to espouse his cause and solicit contributions. Rossa’s views were also carried in *Ireland’s Liberator and Dynamite Monthly*, which featured a list of traitors, spies, informers, and hanging judges, complete with their home addresses should readers wish to eliminate them. Rossa would assume the mantle of the Fenians upon O’Mahony’s death in 1877. Originally, John Devoy wanted Rossa expelled from the UB for this activity, but he later became reconciled. Devoy was successful in wresting control of the skirmishing fund (renamed the “National Fund” in 1881) away from Rossa. See Terry Golway, *Irish Rebel: John Devoy and America’s Fight for Ireland’s Freedom* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998.)

²⁸⁸ Some of the funds were used to develop the building and operation of a torpedo boat, the *Fenian Ram*, designed to harass British shipping and commerce. The ship’s inventor, John Phillip Holland, developed a primitive submarine with a stipend from the Brotherhood. The Fenians had long been enamored with submarines, as evidenced by correspondence from O.S. Halstead to T.W. Sweeny, dated 18 April 1866, divulging plans for a submarine boat dubbed “the intelligent whale.” T.W. Sweeny papers.

²⁸⁹ *Irish World* 10 October 1874. In an earlier editorial, the same journal returned to themes transcendent in Irish American nationalism: the unity of Irish and American interests, and the inherent justice in republican movements of all stripes: “A war between England and the United States would be the ruin of England. A fleet of Irish manned privateers would in six months sweep the seas of English commerce! Destroy her commerce and you destroy also her manufactures. What is the result? Famine followed by civil war, in which the monarchy would be demolished, the aristocracy forever swept away, and her world-wide possessions cut loose and forever independent of the scepter! This would be the result of war between England and the United States. England knows this well. Therefore England will take good care not to engage in such a war. Since she is no position to make war, it is your business, Irish revolutionists, to create complications for her. It is your duty to make the long looked for opportunity. Be active and vigilant; your power is great. Do nothing precipitate though; do not be led away by impulse. But, in times of peace prepare for war. This country is Ireland’s base of operations. Here in this Republic— whose flag first flashed on the breeze in defiance of England— whose first national hosts rained an iron hail of destruction upon England’s power— here in this land to whose shores English oppression exiled our race— we are free to express the sentiments and to declare the hopes of Ireland. It is your duty, revolutionary chieftains, to realize this hope! If you are but true to this duty— if you are but true to nature— there are those among you who, perhaps, will yet live to uplift Ireland’s banner above the ruins of London.” *Irish World* 19 September 1874.

to reopen the negotiation now? Threatened unrest in Poland may be used by England against Russia, who may wish a countervailing trouble in Ireland. Russia will only need Ireland as a demonstration, but Ireland may make good use of the countenance or aid Russia gives.”²⁹⁰

In June 1876 the Brotherhood successfully rescued ten Fenians from Australia, proving that there was much life left in the organization. The same could not be said of John O’Mahony, who passed away on 6 February 1877. At the fifteenth convention, held the week before, the Fenians chose O’Donovan Rossa as new head centre, a position he would hold until his resignation in August 1878.²⁹¹ At the sixteenth convention, held in New York on 17 October 1878, the Brotherhood abolished the title of head centre and replaced it with a governing council of thirteen members. Remaining committed to the use of physical force— the skirmishing fund having drawn in over \$70,000 by this time— the Brotherhood repudiated the use of constitutional agitation and refused to be part of Michael Davitt’s New Departure.²⁹²

The commitment to the use of physical force could be seen in the last convention of the Fenian Brotherhood. Rossa addressed the 132 delegates by stating: “The Fenian Brotherhood men have no allegiance or understanding with men or with societies of men who endeavor to wrest Ireland’s freedom from England by constitutional agitation, or

²⁹⁰ John W.M. Curry to O’Mahony, 17 November 1876, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

²⁹¹ *New York Herald* 8 February 1877. *The Irish World* 10 February 1877.

²⁹² Opined *The Irish American* of 14 January 1882, “the day for temporizing and negotiating with political traitors and trimmers is past forever.” Others agreed: “What in the name of the great God does he mean? He deserves to be put to death. A prominent Irish politician, another prominent but far worse tool that D’Arcy Magee in the service of the Catholic Church and therefore England; he is another Cullen, with all but the cardinal’s hat...may the curse of the persecuted Irish people fall on him and blight his nefarious existence...that wretch, that coward, that traitor.” “Martha” to O’Mahony, 26 September 1875, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Some, of course, advocated change. “It is advisable to send occasional contributions to Ireland to help the victims of landlord or like outrages. If the Brotherhood wishes to retrieve itself from the contempt it has brought upon itself, they should not delay in implementing this proposal.” J. O’Connell to Fenian Brotherhood, nd, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

agitation of any kind that has not fight of some kind in it.”²⁹³ But the tactics and strategies of the Brotherhood were appealing to fewer and fewer members of the Irish American community.²⁹⁴ Worse, the continued activities of physical force nationalists threatened the newfound acceptance and prominence of later generations of Irish and Irish Americans.²⁹⁵ As the *New York Tribune* editorialized:

“The Irish influence in questions of an international character is directly hostile to the United States, and it is one of the most serious dangers against which we have to provide...we shall not quarrel with any man for loving his native land, but we do not mean that the United States shall be the tail to the Irish kite. If Irishmen can establish independence, all right; let them do it, but they shall not use this republic as a convenience...the immediate object of at least a considerable party of them is to embroil us with England about their affairs. This is what they shall not do...the plain truth is that, where the supposed or real interests are concerned, a large and noisy faction of the Irish in the United States are disloyal if not treacherous to the adopted country to which they have sworn fidelity.”²⁹⁶

Even Patrick Ford, long a proponent of physical force nationalism, had soured on the idea of indiscriminate terrorism, transferring the holdings of the Skirmishing Fund to the Land

²⁹³ *New York Sun* 29 November 1885. Rossa’s views were expressed in a new journal, *Ireland’s Liberator and Dynamite Monthly*, as well in the extremist *United Irishman*—“the organ of all advanced nationalists”—which Rossa himself edited. Both journals advocated a program of violence throughout England that was intended to terrorize the populace there. As ringleader, Rossa kept up a barrage of agitation and proposals that denounced constitutionalists as traitors to Ireland. Said Rossa, “The dynamite work will go on until Ireland is free of London is laid in ashes.” *United Irishman* 21 February 1885. When a group of prominent politicians—including Mayor Grace, Governor Hill, and Senator John Sherman—turned out on 27 May 1886 to show support for the reforms of William Gladstone, Rossa tried unsuccessfully to disrupt the proceedings.

²⁹⁴ Both *The Irish American* and *The Irish World* of 20 May 1882 roundly denounced the Phoenix Park murders and the continued terrorist activities of Rossa and his cohorts. Earlier, both journals had also denounced the activities of the Molly Maguires. *The Irish World* of 3 March 1877 maintained that the violent acts attributed to the miners were perpetrated by informants who would then have something to report to authorities; *The Irish American* of 7 April 1877 maintained that the atrocities were the deeds of a small minority.

²⁹⁵ This situation is analogous to the one that greeted the Fenians in the 1860’s; one of the reasons they were confronted by the American Catholic hierarchy is because their revolutionary activities threatened the newfound acceptance of Irish immigrants that had been forged on the battlefields of the American Civil War.

²⁹⁶ *New York Tribune* 18 December 1883.

League.²⁹⁷ Other journalists supported this decision:

“The purposes of the Skirmishing Fund were a series of vague, bombastic and silly propositions, for the blowing up of English prisons with dynamite, the burning of English cities and other equally impractical methods of striking our ancient enemy to her knees. Two wrongs never make a right...the cause of Ireland can be best benefited by a strict adherence to the policy of passive resistance which has worked such good results under the guidance of the worthy leaders of the Land League...there grows in the garden of a national movement no more noxious weed than the ‘patriotic fool.’”²⁹⁸

Devoid of mass support, the Brotherhood died in 1886. Those who remained committed to the use of physical force allied themselves with the Clan-na-Gael and continued to work for the realization of Irish independence.²⁹⁹ Others turned their attention to the Land League to redress Irish wrongs. While the Brotherhood was no longer an active player in local or international affairs, it had left a lasting impression on Irish and American societies.

²⁹⁷ Land League organizer Charles Stewart Parnell had toured the United States in 1880 and was feted by politicians everywhere he went. In an address to Congress, he stated: “we do not seek to embroil your Government with the government of England; but we claim that the public opinion and sentiment of a free country like America is entitled to find expression wherever it is seen that the laws of freedom are not observed.” Gibson, *Attitudes of the New York Irish*, 334.

²⁹⁸ *The Irish American* 12 February 1881. Shortly thereafter, Ford reversed himself: “I believe in making reprisals. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. I believe that every informer ought to die the death of a dog. I believe that all the material damage possible ought to be inflicted on the enemy. I believe that England ought to be plagued with all the plagues of Egypt— that she ought to be scourged by day and terrorized by night...until England falls paralysed on her knees and begs Ireland to depart from her.” *The Irish World* 4 January 1884.

²⁹⁹ The Clan-na-Gael remained a pariah. Commented *The Nation* of 20 June 1889 “whatever becomes of the Clan-na-Gael... it should not be forgotten that this organization, and not the great mass of Irish Americans, is on trial. This is the organization which first and last has been the worst enemy the Irish race in America has ever had. It is led by men who see in Irish wrongs and sufferings nothing more than an opportunity to advance their own interests...it would be an incalculable gain to the cause of home-rule and to American politics if the whole organization could be put in jail.” *The Nation* 48, no. 1251: 496.

CHAPTER SIX

“Whoever are *really* Irish are anti-British— and as profoundly so in the United States as in Ireland.”¹

Having now recounted the story of the Fenian Brotherhood in America, we are left with a series of questions that, if left unanswered, will obscure more than they reveal. Nearly one hundred and fifty years after their exploits, historians and others continue to debate what animated these men to attempt to “liberate Ireland on the plains of Canada.” Only by posing and answering a series of questions, can we come to a more judicious understanding of what forces motivated these “bold Fenian men.” In our inquiries, we must ascertain why individuals chose to join this particular group, how the organization was perceived by others in American society, and the ultimate legacy of the Fenian Brotherhood for nationalist movements, New York City, and Irish America.

Our first investigation must revolve around why individuals chose to ally themselves with such an organization. What did the members of the Brotherhood gain, or hope to gain, by such an association? How did the Fenians attract thousands of men and women, and collect hundreds of thousands of dollars, at a time when there were sundry other alternatives for Irish immigrants in the United States?

The pivotal question in ascertaining the historical impact of Fenianism is not whether such nationalist sentiments were widespread among Irish Americans; rather, the question is why large numbers of Irish Americans chose to express themselves through Fenianism rather than through safer and more conventional vehicles. A close look at the memoirs, personal reminiscences, and nationalist press reveals a fascinating array of

¹ *New York Tribune* 2 June 1866.

justifications and rationales for membership in the Fenian Brotherhood.

We can state that individuals chose to join the Fenians for three broad— and often overlapping— reasons. First, membership represented a rationalization of immigrant pains, and was seen by many as an opportunity to strike a blow for Ireland's independence: this aspect was unique among those other outlets available to Irish exiles. Secondly, the decidedly republican tenor of the Fenians allowed the Irish immigrants to claim as their own a piece of American identity that was then on center stage.² The ideology of republicanism was sacrosanct in nineteenth century America, and the Fenians' conscious juxtaposition of their aims alongside the American revolutionary heritage allowed the Irish immigrant to depict himself as the heirs to this country's revolutionary tradition and hence worthy of citizenship and support. Finally, picnics and grand demonstrations, replete with secret handshakes and clandestine purposes, served as important social and recreational outlets for dispossessed and unwelcome immigrants. All of these were powerful factors that influenced individuals to join, or remain aloof from, the Fenians in New York.

What makes the Fenians so interesting is that they were able to attract members even when faced with competition from countless other groups that courted potential members. Nascent labor organizations, fraternal societies, and other "mainstream" groups all vied with the Brotherhood for members and support.³ Still, despite clerical condemnation and pressures from employers and others not to join, the Fenians were

² For the centrality of republican ideologies and sentiments in antebellum America, see: Daniel Rodgers, "Republicanism: Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79 no. 1 (1992): 11-38.

³ Of course, some individuals were simultaneously members of several of these groups. Terence V. Powderly, co-founder of the Knights of Labor, was a supporter of the Clan-na-Gael and a practicing Catholic.

successful in recruiting and retaining members throughout their long history. Through nearly three decades, the Brotherhood enrolled some forty thousand men and remitted almost half a million dollars to Ireland. One explanation for this level of success was that the majority of members were deeply committed to the ideals expressed by the Brotherhood. Indeed, those who adopt such extreme militant views and measures as the Fenians did— especially when they are opposed and disparaged by society’s “normal” leaders — require an unusual degree of time, energy, courage, and dedication to implement their plans. There is copious evidence to support the contention that the rank and file of the Fenian Brotherhood were “many good and true... earnest and sincere men... who cheerfully and ungrudgingly gave up all that life holds dear— family, friends, fortune, even life itself, for the cause.”⁴

The men and women who supported the Fenian movement were deeply affected by the Great Hunger. Indeed, one contemporary noted that the movement was “the direct, and ... inevitable outcome of ’48.”⁵ An Gorta Mor had left an indelible image in the minds of all those who had lived through that catastrophe; scarcely any who survived the Famine did so with his or her family intact. The horrors of the blight, starvation, eviction, and death haunted the Irish who immigrated en masse to North America in the decades following Black’47.⁶ They took with them an inveterate hatred of all things

⁴ Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative*, 151. In a letter to John O’Mahony, John O’Leary characterized the typical Fenian as “a capital worker, honest...ardent and devoted, zealous and brave. He is decidedly the man with the largest share of intellect among the workers I have met. ” O’Leary to O’Mahony, January 1859, Fenian papers, Catholic University of America.

⁵ O’Leary, *Recollections*, 1: 78. O’Leary added “The famine of ’45, in so far as it influenced the movement of ’48 and inflamed the minds of men then and after against England, had, no doubt, some bearing upon Fenianism.”

English; they had little else on their minds but the hope that they would return to Ireland and exact a good deal of “revenge for Skibbereen,” a Cork village devastated by the Hunger. Immigrants like John Nolan of New York were “imbued with a hatred that only grew stronger as they grew older.”⁷ As one nationalist exclaimed: “In the future, the enemies of Ireland shall be my enemies, and her friends my friends. This is the true doctrine for a Fenian; this is the true test of his sincerity.”⁸ Echoed another: “There is no amount of personal humiliation I would not undergo for the benefit of that country which I have never forgotten nor never disowned.”⁹ Indeed, it was primarily the experiences and memories of the Great Famine that had engendered the savage hatred of England that animated great numbers of Irishmen on both sides of the Atlantic. The words of John Mitchel, who commented “while the Almighty had indeed sent the blight, it was the English who sent the famine,” were considered a truism. Extreme nationalist interpretations of not only the Hunger but of all previous Irish history became commonplace; in later years, those with little connection to the Famine and its resultant emigration would cite these beliefs as proof of English callousness and racial prejudice.¹⁰

⁶ “Emigration,” which *The Irish Republic* of 18 May 1867 characterized as “our misfortune but not our fault,” left the immigrant “with heavy hearts and light pockets.” For a similar take see, “Farewell to Erin,” a poem appearing in *The Irish American* of 1 March 1851.

⁷ John Nolan to James Stephens 4 July 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁸ Proceedings of the Fifth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, 33.

⁹ Timothy Murphy to P.J. Downing, 1 October 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Writing from Texas, Murphy continued: “I understand McCartie is sleeping with your sister. If that be so I wish them one hundred male children, and all of them Fenians.”

¹⁰ Commenting on the way in which history affected all Irish, *The New York Times* of 26 November 1867 wrote: “It seems difficult for the English mind to understand how, in the more imaginative Irish nature, the burden of past grievances is inherited, and how the traditional wrongs of which he himself knows comparatively little, animate the Fenian of today with the spirit of '98. There is certainly a hidden fire in the eyes of most Hibernians, which, on occasions, flashes forth a determination and energy which the colder temperaments of other nationalities knows not...let the memories of the land he has left be once recalled...and you will see the unconquerable spirit of his race convert the uncouth plowman into an

Even the staid *London Times* became uneasy that the prospect of vengeful Irish Americans returning to Europe, warning its readers that “we must gird our loins to encounter the nemesis of seven centuries of misgovernment.”¹¹ Fenian Senator A.L. Morrison of Missouri spoke for many when he stated: “I, like a million others, had left Ireland with a vengeance, when poverty drove me to emigrate to the land that gave me welcome— this glorious land. We had left Ireland with a vengeance, and as misers nurse their gold, we nursed that vengeance, cherished it, and it had grown great. The day is now at hand when we should return with a vengeance.”¹²

The pages of the Irish daily press are filled with references to the Hunger and the role that England ostensibly played in bringing about that catastrophe. So too are the diaries, memoirs, and personal reminiscences of those who were fortunate enough to survive that calamity. To overstate the psychological impact that the Hunger had on Irish immigrants is nearly impossible; it was an all-consuming passion that motivated rational men to take precipitous actions. As one Fenian stated “no matter where scattered, England will find an undying and relentless foe in every quarter of the globe in which an Irishman breathes or has influence.”¹³ Added another:

“Let the tears of the widows and the cries of the orphaned ones steel your hearts and move you to renewed efforts! Let not the prisoner in his dungeon droop with a heavier weight around his heart than the chain that encompasses his limbs, as he despairingly hears of the abandonment of the cause for which he has sacrificed his

eloquent orator, a warmhearted patriot and a sincere friend. There is probably not a more demonstrative nation in the world than the Irish. The Irishman’s demonstrations may not have theatrical finish, but they have real enthusiasm and vim”

¹¹ Schrier, *America and the Irish Migration*, 127.

¹² *New York Times* 19 April 1866. Echoed William Roberts: “They have seen fifty per cent of her population disappear in twenty years— as England said, going thank heaven with a vengeance, perhaps they will return with a Heaven’s vengeance?”

¹³ *Lecture by W.R. Roberts*, 19.

all. Vengeance on the tyrant! Remember the torch, the sword, the prison, the poor-house, and the emigrant ship!”¹⁴

But there is more to the Fenians than blind vengeance. Many of those Fenians who had marched to Canada were Civil War veterans, who knew full well the dangers of combat and the rigors of camp life.¹⁵ Even after the failed raids of 1866, correspondence supports this contention, and shows the level of commitment to the cause. In a letter dated 17 July 1866 Thomas McGinn, Secretary of the IRB in Chicago wrote Fenian Secretary of War Thomas W. Sweeny that “...far from being appalled by our late reverse, we are rather more determined and resolved, no matter what may happen, to persevere until we have achieved what we have undertaken.”¹⁶ More than a few wrote to say that they were disheartened, but not dispirited by the recent events; they were still willing to risk their reputations, careers, and lives in the cause of Irish freedom. The following examples are good illustrations of this commitment.

John McMahon applied for a position as Chief Surgeon of the Fenian Army on 7 April 1866, stating that he was “just about to graduate from Harvard Medical College,” but that he “shall not wait for that if it becomes necessary for him to go to the front.”¹⁷ Patrick Condon of New Orleans wrote to offer his services; “I regret that I have not wealth to give as freely as I can my time and labour, but having graduated first in my

¹⁴ Sixth National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood, 18.

¹⁵ Observers as different as John O’Mahony and George Templeton Strong acknowledged this. O’Mahony referred to the grizzled veterans of the Canadian raids as “soldiers of practical experience and men of splendid courage.” Official Report of the Investigating Committee of the Department of Manhattan, Fenian Brotherhood, 35. On 4 June 1866, Strong wrote: “Very many of these Fenians had seen hard service under Longstreet and Lee (and were therefore beloved by all Canadians two years ago)...Canadian volunteers will find them ugly customers, a specially comforting feature.” Strong, Diary, 4: 89.

¹⁶ Thomas McGinn to T.W. Sweeny, 17 July 1866, T.W. Sweeny papers.

¹⁷ John McMahon to Thomas William Sweeny, 7 April 1866, T. W. Sweeny papers.

class in the military college of Chelsea, I may not be useless.”¹⁸ These feelings were far from isolated. In the three months following the failed June invasion, individuals contributed nearly \$50,000 to Fenian coffers, an amount nearly one-third that had been received from all sources prior to that date.¹⁹ A full year after the raids, James Gibbons, Vice-President of the Brotherhood could happily report “that the organization is progressing steadily on the road to perfection, and where the old circles have died out, new and better ones have been formed. Large numbers of our honest countrymen, who have been deluded or betrayed, are fast joining our ranks, now that the weak and wretched tools have been unmasked and stand revealed in their naked deformity.”²⁰ Added another, “The leaders of the Fenians are men who have taken up downright revolution as the business of their lives...The state centres are nearly all wealthy Irish merchants or professional men; many clergymen are in its ranks, and are earnest supporters of this great Brotherhood.”²¹

This enthusiasm was echoed by at least three other successful Irish Americans: Edward Kelly applied for the same post as the Harvard trained medic, claiming “being a

¹⁸ Patrick Condon to T.J. Kelly, 13 August 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

¹⁹ Report of P.W. Dunne, Acting Secretary of the Treasury, F.B., September 1866, Gallagher papers. While Dunne was satisfied with the contributions, he added: “it cannot be too strongly impressed on the members of the Brotherhood, particularly the wealthy members— who talk of war but never yet have realized their duty in regard to it— that if they mean work they must sacrifice and pay, not what money they can spare, but what they will miss and feel the loss of.”

²⁰ To the Centres of Circles and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood, 10 June 1867, Gallagher papers.

²¹ Preface to Fenianism, 6. The author continued: “But a short time ago, a General of the United States Army and President of the Fenian Military Council, marched arm in arm with the Rev. Mr. Wright, the Superior of Jesuits, at the head of a Fenian procession at Washington D.C.. Generals Meagher, Smith, Shields, McClennan and the mastermind of Sherman’s army, the gallant and invincible John A Logan, are among the distinguished officers who figure in its ranks. One thing is certain— that a fierce and bloody fight between England and Ireland cannot now be averted, and that fight will rock Europe and its institutions to the very base. The Irish revolutionists are right, and right will win as God is God.” *Ibid.*, 14.

surgeon I would prefer a medical position, but having seen service as a lieutenant of artillery in the United States service, I am perfectly satisfied to take a fighting position.”²² EC Franklin of St. Louis was less flexible. Having chosen the medical profession for a livelihood, he stated that he would be of more service “in the field as a surgeon than... running a chance of being shot down in the ranks.”²³ James Sullivan, proprietor of the successful *San Francisco Irish People*, wrote: “The deliverance of our native land has been the dream of my life. I have served through the Mexican War, and one year in the California Volunteers during the late war, so that I am not ignorant of a soldier’s duties. I would gladly go east on the next steamer, to follow you as a private in the ranks. In this cause I am willing to lose my life.”²⁴ A Fenian from Clinton, Iowa had a simple request of the hierarchy: “I do not want any favour from you all that I ask is to be sent on board a vessel of war and have the pleasure of saying I served my own country in the capacity I was brought up.”²⁵ William Randall Roberts, President of the Fenian Brotherhood, successful businessman, and fledgling American politician echoed these thoughts and sentiments:

“My sole and only ambition as a Fenian is to aid in the regeneration of my native land. I joined this organization not to make money but to lose, not to gain new life but to lose one. I entered this movement with a warm heart and high hopes, prepared to stake all and lose all upon the altar of my native land. I risk my all, as do the gentlemen who accompany me; all that is dear to us— the respect of our fellow beings— our respect for ourselves.”²⁶

²² Edward Kelly to T.W. Sweeny, nd., T.W. Sweeny papers.

²³ E.C. Franklin to T.W. Sweeny, 18 February 1866, T.W. Sweeny papers.

²⁴ James Sullivan to T.W. Sweeny, 25 March 1866, T.W. Sweeny papers. *The Irish People* was printed in green ink!

²⁵ Patrick O’Brien to R.M. Hodgden, 12 March 1866, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

²⁶ *New York Times* 19 April 1866. Roberts owned and operated The Crystal Palace Emporium, a dry goods business located at 252 Broadway.

These sentiments, full of an acknowledgement of the dangers which these men faced and of the risks involved to their businesses and reputations, were doubtlessly shared by less literate companions who trekked to Canada in 1866.²⁷ This was certainly not “patriotism as pastime,” but the genuine expressions of dedicated nationalists who were willing to sacrifice anything for their cause.²⁸

Of equal importance in giving rise to Fenianism was the steely reception afforded the Irish Catholic immigrants upon their arrival in America. One theory argues that the potential of rising social mobility led to increased levels of support for Irish nationalist groups.²⁹ Irish immigrants blamed Great Britain not only for exiling them in the first place, but for the inhospitable situation they found themselves in upon their arrival in America.

Many immigrants saw in their low status another manifestation of British misrule.

²⁷ One unnamed correspondent stated he had “quitted his business, compromised his partner, and abandoned his wife” in the name of the cause. “Unidentified agent” to Anthony Griffin, 15 May 1867, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

²⁸ Of particular note is the number of prominent Irish Americans who supported the Brotherhood. Where Eric Foner claims that the best class of Irishmen remained aloof from nationalist activity in later years, this apparently was not the case for the Fenians. A list of twenty-four state centers (including representatives from the West Indies, with Headquarters in Havana) shows that nineteen were lawyers, and four were officers in the United States armed forces. Circular of the Corresponding Secretary of the Fenian Brotherhood, for the period commencing 10 September and ending 28 October 1865 (New York: n.p. 1865). Likewise, at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Department of Manhattan on 30 April 1866, the ten representatives numbered eight lawyers, one physician, and a captain in the United States Army. Official Report of the Investigating Committee of the Department of Manhattan, Fenian Brotherhood (New York: n.p., 1866).

²⁹ See: Thomas N. Brown, Irish-American Nationalism, 1870-1890 (Philadelphia: Lippincott Press, 1966). Brown argues that Irish American nationalism had less to do with Ireland and more to do with the second-class citizenship immigrants were forced to endure in the United States. Brown suggests that Irish American nationalism was a form of social and psychological compensation for the pain and status anxiety generated by immigration and exclusion. This, like Comerford’s approach, tends to trivialize the nationalist sentiment and fervor that animated so many of those who ascribed to the Fenian Brotherhood. The association of so many “respectable” Irish and Irish-Americans in the Fenian movement belies the contention that this was a movement of social outcasts and others striving for respectability in Anglo-America.

Again, personal accounts and the daily press seem to support this thesis; middle class aspirants attributed their harsh reception to the fact that they came from a colonial society. As John Mitchel wrote in *The Citizen*: “Our nation is scattered abroad like the Jews, and trampled at home as no people, or tongue, or nation, ever was before them. Never yet, within the memory of the oldest man, did Ireland rank so low in the public opinion of the world as she does now; never did her honor lie a-bleeding so miserably.”³⁰ Said another, “We are slaves in the United States, and... the reason is plain: we haven’t an Irish nation. England defrauded us.”³¹ In a country such as the United States, founded on liberty and freedom, such a stigma represented a considerable barrier to acceptance and assimilation. By supporting nationalist movements of all stripes, such individuals were hoping to achieve a more ameliorative reception for Irishmen and women in America. “Only if Ireland were independent and prosperous,” argued Thomas Francis Meagher’s *Irish News*, “would her exiled children be honored or respected”; only then, claimed another nationalist journal, could emigrants meet native Americans “without being inflamed with feelings of shame.”³² According to the *Boston Pilot*, “it was necessary for everyone of Irish blood to do all in his power to change the present state of things.”³³ As Thomas Brown argued, nationalism represented a “rationalization of the immigrants pains, and nationalist organizations offered opportunities for leadership and prestige.”³⁴ For Brown, the overriding emotions of the immigrant ghetto were an

³⁰ *The Citizen* 11 March 1854.

³¹ *Irish World* 1 January 1876.

³² Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 334.

³³ *Boston Pilot* 25 September 1886.

³⁴ Brown, *Irish American Nationalism*, 24.

poignant sense of inferiority, a heightened sensitivity to criticism, and an unquenchable yearning for respectability.

Moreover, in the wake of the famine Irish immigrants needed to demonstrate their cohesion as an ethnic group in the face of nativist aggression. During the decades bracketing the American Civil War— a period of intense ethnic identity formation and consolidation— militant Irish nationalists vied with the Catholic Church and the Democratic Party to be the representative embodiment of Irishness in America, the vanguard of the Irish immigrant community. In so doing, the Fenians — by providing this bedraggled mass of Famine immigrants with a language of nationalism— were able to foster incipient notions of national identity in the Diaspora. Thus, in addition to focusing aggression on England, An Gorta Mor served as a rallying point for Irish nationalism. This is not surprising: as Ernest Renan has stated in What Makes a Nation?, it is common suffering such as the Hunger which proves more significant than common triumphs in fomenting nationalist sentiments, as the former impose obligations and demand a common effort from all facets of society.”³⁵

The Fenian Brotherhood helped belie the stereotype that all Irish were uncivilized while allowing for a display of unity in nationalist terms. No longer would they identify themselves as tinsmiths from Dublin, or farmers from Kerry; they were Irishmen, living in America, doing all they could to help themselves and their native country. Indeed, life in the urban ghettos tended to intensify the immigrant’s sense of racial and national

³⁵ Ernest Renan, Qu’est-ce qu’une nation Translated by Ida Mae Snyder. (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1882), 27.

solidarity.³⁶ Just as the Hunger fostered a rabid Anglophobia amidst immigrants who considered themselves exiles, so too did it foster cohesiveness among the hordes that congregated in the sprawling metropolises of the United States. What is more, such expressions of nationalist sentiment seemed more easily embraced by the immigrant community than by their kinfolk in Ireland. Previously isolated in rural pockets, the masses were never able to organize effectively; once they were housed cheek-by-jowl in the ethnic, urban enclaves of North America, such sentiments were more easily voiced and disseminated. Moreover, in Ireland, nationalist sentiment was most often local, directed at foreign landlords or tax collectors. In New York, it could be more readily focused on the larger enemy, the state of Great Britain.³⁷ “Life in America,” wrote Irish America’s journalist giant Patrick Ford, “lifted the Irishman out of the littleness of countyism and into the broad feeling of nationalism.”³⁸

Given these two sets of complementary forces— the legacy of the Hunger and American nativism— one could surmise that the typical member joined the Brotherhood for at least these two reasons: he was looking to help himself in the New World and to

³⁶ Duffy, *Four Years of Irish History*, 690. “They had previously thought and felt in terms of family unit and village, at most in terms of a valley, but now, swept into the melting pot of an early industrial development, they had no valley and no village, and sometimes no family. But there were other impoverished and exploited individuals, and there were others who were better off, and so the new concept of a nation was borne out of this contrast.” Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1961), 61

³⁷ John O’Leary noted, “ The Irishman in America no longer fears the landlord or the law, and he soon, too, ceases to feel the full influence of the priest. He is, and soon comes to feel he is, free to say what he thinks and do what he wishes. And the first wish of the natural man, I am happy to say, is to do something against England.” O’Leary, *Recollections*, 1: 110. The *New York Times* of 26 July 1865 had a less benign view of the typical Fenian recruit. “Most likely the majority of them never set a foot on her soil, or if so it was when they were too young to know anything about it. The natural desire of an Irishman, uneducated and youthful, is to oppose somebody or something, and the natural enemy of the same individual is merry England.”

³⁸ *Irish World* 17 December 1888. On Ford, see J P. Rodecheko, *Patrick Ford and His Search for America: A Case Study in Irish American Journalism, 1870-1913* (New York: ARNO Press, 1976).

redress grievances in the Old. Another motivating factor that cannot be overlooked lies in the decidedly republican tenor of the Fenian movement. By stressing not just independence, but republicanism, the Fenians were consciously adopting one of the most prevalent themes of the host society. In other parts of the Irish diaspora, to be republican was to commit treason; in the United States it was the clearest path to assimilation and respect. Much work has been done in recent years investigating how Irish immigrants tried to assimilate and acculturate into American society. Most treatments have focused on the alleged racism of Irish immigrants, believing that by marginalizing African Americans, the Irish were claiming a white identity and thereby elevating themselves in the eyes of those who held them in little regard. While these whiteness studies have done much to direct the work of new social historians, there are other features of American society that offered as much opportunity for social advancement as did racism. Perhaps the most obvious of these was the ideology of republicanism, which occupied a central place in the American imagination for much of the period under discussion.

By stressing republicanism, the Fenians were going to considerable lengths to show that their aims were not incompatible with American interests; indeed, they seemed to revel in the notion that by seeking Irish independence they were acting as the heirs to America's revolutionary heritage. The fact that the constitutional conventions of both the Fenian Brotherhood (1865) and the United Irishmen (1880) were held in Philadelphia, the site of America's constitutional convention, was not lost to contemporary pundits. Time and again, in memoirs, personal reminiscences, and public and private statements, the leaders and members of the Fenian movement depict themselves as quintessentially American, as not merely revolutionaries but as republican nationalists who are seeking to

redress ancient wrongs by transforming Irish society.³⁹ Of course, this strategy was not new, nor unique to the Fenians; earlier generations of Irish nationalists saw the efficacy and utility of emphasizing their republican sentiments. But it was the Fenians who most clearly juxtaposed their own aims with the perceived meaning of American citizenship. By continually using the symbolic rhetoric of republicanism, Irish nationalists were espousing familiar ideals and arguing for a fuller inclusion in contemporary American society; in so doing, the Fenians provided an important commentary on American society, illuminating public perceptions and transcendent themes about what it meant to be a citizen. The Fenians were making important distinctions between diasporic nationalism and full integration and assimilation, allowing their adherents to be both American and Irish, allowing members to continue to be different without feeling as if they were outsiders.⁴⁰ The dual notion of citizen and revolutionary, of republicanism and nationalism, so threatening to authorities on both sides of the Atlantic, at once made the Fenians a part of, and a challenge to, American society.

Irish immigrants used this connection assiduously. Irish American nationalists built their organizations on a strong foundation of classical and “radical,” or working class, republican rhetoric, inherited both from eighteenth century Irish patriots and Jacksonian Democrats. J.G.A. Pocock and others have stressed the role of classical republicanism in early modern Europe, and Ireland is no different from her continental

³⁹ The symbolic rhetoric employed by the Brotherhood and its members could be seen in the titles of their newspapers (*The Irish Citizen*, *The Irish Republic*) and in the pseudonyms employed by many of their leaders (Hamilton, Washington) in their private correspondence. Apparently, the Fenians sought “liberation through integration,” finding “no challenges, only opportunities.”

⁴⁰ In doing so, the Brotherhood effectively helped re-define the American immigrant experience, allowing individuals to be profoundly American even as they retained political ties and affection for their native land. As an example, consider how many members of the Fenian Brotherhood served in the United States military during the American Civil War.

brethren in experiencing a surge in republican sentiment at this time. Moreover, groups such as the volunteers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century had imbued the people with republican ideologies; by idealizing civic heroes they had inspired the lower ranks with a “republicanism of spirit.”⁴¹ This attitude was transported to America with the immigrants, and remained a consistent, if not always conspicuous, hallmark of Irish nationalism. While some editors were warned against introducing such divisive issues as nationalism to their readers, others went to great lengths to show the harmony between Catholicism and republicanism.⁴² Time and again, ethnic leaders claimed that they were upholding the traditions and virtue of earlier American republicans who had sacrificed for the greater good.⁴³ Editorials admonished Irish readers that “if they expected sympathy or assistance from Americans, they must fight for liberty because they love it, and not bawl it out as a threat, a bugbear, to frighten ‘the old woman at home’ into a base submission to factious tyranny and robbery.”⁴⁴ At the same time, the American audience was assured that Irish interests would be subsumed to American situations.

“When all American demands shall have been satisfied; the candidates for the most exalted political office on earth being equally fit; — then Ireland and Irish

⁴¹ The central discourse of eighteenth century republicanism, from which the Brotherhood drew much of its inspiration, was liberty. The Fenians were trying to show that their movement worked for a restoration, and not a revolution: England had systematically destroyed the Irish nation. The Irish nation preceded both the Brotherhood and the English conquest. This was important, because for many, citizenship was not simply a birthright; it must be won and not merely claimed.

⁴² *Boston Pilot* 13 December 1856. Not all agreed. *The Freeman's Journal* of 8 September 1849 claimed: “we are proud to say of the Irish Catholics that they hold their religion, their glorious old religion, for which their forefathers were martyrs, for which they are now exiles, for which they are ready still to suffer, if God should so ordain— far above the temporal vicissitudes of the unhappy land that gave them birth.”

⁴³ Describing the New York City St. Patrick's Day parade, *The Irish American* of 26 March 1864 noted a banner carried by the Thomas Francis Meagher Club: “One our side is Virtue and Erin, on theirs is the Saxon and guilt.”

⁴⁴ *The Irish American* 26 August 1849. The same paper later carried a lengthy editorial contrasting republicanism and monarchy. *The Irish American* 29 February 1851.

interests may be considered. But not until then. Then— all other claims being equal— he who may happen to have the most active sympathy for the claims of downtrodden Ireland— who may hate England with an intenser and more refreshing bitterness— merits and should receive our preference. The strongest and best hater of England is sure to prove the best American.”⁴⁵

Others commented on the common history and heritage of these two nations, once controlled by British domination, but soon to stand together as equals. The *Dublin Nation* editorialized that:

“The relations between Ireland and America are ...kindlier than those that bind any other two peoples on earth. Her free banner has been the Aegis; her fruitful soil the Canaan to which every Irish exiles weary steps have naturally tended... We feel no beggar’s shame in acknowledging the munificence of America, but the honest gratitude of a nation which, while yet young and vigorous, lent some of it’s strength and all of its sympathies to the struggling fortunes of the Republic, felt for her dangers, and triumphed in her successes.”⁴⁶

Further efforts to draw the United States and Ireland together were made by immigrant editors, who continually joined Irish and American hostility to Great Britain. “The English people hate, and what is worse, despise America and Americans. They hate our democracy as much as they love their own Queen. They despise our institutions and ridicule our habits.”⁴⁷ Echoed *The Irish News*, “Resistance to England, hatred of her intolerance, defiance of her power: these are recollections and virtues common to the citizens of America and the emigrants of Ireland.”⁴⁸ Thus, time and again nationalist sentiments were portrayed as being fully compatible with the duties of Irish immigrants

⁴⁵ *The Irish American* 17 April 1852.

⁴⁶ Quoted in *The Irish American* 23 September 1849.

⁴⁷ *The Irish American* 9 May 1857. Such sentiments were not reserved to the nationalist organs. The Catholic *Freeman’s Journal* of 18 September 1852 had counseled its readers to vote for any candidate who was anti-English.

⁴⁸ *The Irish News* 12 April 1856.

who were also fledgling American citizens.⁴⁹

Irish American nationalists would be far from reticent in claiming national self-determination and ethnic autonomy.⁵⁰ The *New York Tribune* of 15 August 1848 carried an appeal from the Irish Directory, urging support of the Young Ireland movement:

“Friends of Ireland! Now or Never! The blow is struck, the contest is now waging. Why sleeps the Irish blood in America? Precious hours are being wasted; precious blood is flowing...the dying call for vengeance, and the living implore your aid. Let us promptly answer the call, Awake to instant action! Ask no questions, but trust to our zeal, determination, and prudence and neither you nor Ireland shall be disappointed.”⁵¹

These sentiments were echoed by *The Irish American* of 28 October 1849, which stated that it would be:

“Better to sacrifice 100,000 lives in a war that would rid them of their landlord oppression; better to spill half the blood of the Irish race, in a hallowed and sanctified conflict against the most savage oppression the world ever witnessed, than continue such a state of things as exists at present in Ireland. Whet your pike and prime your rifle, and allow no bandit to seize your child’s food, save across your lifeless corpse.”⁵²

While their goals were often elusive and illusory, the Irish nationalists were creating a heritage for themselves. They continually held themselves up as the

⁴⁹ See, for example, editorials in *The Citizen* of 7 January and 29 April 1854, where John Mitchel theorizes that should Irish immigrants place the interests of Ireland above those of the United States, “we abuse the generous hospitality offered us, and we prove the truth of what our enemies say: that we are unfit to win freedom ourselves, or to appreciate the freedom won— and dearly won— by other men.” See also *The Citizen* of 9 February 1856 and the *Irish Citizen* of 29 October 1867 for the sentiment that dual allegiance was not un-American.

⁵⁰ As early as 1848 there were organizations founded in New York to effect an invasion of Ireland to coincide with the Young Ireland revolt. Thomas Addis Emmet and Horace Greeley were among those who raised funds for the Irish Directory for the defense of Irish prisoners. Later, some of this money was used to assist Irish patriots in their escape from Van Dieman’s Land. See *New York Herald* of 14 May 1848 for a letter sent from Ireland by Thomas D’Arcy McGee appealing to the Irish in America not to delay too long their organization and making a strong bid for financial assistance. Three days later, reporting on the Famine, the *New York Tribune* argued that if the British did not take some action to remedy the situation, revolution was the only alternative. *New York Tribune* 17 May 1848.

⁵¹ *New York Tribune* 15 August 1848.

⁵² *The Irish American* 28 October 1849.

intellectual and ideological heirs of America's republican heritage, experiencing the same things as, and seeking to recreate the achievements of, the revolutionary generation. "Would to heaven that our countrymen in Ireland would learn a lesson of independent feeling and hatred of monarchy from this Republican land, with its glorious institutions."⁵³ Far from being indolent and uncivilized, the Irish immigrants were making important statements about the nature of American citizenship; by employing symbolic rhetoric and claiming a symbolic identity, early Irish American nationalists were constructing a symbolic relationship with America's revolutionary heritage. The Fenians, by consciously playing on well-known republican themes, were holding themselves up as the true inheritors of America's republican heritage; moreover, republican rhetoric provided Irish nationalists with a convenient weapon with which to tweak Americans for their hypocrisy. An early issue of *The Irish American* made this clear:

"We protest, as indignantly and solemnly as in our power, against the imputation that we are no true Republicans and disposed towards monarchy. This is a cruel calumny. No body of citizens in these United States are more attached to democratic liberty, and the purity and holiness of the republican spirit, than the Irish Americans. If called on tomorrow to defend the Stars and Stripes, they would belie this wretched imputation by personal sacrifices and deeds of valor; they would show, by the track of the blood stained battlefield, how deeply they love, in their heart of hearts, Republican America and her glorious institutions. The madman and knave, who by his insane, illiterate, coarse, and vulgar writings no more mirrors the political sentiments of Irishmen on the question of Republicanism than did Benedict Arnold the sentiments of Americans when he sold his country to the enemy."⁵⁴

"America has a higher destiny than building ships, breeding niggers, raising cotton,

⁵³ *The Irish American* 16 December 1849. *The Citizen* of 17 March 1855 went even further. John Mitchel editorialized that Saint Patrick had done little for Ireland other than drive out the snakes; George Washington, on the other hand, had rid America of a far more dangerous enemy, one that continued to plague the Emerald Isle.

⁵⁴ *The Irish American* 2 September 1849.

discussing Kansas, or getting crazy with religious revivals,” added one correspondent to *The Irish News*, “Her task is to promulgate freedom in every land. The heroes of the Revolution assuredly did not shed their blood and conquer freedom for America alone.”⁵⁵ Added, another journalist, “The United States of America are, emphatically, the asylum of our race.”⁵⁶

To offset claims that Irish American nationalists were subverting the Republic, journalists and editors went to great lengths to prove that love of one’s birthplace was not inimical to love of one’s adopted country. “In American political movements, the influence of Irish prejudice, Irish politics, Irish impulse should be swallowed up in one whole-souled desire and anxiety to prove worthy of the institutions, the franchises, the freedom, the advancement, the glory, the power of this land of adoption. Such doctrines and views it will be our sacred duty to advocate and teach till they are burned into the soul and sentiment of those whom we specially address.”⁵⁷ Others were chiefly concerned with impressing upon an American readership that their plans represented no threat to the national security of the United States. Wrote the *Irish American* of 21 October 1849 (concerning the newly formed Irish American military units that many worried threatened American institutions):

“The purpose of the Irish American corps is to strengthen the arm of the American military power— to offer Irish hands and hearts to the protection of the Star Spangled Banner— and show their fellow citizens that no order of men in the community can be found more attached to the broadest Republican liberty, or more ready to spill their blood in case of emergency, in its defense, then they. As

⁵⁵ *The Irish News* 8 May 1858.

⁵⁶ *The Irish American* 20 January 1850. Reprinting an article from the *Dublin Nation*, *The Irish American* of 23 September 1849 argued that Irish immigrants needed to prove their worth as citizens, adding, “let them toil night and day to be worthy of the great country.”

⁵⁷ *The Irish American* 3 March 1850.

individuals, they will be found prepared and willing to act patriotically towards Fatherland should the opportunity present itself; but, at present, they have no idea to compromise, by any mental reservation or disguised intention, the good faith and generous hospitality of the American government, or lead it into any difficulty with any European nation with which terms of peace may at present be in existence.”⁵⁸

Echoed Edward O’Flaherty, a Fenian and a Catholic priest, “The first duties of the Irish military organizations now being formed in this country will be the support and defense of the Republic— nor will this militate against or prevent them from offering their swords at a future time to the service of their country. Should Irish American soldiers be asked at the ‘trying time’ to sign a treaty for the independence of their country with the point of their swords, they will do so, or shame their sires.”⁵⁹ These sentiments were repeated in *The Irish News*. Commenting on Irish participation in Fourth of July festivities, editor Thomas Francis Meagher wrote “no better proof could have been given that in America the broad badge of citizenship makes brothers of us all.”⁶⁰ Reiterated *The Irish American*:

“If the battle is to be, only give us Irish-Americans a chance. Give us one fair chance and an open field. Say but the word and 100,000 fighting Celts will spring up and give one wild and hearty cheer for America and liberty. Let the fight be ours against the felon flag and robber foe of Albion; and we swear by the good and great Jehovah to do our part in the conflict like true men and brave soldiers. If we do not, with the Stars and Stripes waving above us, make the battle-field run red with the blood of the foe, and if we walk not over the dead bodies of the enemy to victory and glory for the land of our adoption and grateful love; let the Irish name be blotted from the roll of nations and our people be the laughing-stock to mankind for all time.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ *The Irish American* 21 October 1849.

⁵⁹ *The Citizen* 2 April 1855.

⁶⁰ *The Irish News* 19 July 1856.

⁶¹ *The Irish American* 7 August 1852. For further statements that Irish American nationalism was separate from, but not incompatible with the duties of Irish Americans as apprentice citizens, see *The Citizen* of 7 January and 29 April 1854, and 9 February 1856. Also, *The Irish Citizen* of 29 October 1867.

Added *The Citizen*: “We know of no better way of evincing our appreciation of the laws and institutions of our adopted country than by thus bearing arms and learning their use, holding ourselves in readiness to volunteer at the cry of danger— to suppress domestic treason or repel a foreign invader— a British one especially.”⁶²

Many chose to stress the fact that love of one’s homeland did not preclude love for one’s adopted country. Editorialized the *Illustrated Irish Nation*: “The man who never ceases to love and cherish his aged parents in their time of sorrow and helplessness will prove truer to the wife of his bosom than he who forgets them in their hour of need.”⁶³ A journalist for the *Irish Miscellaney* concurred, adding: “The man who turned his back on his native land forgot his God and promised to become a traitor to the land of his adoption.”⁶⁴ Others drew the connection between love of Ireland and responsible citizenship in America: “By keeping in mind what was good and honorable and virtuous in the old land you will best teach him [the immigrant] to adopt, and love, what is good and noble in the new.”⁶⁵

Others went so far as to advocate not the liberation of Ireland, but it’s annexation by the United States.⁶⁶ “England will never govern Ireland fairly or justly. That consummation seems to be morally and physically impossible. Instincts of hate prevent it. Ownership of land, aristocracy, and serf-ship oppose mountains in its way. With the

⁶² *The Citizen* 19 April 1856.

⁶³ *Illustrated Irish Nation* 19 March 1859.

⁶⁴ *Irish Miscellaney* 3 April 1858.

⁶⁵ *The Irish American* 20 April 1858.

⁶⁶ *The Irish American* of 4 October 1859 also advocated American annexation of Canada.

United States it would be different.”⁶⁷ Most, however, were content with proving that Irish nationalism was not inimical to American interests; indeed many stressed the theory that immigrant nationalism and American interests were mutually supportive. “What are American interests? The preservation of peace, the conservation of equal rights, the honor of the country abroad, may be regarded as the interest of Americans. Irish Catholics are favorable to American interests; if the adoption of proscriptive policies, the inauguration of anarchy, the creed of Abolitionists, and the designs of filibusters represent American interests, we are opposed.”⁶⁸ A common theme was that Irish Americans and the United States would be working together to bring republican liberty to the subjugated peoples of Ireland.⁶⁹

From early in their history, the Fenians consciously stressed their republican tendencies, and what this meant for them as American citizens. At their inaugural constitution, the representatives declared unequivocally: “The Fenian Brotherhood contemplates no breach of the laws of this country, while aiding in the liberation of Ireland...we nevertheless fully admit that our association may possibly be open to the charge of being illegal, if tested by the laws of England, but these we have repudiated on taking the oath of allegiance to the United States.”⁷⁰ This statement made membership in the Brotherhood, and defense of its aims, a test of one’s republicanism.⁷¹ Indeed, one

⁶⁷ *The Irish American* 27 January 1850.

⁶⁸ *American Celt* 2 December 1854. Also, *American Celt* of 7 and 28 October 1854.

⁶⁹ *American Celt* 15 February 1851. Also, *Boston Pilot* 5 January 1850 and 11 November 1865. See also, *The Irish American* 1 April 1865 and *The Freeman’s Journal* 23 February 1889.

⁷⁰ Proceedings of the First National Convention, 34.

⁷¹ The document continued: “we earnestly invite every American who is loyal to the principles of self-government to aid and sustain us by his moral influence against our enemies, the emissaries of foreign

editor offered the following definition of Fenianism, which he saw as a universal organization for freedom and equality: “a word embodying the idea that all men were created free and equal and had the right to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”⁷² Offered another:

“Fenianism is no longer a mere expression of patriotism— a protest against English tyranny and brutality— it is an adoption and a consecration of the principles of human liberty; it is a confession of political faith. As such there is no fear that it will die, or that it will fail. This Brotherhood gives voice and expression, not alone to what is generous, noble, and heroic in the Irish heart, but also to the impulses and tryings, generous and eternal, of the human heart. It has become a reform movement based on justice, liberty, and humanity; and as such it will in the end triumph— as all such movements do.”⁷³

To argue against the movement was to argue against the very tenets of American political thought!⁷⁴

To further connect the Brotherhood to the United States, many compared the experiences of the Irish with those of the American revolutionary generation:

“Less than three millions of colonists elevated themselves from vassalage to England to sovereignty in the republic. No braver than the Irish in their struggles; but they fought the enemy, three thousand miles away from home, and with that advantage beat him. Cannot five millions of Irish people in America fight the enemy three thousand miles from his base and beat him, while Ireland stands at his back with raised dagger, daring him to move? Two or three Confederate privateers destroyed half the commerce of the United States. What would follow to England in the wake of a dozen Irish privateers? Destruction of her commerce; and following that closed manufactures, an empty exchequer, bread riots, national

despotisms, who would feign crush the growth of republican principles and stop the onward march of Freedom by assailing it even in this free land.” Ibid., 36.

⁷² *The Irish Republic* 21 September 1867.

⁷³ D. O’Sullivan, Report of the Secretary of Civil Affairs, 23 November 1868 (n.p., n.d.), 8

⁷⁴ Following the apprehension of W.R. Roberts, one Fenian addressed a crowd of supporters with the following harangue: “President Roberts is not among you tonight; he is now a prisoner in the Eldridge street jail, in a city of free America, charged with the crime of endeavoring to propagate American liberty.” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 14 June 1866.

bankruptcy, revolution. That would be the brief history that would stare her in the face if she continued such a war with us. This would be a war from which no armies could defend her, no navy protect her, no money save her. Her only safety would be in her concession to her demands— Ireland a republic, independent, and free.”⁷⁵

The Brotherhood skillfully linked allegiance to this nation with membership in the organization, solemnly declaring:

“...without limit or reservation, our entire allegiance to the constitution and laws of the United States of America. We furthermore boldly and firmly assert our unquestionable right under the said constitution and laws to associate together for the above named object, or for any similar one; and to assist with our money, our moral and political influence, or if it so pleases, ourselves, with our persons and our lives in liberating any enslaved land under the sun. We direct the whole force, moral and material, from all points toward the overthrow of British tyranny in Ireland, and the establishment of an independent government in its stead.”⁷⁶

Disavowing any political pretense or affiliation, *The Irish American* defended the organization. “The cry is raised: the Fenians are a political body! Not as far as American politics is concerned...they do not, as a body, propose to meddle in American affairs in any manner.”⁷⁷ To offset claims that the Fenians were, like all Irishmen, close-minded tools of the Democratic Party, *The Irish American*, in an essay entitled “The Fenian Policy,” attempted to show that the Irish were political pragmatists:

“It is a singular fact that, closely as the Irish in the United States have been identified with American politics for the last half century, their position and the influences that govern their actions are little understood and appreciated by those who write for the American press as though we were some foreign body deposited in the midst of the community by some political convulsion instead of a kindred and congenial element, gradually and naturally absorbed into the social system through the wise provisions laid down by the Fathers of this Republic.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Timothy O’Leary to Michael Kerwin, 16 November 1868, Gallagher papers.

⁷⁶ Proceedings of the First National Convention, 37.

⁷⁷ *The Irish American* 2 September 1865.

⁷⁸ *The Irish American* 30 June 1866.

Should this government interfere in their plans, the Fenians were quick to point out that as long as they limited themselves to moral agitation, they were breaching no laws:

“While we conduct ourselves as law-abiding citizens of these United States, we most firmly and emphatically protest against, repudiate, and resist all interference with the legitimate exercise of our civic and social privileges as Freemen under the American constitution on the part of any man or class of men, and more especially on the part of those who may claim to represent or to receive instruction from any foreign potentate or foreign official whatsoever; for, if we were to submit to such interference, we would be unworthy of participating in the great political privileges, wherewith the naturalized citizens of America are invested.”⁷⁹

Stated another:

“The American Fenian Brotherhood is only a branch, and not a fighting branch at that, of the general movement for Irish revolution. The members are not sworn or even pledged to take the field. It is not proposed to transport the Brotherhood to Ireland...the proper functions of the Fenian Brotherhood are not to carry on the war in Ireland, nor to urge the carrying on of such a war, but simply to sustain those who have decided, and they are the parties to decide in the premises, to take the field or; 1. to evoke and practicalize a general sentiment, on the American continent, favorable to Irish independence 2. to organize and wield in the revolutionary conflict the intelligence, wealth, and voluntary physical force of the Irish American population.”⁸⁰

These sentiments were echoed by both camps within the Fenian movement, and each side tried to paint the other as less republican, and hence less American, than itself. Indeed, the continued trumpeting of the republican aspects of the Brotherhood was sometimes the only common feature unifying the fragmented movement.⁸¹

⁷⁹ The only crime the speaker admitted was “the heinous crime of loving his country and her institutions better than his imbecile majesty.” Ibid.

⁸⁰ Preface to Fenianism, 6.

⁸¹ A second unifying force could be found in the fact that each camp advocated temperance. Wrote *The Irish Republic* of 14 December 1867: “An hour of drunkenness kills the work of sober and tiresome years. All nationalists should shun whisky as they would the devil.” *The Irish People* of 23 March 1867 ran a column titled “Whiskey and Fenianism” that counseled total abstinence for all Irish nationalists.

The Fenians were determined to prove that they were American, and that their aims should be supported on that premise. Others were intent on proving that love of one's birthplace was not incongruous with loyalty to one's adopted country. When the *New York Herald* stated "The Fenian Brotherhood is neither loyal to the government of the United States, under which it has been allowed to grow up, nor unwilling to violate the laws of this country, if by so doing its darling object—the liberation of Ireland from the British yoke— could be either accomplished or materially furnished," the ethnic press was quick to respond.⁸² *The Irish American* attributed these "prejudicial and unfounded aspersions" to "extraneous and well organized agencies of British origin," adding emphatically "The Fenian Brotherhood is loyal to the land of its adoption in every fibre...there was a time when to hate and strike against the red flag of Britain was no crime on this side of the Atlantic. That time may come again, and should this happen the Fenian Brotherhood will be a ripe and powerful auxiliary to the arms of the Union."⁸³ The Fenians were likewise concerned with debunking the myth that Irish immigrants were unworthy of citizenship. Wrote George Francis Train, "Irishmen are as much American as those who came to Jamestown or Plymouth ten generations ago."⁸⁴ *The Irish American* mirrored these comments: "From the first foundation of the original thirteen colonies down to our time, in every state of the Union, the Irish citizens and their children have done more for the unity, glory, and perpetuity of this country than the exiles of any other land on the entire globe."⁸⁵ At their Sixth National Congress, the Fenians went to

⁸² *New York Herald* 7 May 1865.

⁸³ *The Irish American* 13 May 1865.

⁸⁴ *The Irish American* 28 October 1865.

⁸⁵ *The Irish American* 5 August 1865.

great lengths to show that love of one's homeland was not inimical to love of one's adopted country. Delegates to that convocation passed a series of resolutions to this affect:

"In every fight, on every field, from the first shot at Lexington in 1775, to the last in 1865, the citizens of Irish birth gave the noblest proofs of their devotion to America and her institutions. While the foes and oppressors of Ireland have never ceased to use their influence against the liberties and union of the American people, the friends of Irish independence have never ceased to fight for their preservation. No man, who is not either a fool or a knave, will affirm that the great mass of the citizens of Irish birth have not been loyal, to the heart's core, to the Constitution and independence of these United States. To argue that, because we love the mother that bore us, we cannot adore the bride of our choice, would be as illogical and untrue as to assert that, because we endeavor to be worthy of the freedom we enjoy, by extending it to others, or to make our native land a source of pride and glory instead of sorrow, misery, and mortification, we are not in harmony with the spirit of free institutions or conscientiously true to our oath of citizenship...The Republic has nothing to fear from her Fenian citizens, who hope to establish a similar government on Irish soil...on the contrary, there is much to encourage and rejoice at. Loving freedom, can we be false to it?"⁸⁶

The Brotherhood even placed the failed Canadian ventures in this republican light:

"The men of the Fenian Brotherhood are accused of the same crime as Washington, Kosciusko, Lafayette, and Bolivar were guilty of; their country did not appeal to them in vain— her sufferings reached their hearts and they risked their lives to crush the tyrant, that Irishmen at home might breathe God's pure air of freedom. Did they go to enrich themselves or pander to an unworthy or unpatriotic instinct? No! They are charged with accompanying men who, in the broad light of day, and with the banner of their native land, and with the spirit and heroism of true Irish soldiers, met a vastly greater force of the enemy in a fair and honorable conflict, routed their columns, spared the captured foes, cared for their wounded, and respected their dead. These were the deeds of brave and good and patriotic men."⁸⁷

In an "Address to the Fenian Brotherhood," others saw in the Canadian venture a proper settlement of America's grievances with Great Britain, stating: "we have humbled the enemy of our race and the enemy of American institutions, American manufactures,

⁸⁶ Sixth National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood, 31.

⁸⁷ To the Fenian Brotherhood and Irishmen of America, 1 November 1866, Gallagher papers.

and American commerce...”⁸⁸ Opined one correspondent to *The Irish Republic*:

“The true Irishman is loyal both to his native and to his adopted country. Whenever there is an Irishman to be found who has forgotten his native land, or who refuses to assist in her regeneration and disenthralment, it may be set down as an unmistakable indication that he is either a traitor to, or an unworthy citizen of, the United States. As citizens of America we owe allegiance to her, and to her only. She is, as it were, our lawfully wedded wife, while Ireland is our poor, widowed, woe-worn mother. An ungrateful son never made for a kind father, nor a fond husband; and he who could forget the one would dishonor the other. I have been a soldier of the United States. I would consider myself unworthy of the confidence of America, or of Americans, did I fail or neglect to do for the green flag of Erin what I spent the three best years of my life doing for the Stars and Stripes. I hope our countrymen will still be true to the old cause, and not be diverted from it by the spoutings of politico-religious demagogues. Ireland is our country, and to emancipate and defend her ought to be our religion, and politics, too.”⁸⁹

Echoed another: “The man who is an Irishman born, and is not true to Irish independence, must be false to America. A man who can see his own mother die without lending a hand to relieve her cannot love his adopted mother. In fine, a man false to liberty in one country is false in all.”⁹⁰ Again, the Fenians were attempting to show that not only were their actions justifiable, but that they were in the American tradition.⁹¹

In a well-attended lecture delivered in the autumn of 1865, W.R. Roberts drew the analogies between the United States and Ireland even more explicitly.

“When the American colonies in 1776, embraced the drooping and despised spirit of liberty, and sent the warm and generous blood of Freedom coursing through the

⁸⁸ Address of the Fenian Brotherhood of Philadelphia, to Irishmen and Friends of Ireland in Pennsylvania, n.d., Gallagher papers.

⁸⁹ *The Irish Republic* 22 June 1867.

⁹⁰ *The Irish Republic* 18 May 1867.

⁹¹ With tongue firmly in cheek, the editors of *The Irish Republic* of 4 May 1867 expressed the sentiment that their political reforms extended beyond Irish independence to include women’s suffrage. “We are in favor of woman suffrage, for we, men have suffered so long alone at the hands of rascally politicians that we are anxious to have you suffer with us— misery loves company!”

great heart of humanity, they supported their declaration of independence with the sword, the only talisman that brave men wield against tyrants, and preferred the dread realities of grim and ghastly war, with all its attending evils, rather than bend in base submission to a tyrant, or permit a power other than their chosen representative to bind them or their children with the smallest shadow or stain of slavery...America opened a new volume in the history of humanity and held up to the admiring gaze of oppressed nations the divinity of the people...none hailed American independence with more intense admiration and love than the Irish people....then the beautiful goddess of Liberty, who presided over the destinies of Columbia, touched the shores of poor Erin with her wand, and a gleam of sunshine, which for six hundred years not once penetrated to the abodes of tyranny and misrule, illumined the mountains and valleys of my native land.”⁹²

Comparing the British press accounts of both the American Revolution and the Fenian movement, Roberts could not help but conclude that destiny had a special place for the two nations, a place that was firmly built on republican foundations, a place where “a stern republican government would protect the liberties of a people from barter and betrayal at the hands of those, who under Republicanism are the people’s servants, but under monarchy, become their masters.”⁹³

Years earlier, a correspondent to the New York Express had expressed his rationale for joining the Fenian movement.

“My sole desire ever has been, ever will be, to labor quietly, and I trust effectively for the liberty of poor downtrodden Ireland, as far as my limited means and meager abilities will enable me. I court no man’s favors, smiles, or rewards. I have never attempted to barter the patriotism of exiled Irishman for lucre or paltry political office. I despise low practices in men claiming leadership as well as in those called followers. My model of a patriot is the immortal Washington. My idea of an Irish government is founded on democratic principles. Ireland in the past has been ruled by man-worship; republicanism should be the cry of the

⁹² Lecture by W.R. Roberts, 6. Some 5000 attended, including a number of ladies “who occupied the front seats, and who evinced quite as much interest as their male friends.” *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹³ Later, the Fenians acknowledged: “The American colonies, when they determined on separation from the mother country, were strengthened in their resolve. Your organization today is numerically as powerful as were the patriots of the Revolutionary era: it commands a military element as large as they could call into the service of their country; and, in following an example so illustrious, you may justly hope that the result in your case will not be less favorable to the cause of freedom, than was the mission of the young Republic.” Seventh National Congress, 13.

hour.”⁹⁴

At the Fourth National Convention, held on Washington’s Birthday, the Fenians were not going to allow such a fortuitous alignment to pass unnoticed.⁹⁵

“Motives higher, holier, nobler have drawn us from our distant homes, to think, to labor, to resolve for Ireland. Here on this day, hallowed by all the glorious deeds that consecrate the name of Washington— rising above all petty considerations of self— we devote our energies, our fortunes, and our lives to the holy task of raising our dear country from her degradation and misery to freedom and independence... We are men, free men, who both know and appreciate the value of republican liberty... A Te Deum of universal joy will swell throughout the world— earth and heaven will rejoice when the glad tidings are proclaimed that the tyrant, in the midst of his pride and power, is trampled in the dust, and a proud young Republic, clothed in all the attributes of freedom, is born in Ireland.”

So as to further tweak the noses of those who claimed the Irish were undeserving of American citizenship, the Brotherhood clothed itself in one of the most aggressive facets of American republicanism: the Monroe Doctrine.

“Resolved, that we the representatives of the Fenian Brotherhood, in Congress assembled, do hereby, in the most emphatic manner, declare that we are in favor of carrying out, to the fullest extent that honored principle of American policy, believing, as we do, that this continent should be occupied exclusively by one grand family of free republics.”⁹⁶

The Irish American echoed these thoughts:

“Every Irish American who loves the land of his adoption and hopes for the regeneration of that land which gave him birth, should refuse to vote for any candidate who is not pledged to make England pay for any damages we have suffered through her means; to compel her to liberate all of our citizens whom she holds in chains, and to acknowledge the inviolability of American citizenship in its fullest sense, and who believes that the whole of this continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, should be consecrated to freedom, and not desecrated by

⁹⁴ Letter of John Rafferty to *New York Express* 25 June 1860. For other reports of European press coverage of the Fenian movement, see *The Irish American* of 14 October 1865.

⁹⁵ Indeed, the extensive press coverage and politically charged editorials of such events as Washington’s Birthday, Evacuation Day, and Jackson’s Birthday were obvious attempt by editors and journalists to link their pet projects with iconic American events.

⁹⁶ Proceedings of the Fourth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, 29.

such bastard despotism as that which England has attempted to set up on our northern frontier.”⁹⁷

To answer critics who perceived the formation of armed military organizations on this continent, the Fenians asked: “If it is a crime to form a quasi military organization, to be used in case of war with another country, why not condemn our state militias, who come under the very same objection, and are equally guilty, if there is any guilt?”⁹⁸ To the Fenians, republicanism was more than an abstract political notion; it represented a key to acceptance in America and was used assiduously by Irish nationalists to assuage and ameliorate American sentiment and misgivings. By couching their calls for independence in decidedly republican tones, the Fenians were maintaining a cultural connection to earlier republican nationalists while making important claims about their identity in what they hoped was a post-colonial future.⁹⁹ The hints and speculations, spoken assumptions and unspoken articulations, analogies and affinities were the residue of a relationship between the Fenians and earlier republicans. The constant presence (and sometimes curious absence) of republican rhetoric resonated with an audience that would surely have picked up on these themes. The language employed by the Brotherhood was, therefore, a reflection of the reality in which they found themselves on both sides of the Atlantic; it speaks to the roots and implications of Irish identity and ethnic labeling. Their words were significant; they were responding to both internal and external challenges to longstanding Irish republican traditions while calling for participation in a body politic.

⁹⁷ *The Irish American* 20 June 1868.

⁹⁸ Lecture by W.R. Roberts, 15.

⁹⁹ Moreover, the language that the Fenians employed made important comments about the nature of citizenship in postwar America.

Aside from the manifestations of Fenianism as expression of vengeance or as a vehicle for social advancement, there was also a set of latent benefits to be achieved by association with the Fenians.¹⁰⁰ These would be akin to what David Emmons has termed the “socialization of uncertainty.” Referring to the heavily Irish mining community of Butte, Montana, Emmons has argued that membership in such groups as the Ancient Order of Hibernians allowed for a sense of cohesion and recreation in a hostile environment.¹⁰¹ Indeed, with the exception of certain paid organizers and party elites, politics is essentially a social forum.¹⁰² With their poems and songs, acting troupes and baseball teams, fundraising fairs and monster picnics, the Fenian Brotherhood was as engaged in social activities as much as revolutionary ones.¹⁰³ Fenian picnics were replete with “six-legged curiosities,” highland bagpipers (“who collected more money than the Brothers”), young children selling figs, and old women hawking apples.¹⁰⁴ *The Irish American*, commenting on one meeting, observed: “Dancing and rifle shooting seemed to

¹⁰⁰ Sociologists often refer to the latent and manifest functions of group association. In the case of the Fenian Brotherhood, the manifest— or overt— benefits would be vengeance and acceptance. The latent— or unintended but nonetheless beneficial— returns would include increased levels of socialization and confraternity.

¹⁰¹ David Emmons, “The Socialization of Uncertainty: The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Butte, Montana, 1880-1925,” *Eire -Ireland* 30, no. 2 (Spring, 1995): 74-92.

¹⁰² People who adopt extreme, militant views— even if, perhaps especially if, those views and measures are the logical extensions of vaguer, general sentiments held by the larger community— are surely ALWAYS going to be in a minority, for it requires an unusual degree of time, energy, intellectual honesty, dedication and courage to adopt and implement radical and especially violent views and measures that are opposed by society’s “normal” leaders— priests, politicians, middle classes striving for respectability, etc

¹⁰³ One editor called for a Fenian baseball club in every city, “to inculcate teamwork and physical activity.” *The Irish Republic* 5 October 1867. On the formation of a Fenian Literary Society, see *The Irish Republic* 21 September and 31 August 1867. For the activities of the Fenian Dramatic Club, see *The Irish Republic* 20 July 1867.

¹⁰⁴ *New York Times* 26 July 1865. Also, *New York Times* 5 March 1866.

occupy the attention and form the principal amusement of the Fenians during the day.”¹⁰⁵ Receipts from a Fenian meeting at Buffalo’s Clinton Forest on 17 July 1867 included expenditures for 171 kegs of beer, 2700 cigars, and two bands!¹⁰⁶ Astute businessmen appropriated the Fenian name to help sell their products, as evidenced by advertisements for Cavendish tobacco, hailed as “the Fenian’s pride.” One historian notes: “The crowds at these rallies were accustomed to a certain amount of entertainment after walking miles to the places of assembly. Political speeches, then, were not simply exercises in polemic but oral performances by acknowledged actors or speakers who were there to strengthen the social as well as the political bonds of the community.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, although it was certainly unintended, the socio-entertainment aspect of the Fenians cannot be ignored.

In his Fenians in Context, RV Comerford argued that the Brotherhood in Ireland played a vital social and psychological role in the lives of its members. This influential and controversial demographic study of rank and file IRB men broadened the story of Irish republicanism beyond principal antagonists. Comerford established that the majority of Fenians were young urban wage earners, lacking direct access to parliamentary politics. For these disaffected young men, Fenianism was more a social pastime than a political activity.

Other treatments replicated Comerford’s methodology with highly localized studies of the IRB, but nationalist-oriented scholars—who were reluctant to accept Comerford’s unprecedented revisionist conclusion that typical Fenians were anything

¹⁰⁵ *The Irish American* 8 August 1865.

¹⁰⁶ Gallagher papers.

¹⁰⁷ L. Perry Curtis, “Moral and Physical Force: The Language of Violence in Irish Nationalism,” *Journal of British Studies*, 27, no. 2 (April 1998): 150-189.

other than committed revolutionaries— have rightly criticized these works.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, in an attempt to legitimize the movement, Comerford and his acolytes went too far: he trivializes nationalist fervor and argues that the Fenians were historically important only because of their recreational role and that the Brotherhood was otherwise a dismal failure. Comerford rightly emphasized the social implications of the Fenian fraternity, as young men in the countryside and small towns made use of this underground movement to enjoy nights out and as a relief from the monotony of mid-nineteenth century life, arguing “the Fenians cannot be adequately understood merely in terms of guns and republicanism. Their movement was not a ‘manifestation of infeasible nationality’ but rather the product of a range of social, economic, and intellectual-sentimental factors, and of assorted contingencies of personality, place, and time.”¹⁰⁹ The fact that the movement failed does not diminish its importance for its time, or for the later course of history. Fenianism was a serious threat to British rule, had active chapters on a global scale, and attracted the support of thousands.¹¹⁰ It is surely absurd to imply, as Comerford has, that the uniquely nationalist aspects of these organizations, and their member’s motives for joining, can be discounted as superficial, as merely “patriotism as pastime.”¹¹¹ Given the pressures not to join extreme nationalist organizations— from priests, local elites, employers, customers, and Anglo-America in

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, John Newsinger, Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain (London: Pluto Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁹ Comerford, Fenians in Context, 8.

¹¹⁰ For an assessment of British views of the Fenians, see: Michael de Nie, “‘A Medley Mob of Irish-American Plotters and Irish Dupes’: The British Press and Transatlantic Fenianism,” Journal of British Studies 40, no. 2 (April 2001): 213-240.

¹¹¹ See R.V. Comerford, “Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the mid 1860s” Irish Historical Studies 22, no. 87 (March, 1981): 239-250.

general— it is obvious that Irishmen and women would have to choose whether to seek social and psychological satisfaction through a nationalist organization as opposed to other “safer” religious, social, or political media.

This is not to wholly discount the psychological reinforcement that many members indubitably received from their association with the Fenians. It would be as absurd to imply that there were not coincidental benefits arising from the increased opportunities for socialization as it is to imply that these benefits were the primary motivation for joining the Brotherhood. Fenian meetings served as powerful social magnets, giving disgruntled Irish immigrants an opportunity to meet socially at a time when life was dull and difficult. Participants enjoyed good companionship, a steady diet of inflammatory anti-British speeches, and “a supply of liquor in amounts that staggered the sensibilities of civic leaders.”¹¹² At least one Catholic priest assailed the Fenians, not for their revolutionary aims, but because he found “the night reveling associated with our meetings productive of too much immorality.”¹¹³ Fenian John Devoy stated that the true attraction of the group was meeting in the saloon and sharing a pint, rubbing elbows with fellow Irishmen, and speaking of home— though not necessarily of home rule. Fenian military drills frequently began and ended at local public houses— where the tree of nationalism could be liberally watered— and contained as much drinking and carousing as they did military preparations. Time and again, in private correspondence and public pronouncements, references are made not just to the speeches and plans of the Brotherhood, but of the grand fairs and balls, of the number (and relative beauty) of the

¹¹² John J. Patrick, “The Cleveland Fenians: A Study in Ethnic Leadership” *The Old Northwest* 9, no.4 (Winter 1983-84),311.

¹¹³ Charles Quinn to O’Mahony, 15 November 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

ladies present, and of similar ephemeral details.¹¹⁴ Certainly those who attended the mass meetings, public obsequies, celebrations, demonstrations, and grand fairs were interested in Irish nationalism, but even a cursory glance at contemporary reports suggests that these were far from single-minded attendants. The fact that pickpockets plagued at least one meeting, even relieving John O'Mahony of his wallet and watch, suggests that some in attendance were opportunistic, and concerned with the fortunes of more than just Ireland.¹¹⁵ This socio-entertainment function, coupled with the role of ethnic self-identification, was to ensure that with the dispersion of Irishmen throughout the world in the nineteenth century, Fenianism would also make the transition from Old World to New.¹¹⁶ The attraction that Fenianism held for its followers was certainly amplified by its social components, but the overriding motivation on the part of its adherents was clearly the nationalist and republican aspects of its message. In mid-nineteenth century New York, where the pressures not to join such nationalist groups as the Fenian Brotherhood were severe, the best (though by no means the only) way of interpreting the movement was as an honest expression of Irish and Irish American nationalism. Given the panoply of social and recreational outlets—from the AOH to church-sponsored groups, and from nascent labor organizations to other ethnic associations—the fact that tens of thousands

¹¹⁴ See, for example *The Irish American* of January 4, 1851. Not all observers were pleased with these displays. Wrote one: "As a matter of economy, avoid the purchase of expensive flags and banners; we can capture them in galore from our enemies. Nor will you have any fifes and drums, or bands, as they are a useless expense, and a perfect nuisance to those who live in the neighborhood of your lodge." Undated correspondence. T.W. Sweeny papers. Others agreed: "it is the sense of this congress that no more green flags ought to be purchased by the Circles, but that the money which would be thus expended should be sent to headquarters to be applied for the purchase of rifles...also that the large sums usually expended on what are termed 'national celebrations' should be saved and applied for revolutionary purposes." Sixth National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood, 14-15.

¹¹⁵ *New York Times* 13 February 1866.

¹¹⁶ Christopher D. McGimpsey, "Internal Ethnic Friction: Orange and Green in Nineteenth-Century New York" Immigrants and Minorities 1, no. 1 (1982), 42.

of Irish Americans chose to express themselves through the Fenian Brotherhood can be seen as a sign of the level of commitment to the cause of Irish republican nationalism.¹¹⁷

We can then state with a good level of confidence that individuals chose to join or otherwise support the Fenian Brotherhood for any number of reasons, and that the movement benefited from its highly variable appeal. There is no one Fenian, there are many Fenians, and there can be, therefore, no one history of Fenianism. The avenging exile, the middle class aspirant, the fair weather Fenian, and the displaced emigrant all appear on the muster rolls and membership records. They have left an indelible record of their thoughts and feelings in their diaries, memoirs, personal reminiscences, and weekly newspapers. If nothing else, the Fenians are not the monolithic group of bomb-throwing radicals that *Punch* and *Harpers Weekly* made them out to be. They were a diverse and pragmatic group of individuals struggling to make sense out of the situations— some of their own creation, other thrust upon them— in which they found themselves. When viewed in the political and ideological framework of their day— when read in the context of their period and rooted in their contemporary national and international scenes— the Fenians are seen as complex and diverse actors, as both victims and as perpetrators of violence, as individuals with a multiplicity of conflicting interests.

¹¹⁷ Alternative options included any number of Irish County Societies, political clubs, and athletic organizations. On the development of all these in New York's Irish community, see Bayor and Meagher, *The New York Irish*, 213-300.

CHAPTER SEVEN

When examined from the historical vantage point offered by a century and a half, the exploits of the Fenian Brotherhood seem to many to be quixotic, inane, and downright comical. The attempts of Irish nationalists to liberate their country on the plains of Canada have captivated historians since the time of their first appearance, and the usual treatments have been ones of dismissiveness and ridicule. Many see the movement as a sort of national burlesque, as providing comic relief for a country slowly recovering from four years of unrelieved tragedy associated with the Civil War.¹ This interpretation was first put forth by the *New York Times*, and has been picked up by scholars and students ever since.²

When viewed from the perspective of the society in which the Brotherhood operated, however, the Fenian movement can be interpreted as a reasonable response to the situations in which many found themselves. The treatment afforded the Brotherhood by contemporary observers varied from source to source and changed over time; these treatments were a reflection of empathy for the Brotherhood's ideals, an indication of American sentiment towards Great Britain, and a reflection of the highly contentious political atmosphere that accompanied Reconstruction. An investigation and analysis of the ways in which the Fenian Brotherhood was perceived and presented serves as a window into a host of issues that dominated and sculpted their society. It is the aim of

¹ Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations*, 108.

² In a column titled "F.B.— Fenian Burlesque," the *New York Times* of 15 January 1866 drew this scathing connection: "It is the custom of theatrical managers to treat their patrons to a sort of light dessert, in the shape of a farce or burlesque, after the heavy dinner of tragedy...for four years this nation was the stage on which a tragedy more terrible and important, more extensive and bloody than any other known to history, was being enacted; other nations held their breath, and the whole world awaited in painful anxiety the grand denouement."

this chapter to link these fluctuating levels of support to larger political, social, and economic issues that were occurring at the same time as Fenian activity.

When one investigates the Fenian Brotherhood in New York City, one is struck by the mixed reactions that the group receives from both the secular and religious press of the day. Throughout its long history, the organization was subjected to varying interpretations from both Irish immigrants and native-born Americans. Nowhere was this clearer than in the tumultuous relationship between the Fenians and the Catholic Church.

Archbishop David Moriarty's infamous condemnation that "hell is not hot enough, nor eternity long enough for the Irish Republican Brotherhood," might well have been uttered by any number of prelates concerning the American branch of that body.³ With the exception of Archbishop John Hughes, who was mildly supportive of the Fenians, the American Catholic Church was none too tolerant of the revolutionary plans espoused by many Irish immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ As both the home to many of these radicals, and as the largest Catholic archdiocese, New York City offers an interesting microcosm of the tense situation that existed between the two groups. From a

³ This was a sentiment shared by the hierarchy in Ireland. The leading figure of Irish Catholicism was Cardinal Paul Cullen, who had been present in Rome during the 1848 rebellion and who came to associate all forms of republicanism with the excesses he had witnessed there; the result was an unrelenting opposition to republican movements, even in his homeland. Catholic leaders considered nationalists of all stripes, but particularly republican nationalists, as foes to order and stability. The Church's considerable opposition no doubt disrupted the revolutionary plans of Young Ireland in the latter 1840's and proved a considerable obstacle to recruitment efforts by the Fenians in subsequent years. The fact that members were required to take a "secret oath" made them ineligible for sacramental rights and privileges; hence, many opted not to join. Those who did, however, were wholeheartedly committed to the establishment of an independent Irish republic, and could not be cowed by mere clerical condemnation.

⁴ For a detailed assessment of this question, see Oliver P. Rafferty, "Fenianism in North America in the 1860's: The Problems for Church and State," *History* 84, no. 274 (April, 1999): 257-77. Rafferty states that Canadian bishops attacked the Fenians not on anti-republican grounds, but because they saw the group as reinforcing negative stereotypes of a persecuted minority. American prelates, aware of the precarious position of their congregants in America, were less likely to denounce the group; they considered Fenianism to be a political problem, and believed any denunciation might be interpreted as blurring the distinction between church and state that Catholics were already accused of trampling.

closer investigation and analysis of the connection between the Fenians of New York and the Catholic Church of that city, we can extrapolate much concerning what it meant to be an Irish American during the critical years of the mid-nineteenth century.

The pillars of Irish America have long been considered to be the Democratic Party, Catholic Church, and organized labor. That there was room within this triad for nationalists of all stripes— from the most unrepentant physical force advocates to the most constitutional of parliamentarians— there is no doubt, but interactions between the great triumvirate and the Fenians were often difficult. This is particularly true of the Fenians and the Catholic hierarchy.⁵ As their numbers swelled during the era of the Great Hunger, more and more of the New York Irish came to regard the Church as having contributed to the collapse of what were, in their eyes at least, promising revolutionary movements.⁶ As the Fenians grew in strength, they represented a potent threat to the role that the New York Church played— or hoped to play— in the process of community building. While Fenianism helped to give some cohesion to the Irish in America, this inevitably brought it into conflict with the church, since both organizations competed for influence over the immigrant population. The problem was that the Catholic Church was just beginning to find acceptance in America when Fenianism

⁵ There are countless examples of parish priests supporting the movement. As an example, the Reverend James O'Connor tried to offset clerical opposition to Fenianism by lecturing on "Irish Revolution and its Harmony with the Doctrines of the Catholic Church." *Irish People* 29 February 1868. Likewise, most Fenian conventions were opened by a chaplain, and on at least two occasions Catholic priests attended in the capacity of delegates. See *New York Herald* 11 January 1866 and *Irish People* 20 January 1866. Most of the evidence we have is in the form of editorials and articles penned by journalists writing for Church-sponsored, and hence hierarchically dominated, periodicals. The close association of some priests with Fenianism served to weaken the effect of the denunciations hurled at the Brotherhood by the Catholic hierarchy. With some priests active in Fenian circles, "expressing concurrence in the avowed objects of the organization," it was argued that Cullen instigated the opposition of the bishops in America.

⁶ "As long as the Catholic religion exists in Ireland, the people of Ireland will remain between starvation and degradation. If asked whether the people of Ireland would be better off, in a worldly point of view, under different circumstances, we answer, without a moment's hesitation, YES!" *The Irish American* 18 November 1849.

appeared; the movement, therefore, was threatening this newfound position by reawakening forces that were hostile to the Church that had only recently been laid to rest. As the two institutions vied against one another to become the ultimate representative of New York's Irish community, there could be but one victor. While the battle was rather one-sided, the results were far from conclusive to the contemporary observer. Fortunately, much of the dialogue has been preserved in the pages of the leading Catholic and secular journals of the day.

That the relationship between Irish nationalists and the Catholic Church was strained was evident even before the Fenians were formed. As early as 1849, Young Ireland leader Thomas D'Arcy McGee had used his journal, *The Nation*, to blame the Catholic Church for the failure of that revolt.⁷ Responding to these charges through *The Freeman's Journal*, Archbishop John Hughes of New York attacked McGee, branding him "a heretic and an infidel," and urging all Catholics to bar *The Nation* from their homes. The strategy worked: by November of 1849 McGee was forced to leave New York, his paper bankrupted by the loss of subscribers. The next major contest between Irish nationalists and the Catholic Church would be even more damaging to the hopes and plans of would-be revolutionaries.

On 30 November, 1853 John Mitchel, unmitigated foe of all things British, made

⁷ In later years, Catholic editors answered the charge. "We are not, as is well-known, unqualified admirers of everything that was said and done in Ireland in 1848, or that has since been said or attempted there. But, however, our judgment may now disapprove particular actions then or since, we never had a moment's doubt, that the cause of the Irish people in 1848, as in 1858, was, and is, a just and sacred cause, and that the patriots who risked everything men hold dear or desirable in private life for the cause deserve the eternal gratitude of their countrymen." *New York Tablet* 4 December 1858. The same journal later added: "There will be no demur to the allegation that the English government in Ireland is an abomination. The chief duty of that government and its agents seems to be the keeping up of antagonistic feeling between the different classes of Irishmen, the keeping alive of religious dissension, and making the rich man distrust the poor man and look upon him as his natural foe." *New York Tablet* 15 January 1859

his way from penal servitude to New York City. After a whirlwind tour of the country, where he made dozens of speaking engagements and was feted by politicians and demagogues of all stripes, the doyen of Irish nationalists settled in Brooklyn. From this base, he began a newspaper aimed at the city's teeming immigrant Irish community. From the start, Mitchel continued his Anglophobic ways:

"I am a professed revolutionist now, an adventurer, a seditious propagandist. I mean to make use of the freedom guaranteed to me as a citizen— or inchoate citizen— of America to help and stimulate the movement of European democracy and especially of Irish independence. I mean to claim for the revolutionary refugees here, not only the hospitality and comity of America, but also her sympathy and active friendship; nay I claim for them that America shall be to them the very stamping ground prayed for by Archimedes, whereon they may plant a lever that shall move the world."⁸

The son of a Presbyterian minister, Mitchel did not stand in awe of the Catholic church in the way that marked many of his compatriots. His weekly *The Citizen* was to be a personal vehicle by which Mitchel would extol his hatred of England and his vitriol against any institution— temporal or spiritual— that prevented Ireland from taking her place among the nations of the world.⁹

In an early issue of *The Citizen*, Mitchel blasted a Roman Catholic priest who had spoken out against the training of Irishmen for a planned invasion of England. The cleric "denounced the organization in the most emphatic terms, and warned all the members of his congregation to have nothing whatever to do with secret societies of any kind." The jeremiad concluded by intimating that if the warning was disregarded, it would be followed by other measures. "Had he lived at the time of the American Revolution,"

⁸ *New York Tribune* 20 December 1853.

⁹ The inaugural issue of *The Citizen* appeared on 7 January 1854. That issue noted: "Mankind is once more becoming charged with the electricity of Revolution, and one of the poles of that battery we believe to be situated in New York."

wrote Mitchel of the meddling priest, “with what holy zeal he would have launched his spiritual thunderbolts against the infidel Republicans of the French school, who overthrew the peace, law, and order of the British empire in the New World!”¹⁰

Almost from the start, Mitchel found himself embroiled in controversy with the Catholic hierarchy. At least one paper—which hoped that Mitchel would use his considerable journalistic skills against the Catholic press and its inimitable leader, James A. McMaster—had heralded his arrival in New York.¹¹ McMaster, a convert who expressed all the zealotry associated with such individuals, was the publisher of the *Freeman's Journal* and a worthy opponent to the irascible Mitchel.¹² The newcomer did not disappoint. In an early diatribe, Mitchel stated in an open letter to the Bishop:

“Your Grace and the whole hierarchy of your Church, and the priesthood of it, too, so far as the hierarchy can control it, is an enemy of Irishmen, to the rights, the manhood, and the very rights of Irishmen.... The Irish here will be good and loyal citizens of this republic in the exact proportion that they cut themselves off... from that political corruption that you call the Church of God.”¹³

Subsequent issues defended the right of the inhabitants of the Papal States to rebel against

¹⁰ *The Citizen* 3 and 10 June 1854.

¹¹ The *New York Herald* of 6 December 1853 opined that Mitchel could not use his journalistic talents better “than in a sheet which should advocate here the cause of Irish independence. We should like to pit John Mitchel against the Abbe McMaster in the advocacy of Irish wrongs and Irish rights.” Mitchel replied in *The Citizen* of 21 January 1854 “we are continually warned against the Pope by friendly monitors, threatened with the Pope by hostile critics, pitted against the Pope by sporting newspapers until at last we begin to be haunted by a venerable apparition with three hats upon what seems its head.” McMaster and T.F. Meagher would later be involved in a street brawl, in which Meagher was shot. *New York Times* 19 July 1854.

¹² *The Freeman's Journal* was among those papers barred from the mails for much of the Civil War. Its masthead proclaimed unequivocally, “The Truth Will Make You Free!”

¹³ *The Citizen* 9 September 1854. A later editorial argued in favor of limiting papal jurisdiction to a spiritual dominion, noting the “very existence of the Pope and the vitality of the Church is endangered by his standing between the triumph of popular liberty and the overthrow of despotism in Italy, and all the Catholic countries of Europe.” *The Citizen* 23 December 1854. Earlier, Mitchel explained the Vatican's contempt for revolutions thusly: “The Pope, being weak and foolish, and surrounded by evil councilors, could not bear the thought of being Bishop only and not Prince.” *The Citizen* 11 March 1854.

the Pope, while expressing Mitchel's desire for a "plantation in Alabama stocked with fat, healthy Negroes."¹⁴

The response was swift and uncompromising; McMaster urged Mitchel to drop the "cant of universal Democratism, which the Young Irelanders learned in bits and scraps from the old French Jacobins and the new French socialists," while many subscribers demanded their money back.¹⁵ For the better part of a year, Mitchel was able to hang on as he and the Catholic press waged an almost weekly battle; the dispute was so rancorous that it was even picked up by secular journals.¹⁶ Acknowledging that he had bitten off more than he could chew, and that Philo Veritas (the pen name of New York's Archbishop John Hughes, who responded to many of Mitchel's attacks through the pages of *The Freeman's Journal*) was too strong an enemy, Mitchel retreated to a location

¹⁴ *The Citizen* 21 January 1854. Also 11 and 18 March 1854. One historian claims that Mitchel's vindictive hatred for all things British— he once admonished the Irish to burn everything that came from England except her coal— colored his ideas on all political and social questions, and "If the British were anti-slavery, then he would be pro-slavery." Gibson, *Attitudes of the New York Irish*, 13. Mitchel's statements concerning slavery— which appeared on 14 January 1854— (in the second issue of *The Citizen*!) drew the ire of other journalists. See, for example the *New York Tribune* of 14 January 1854. Mitchel had written: "We deny that it is a crime, or a wrong, or even a peccadillo, to hold slaves, or to buy slaves, to sell slaves, to keep slaves to their work by flogging or other needful coercion...and as for being a particular in the wrongs, we, for our part, wish we had a good plantation, well stocked with healthy Negroes in Alabama." That same day, the *New York Tribune* replied: "Mr. Mitchel will probably increase the popularity of his paper among the Irish-Americans— alas that it should be so! We have not now for the first time to see the great majority of them, with liberty and democracy on their lips, vote to fortify, extend, and perpetuate the foulest and most atrocious tyranny known among men, and while demanding all rights for themselves, clamorously deny the most obvious and essential rights to American born, whose fathers fought to vindicate and establish American Freedom. But if liberty for Ireland and the Irish is sought in the spirit evinced and on the principles avowed by *The Citizen*, it can hardly be necessary to say that the effort will be fruitless and the hopes of its champions a mockery. Alas for the aspirations of the oppressed and exiled, if their incitement to struggle for liberty is the horrible desire of buying, selling, and lashing each other!" In May of that year, *The Citizen* ran an article in which Hughes defended the peculiar institution, asserting that bondage in America was preferable to freedom in heathen Africa. 5 May 1854.

¹⁵ *Freeman's Journal* 29 January 1854. McMaster also condemned Mitchel's criticism of the sovereignty of the Papal States. *Freeman's Journal* 12 March 1854. McMaster, who had seen nothing in Fenianism contrary to Catholic teachings (see *Freemans Journal* of 12 September and 28 November 1863)— changed his tune after Bishops Duggan of Chicago and Wood of Philadelphia condemned the Brotherhood as anti-Catholic. Editorialized McMaster on 13 February 1864: "If the Catholic church condemned anything in the form or the objects of the Fenians, that Brotherhood will do well to change it."

¹⁶ See *The New York Daily Times* 5 August 1854.

which he considered to be free from the sectarian influences that he believed stymied Irish nationalist aspirations.¹⁷ At the end of 1854 he turned the paper over to his associates and headed to a self-imposed exile in the American South.¹⁸

This lesson would not be lost on future nationalists, who trod lightly on religious matters lest they wind up in a position akin to McGee and Mitchel.¹⁹ As an example, James O'Sullivan, editor of the influential *San Francisco Irish People*, wrote that the Fenians should not take too anti-clerical a line, lest they run the risk of alienating practicing Catholics who were otherwise favorable to the movement.²⁰ Editors and journalists went to considerable lengths to show that there was no disparity between republican nationalism and Roman Catholicism.

“There is—there can be—no conflict between the Irish national party and the Church to which the majority of the Irish people belong, and which has been so intimately identified with them in the trials and persecutions. No such contest ever existed; and those who would assert that it exists now, wrong the hopes and injure the future prospects of a generous, truthful, and confiding race by generating suspicion and discord where neither should find a place. To say that

¹⁷ *The Citizen* 30 December 1854. For a succinct analysis of Mitchel's views, see Brian P. McGovern, “John Mitchel: Ecumenical Nationalist of the Old South,” *New Hibernia Review* 5, no.2 (summer 2001): 99-110. Apparently Mitchel did not learn his lesson. In an early issue of *The Irish Citizen*, a New York paper he founded in 1867, Mitchel asked: “Shall we have a Sabbath? The answer is emphatically no...not, at least, in the sense in which you mean it—that is, the sense of interference with other people's business or pleasures. In God's name, let us enjoy our Christian holyday of Sunday in our own way!” *The Irish Citizen* 26 October 1867.

¹⁸ For Mitchel's resignation, see *The Citizen* 30 December 1854. Mitchel's name would remain prominently on the paper's masthead until 1856. The paper folded in 1857, apparently a victim of the economic depression of that year.

¹⁹ Years later, Mitchel would return to the fray, stating that he had: “nothing to do with the College of Cardinals; for, in fact, Ireland is his Church, and by it he hopes to be saved; yet he will venture in all humility to observe that the English government in his native country is the most authentic representative on Earth of the foul fiend; that its operation is all evil, all treacherous and murderous; and that any and all combinations and conspiracies, open and secret, for overthrowing it at all costs and risks, are good, religious, and blessed; and if the Pope and College of Cardinals denounce him for this, as a Garibaldian, Orange, Fenian, Freemason, why then—we do not finish the sentence.” *The Irish Citizen* 26 February 1870.

²⁰ James O'Sullivan to T.W. Sweeny, 18 March 1866, T.W. Sweeny papers NYPL.

the Catholic Church condemns or denounces Fenianism is radically false. The Priesthood, springing immediately from and belonging to the people, cannot but sympathize with them and desire the elevation of those who are their brethren”²¹

Months later the same source assured its readers “the great majority of the Fenians are exemplary and staunch Catholics, whose principles and whose conduct in accordance with those principles cannot be called into question.”²²

Despite these hopes for mutual respect and comity, the relationship between Irish nationalists and the Catholic Church would remain strained through the years of the American Civil War. In some areas, the Catholic clergy were “making a crazy opposition against the Fenian Brotherhood,” with “missionaries going from town to town preaching against Irish nationality.”²³ A Fenian from Pennsylvania reported that “father O’Keefe spoke of the Fenians and called us children of hell...and said that he was ordered by the bishop to stop our progress. He have done soe as far as concerind but us brave Fenians in

²¹ *The Irish American* 1 April 1865. In the original Fenian Constitution, adopted at the inaugural Chicago convention, delegates passed a resolution declaring: “All subjects relating to differences in religion be absolutely, forever, and peremptorily excluded from the councils and deliberations of the Fenian Brotherhood.” Proceedings of the First National Convention, 33.

²² *The Irish American* 2 September 1865. Years earlier, *The Irish American* had defended the Catholic Church from attacks by Hungarian revolutionary Louis Kossuth, who referred to the priestly government of Rome as the worst of human inventions. Opined the editors: “If Kossuth had announced, from circumstances and fact, that the Roman Catholics of Europe, in part or in a body, had continued to aid or assist despots in their machinations against liberty, we should dearly, sincerely denounce the deed and lament the treason. But when, instead, we have vague generalities and wholesale, unsupported assertion, we must deem the charge, distinctly repeated and seriously pronounced, an insult to millions who, though not so eloquent or noble, are as true-hearted and thorough friends of the world’s emancipation from monarchical and aristocratic tyranny as Kossuth himself. And until he prove his assertions or retract them, we cannot consent to, or take part in, any ovations to do him honor...” *The Irish American* 29 November 1851.

²³ John Forristal to O’Mahony, 28 June 1864, Fenian Brotherhood Records. Writing from Illinois, Forristal added, “The time will come when they will wish that they had not meddled in political affairs.”

hart and sole have resolved to fight no matter who may be contrary to our cause.”²⁴ Few could reconcile their conscience with membership in the Brotherhood, and few tried to do so. Many castigated both the priests for opposing the wishes of the people and the people for caving to the demands of their clergy. The editors of *The Irish Republic* replied to an article on Fenianism submitted by Reverend Edward Purcell of Cincinnati:

“If such an article appeared in an English paper, it would excite a howl of indignation from all Ireland that would shake the parliament house in London. Coming from the source from whence it comes, our timid Irishmen will put a finger on their lips and cry ‘hush, tisn’t lucky to meddle with the clergy.’ But such priests as Purcell are as English as the late Famine, and have killed as many of the Irish people by aiding and abetting the English government.”²⁵

Others simply suggested that in America the clergy should keep aloof from political activities. Addressing a crowd of Fenians in Jones Wood, William Roberts stated that any priest who denounced the Brotherhood was overstepping his authority. “Called to look after our spiritual salvation, they assume a political protectorate unworthy of their descent and inconsistent with their calling.”²⁶

When the church assailed the Fenians, the Brotherhood astutely changed their strategies. On 4 February 1864, Bishop Duggan of Chicago had issued a circular condemning the organization; declaring that there was an irreconcilable difference between Catholics and Fenians, he instructed his clergy not to administer the sacraments to members of the organization, and to deny a Christian burial to any who had aided or

²⁴ S.W. McDonald to O’Mahony, 9 March 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records. At least one Catholic priest assailed the Fenians, not for their revolutionary aims, but because he found “the night reveling associated with our meetings productive of too much immorality.”

²⁵ *The Irish Republic* 28 December 1867. In a column titled “The Religious Side of Fenianism” of that same day, the editors commented that if any were cowed by clerical condemnation it merely proved that “they were far from being the stuff of which revolutions are made.”

²⁶ *New York Times* 26 July 1865.

supported the movement.²⁷ McMaster and *The Freeman's Journal* applauded the attack, leading to a flurry of responses from Fenian supporters. "An Irish Priest" answered in the pages of *The Irish American*: "We never knew that a Bishop — not to mention a newspaper— had power to pronounce the fiat of supreme authority...we have heard of a higher tribunal in Rome." The correspondent went on to characterize the Catholic journals of New York, which "aspire to be more Catholic than the Catholic Church, and hence are really non-Catholic," as "intolerable nuisances. They make great pretense to Catholicity and friendship to Ireland, but I believe they are enemies to both."²⁸ "Another Irish Priest" saw in McMaster's comments proof of his hatred of Ireland. "I should like to speak soothingly to the man; he may not be malicious, he may only be ignorant after all. There are men in Ireland who will agree to differ on all things religious and political with any man who is ready to open his veins for the Shan Van Vocht."²⁹ Even more objective secular journalists became involved; one declared that the Bishop's act was: "an attack upon the liberty of thought and action, which can never be successful in a land whose mission is to develop the highest freedoms, political, social, and religious." It was the opinion of the editor that the "ultimatum would fall dead on the Brotherhood who have made themselves a power in the land and will be heard in reply to whatever savors of ecclesiastical tyranny indulged beyond the bounds of ecclesiastical jurisdiction." In taking this view the editor was careful to explain: "we do not especially

²⁷ *The Irish American* of 20 February 1864 printed a copy of Duggan's sermon where he stated "the society was an unlawful one, condemned by the laws of the church and contrary to the well-being of society...its members fall under the ban of many rescripts and Papal bulls."

²⁸ *The Irish American* 27 February 1864. That same paper carried a reply by John O'Mahony to the Bishop's objections to the Brotherhood.

²⁹ *The Irish American* 23 April 1864.

endorse the Fenian Brotherhood. We look upon their scheme of the restoration of Ireland as visionary...a project about as sure of being realized as de Leon's search after the waters of eternal youth."³⁰ In response to these charges (first proposed by Bishop James Wood of Philadelphia) *The Irish American* carried the following statement from O'Mahony and Roberts to the community:

"The Fenian Brotherhood is in no sense a secret or oath bound society, and the introduction into the Brotherhood of any secret oaths or tests would be in the highest degree detrimental to the organization and calculated to defeat the object it has in view...the introduction of secret and oath bound cliques or cabals into this organization should be reprobated by every honest, straightforward, and truth-loving man in its ranks."³¹

By disavowing any clandestine activity, the Fenians were hoping to find themselves in the good graces of the clergy. O'Mahony emphasized this point when he wrote:

"One great advantage to be derived from this [disavowing secrecy] is, that it will put the Brotherhood beyond the reach of hostile Churchmen. Becoming an American association and basing our right of action upon our privileges of American citizens and keeping within the laws of these states, we can place ultramontane plotters against human freedom in a very awkward predicament and a very unsafe one for them, if they presume to assail us. The pretext of 'Secret Society' being taken away from them they will have to assail us as a political organization. They must avow that the papacy has made common cause with the tyrants of Europe to put down republicanism... This, and it is a great one, churchmen being our most formidable enemies, will be a benefit to be derived from having the Fenians independent of our fellow-laborers in Ireland, where the organization must be 'secret' for some time to come."³²

Despite these wishes, the church continued to oppose the Brotherhood, though often to no avail.³³

³⁰ *Chicago Tribune* 27 February 1864.

³¹ *The Irish American* 15 July 1865. On Wood, see Joseph George, "Very Rev. Dr. Patrick E. Moriarty, O.S.A., Philadelphia's Fenian Spokesman," *Pennsylvania History*, 48 (1981): 225.

³² O'Mahony to Charles Kickham, 19 October 1863, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

³³ In March 1864, a deputation of Fenians "wanting to show proper respect to spiritual authority waited upon the Bishop to explain their position fully," but the bishop simply told them that the object of their organization was "criminal." *Cleveland Leader* 2 March 1864.

Many Irish nationalists were incredulous that their organization was being singled out for special retribution. “Did not the Church sanction war?” asked John Mitchel. “If not, why bless cannon and swords for those who were going to battle?”³⁴ “Surely the Holy Father,” wrote another, “who has to use temporal weapons in defense of his territorial rights, sees no reason why Irishmen should not do the same in defense of their liberties.” The author continued:

“If America, on a mere question of jurisdiction, was justified and applauded in appealing to arms; if the minister of God committed no crime by replacing in the very sanctuary the robes of the Church with the uniform of Mars; if it was right to offer up a Te Deum in the Catholic sanctuary of Philadelphia in 1776, at which the President, the Congress, and the Council of State of the Colonies assisted, to invoke a blessing on the American cause and arms...now, if it was right to invoke God’s blessing on the cause of the American colonies and on the American patriots— and I don’t think that anybody outside a lunatic asylum or a royal palace will assert to the contrary— why should Irishmen, who have suffered for centuries the most brutal and degrading wrongs, at the hands of England, be frowned upon or denounced by any man or class of men, who pray to their heavenly Father, that he might loosen the chains of the bondsman and assist the poor and the oppressed.”

Even if Rome castigated the Fenians, the charge meant little:

“We never appealed to the Pope for his approval; we do not consider the liberation of Ireland a matter that in any way calls for his action or interference, unless we thought that his influence could aid us in achieving it. In that case we would wear sackcloth and ashes for the remainder of our lives, and do penance with peas in our shoes; in fact, do any moral thing, that he or any body else would require of us, if they would help us to do with the British snakes and bullfrogs of our day what St. Patrick did the Irish ones in his— drive their poisonous forms to hell, or England. No, the church has nothing to do with the freedom of Ireland, and we have not the slightest doubt but when the Independence of Ireland is achieved there will be Te Deums in Rome as well as in Dublin, for the success of our arms”³⁵

³⁴ *The Citizen* 28 July 1855.

³⁵ *Lecture by W.R. Roberts*, 15. Added another: “If overzealous flunkies continue to propound the heresy that ‘hell is not hot enough...’ we and all other Christian men can only answer them in the words of Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* ‘I marvel you will still be talking; nobody minds you.’” *The Irish Citizen* 4 May 1867.

Following this theme, a St. Patrick's Day editorial in one immigrant paper hoped that Irish Americans could elevate their homeland politically as the patron had spiritually by driving out the English reptiles that now infested the homeland.³⁶

In 1865, Rome issued a statement that Fenianism was incompatible with adherence to the Roman Catholic Church, and it counseled its priests to use their influence to dissuade Catholics from joining.³⁷ *The Freeman's Journal* advocated excommunication for all members, believing that such a threat would quickly vitiate the movement.³⁸ McMaster later added: "Irish Catholics ought not to have needed this tea-pot explosion, to have warned them against trusting any Irish movement that professed to be too patriotic to be in harmony with the Irish Catholic priesthood. Those who have been deluded into joining should withdraw, make their confession, and enjoy Christmas in good conscience."³⁹

Many responded to these charges. "A Western Priest" added: "He [McMaster] has wasted so much ink and made himself so ridiculous to well-informed Catholics in his

³⁶ *San Francisco Irish News* 17 March 1868.

³⁷ *New York Times* 9 December 1865. Responded Roberts: "There is not an Irishman who not only has faith in the cause of his country, but good works too, without which, Scripture tells us, faith is of no avail. For every clergyman who opposes the Fenians, there are a hundred who, in their hearts, wish them every success...the right to revolution is a sacred one, and, heaven knows, if any country has a cause to revolt it is Ireland...when the day of battle comes, we will not want for chaplains. Those priests who have turned their altars into political rostrums, for the purchased praise of parliamentary renegades will succeed in driving fearless men into the organization and frighten only pusillanimous cats. If this is a crime, we will make the most of it; we'll abide the consequences; and if we have nothing else to answer for before our Maker, we think our chances of salvation quite as good as that of our accusers. You cannot stay the onward movement of the army of Irish patriots...but you can contribute to the victory they hope to achieve in proportion as you discharge the duties which as Irishmen and freemen you owe your country and liberty...be true, then to you race, your country, and your God." Lecture by W.R. Roberts, 23.

³⁸ Following Duggan's original statements against the Brotherhood in 1864, McMaster wrote: "The Irish, separated from their clergy, would cease to be Irish...Down with the Fenians!" *Freeman's Journal* 25 August 1865.

³⁹ *Freeman's Journal* 16 December 1865.

soft-brained exposition of Catholic discipline. That such officiousness was rewarded with a willing ear by one or two bishops is a lamentable fact; but that it met a well-earned rebuke from the silence of others is, for the sake of truth and justice, consolingly true.”⁴⁰ Later that same year, British informants reported meeting with New York’s Archbishop John McCloskey, adding that the prelate, through the pages of his diocesan journal, *The Tablet*, had done much to impede the organization.⁴¹

Perhaps the most obvious clash between the Fenians and the Catholic Church occurred in March 1866. O’Mahony had issued a call for a mass meeting on Sunday, 4 March. Archbishop McCloskey denounced the plan, a move seconded by the *New York Times*, which hoped “the warning would be received with respect even by those who have foolishly been dragged into the Fenian snare.” “The appeal,” the paper continued, “carries with it the highest ecclesiastical authority, and it expresses the sentiment of that large body of educated, industrious, and thoughtful Irish Americans who have taken and will take no part in the present insane attempt to revolutionize their native country.”⁴² On the appointed day, 100,000 braved a snowstorm to attend the fair, and heard O’Mahony proclaim: “this cause is a holy cause, and fit for advocacy on any day. Our patriotism cannot be controlled by the calendar. If the recording angel should be disposed to place this meeting among the lists of our sins, our martyrs will intercede for us and efface it

⁴⁰ *The Irish American* 11 February 1865.

⁴¹ D’Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, 95. Some Fenians were unaware of this hostility. Wrote W.R. Roberts, “May God bless Archbishop McCloskey in all his works, for he knows his mission, and how to fulfill it; he knows the church’s place, and where to keep her.” *Lecture by W.R. Roberts*, 10.

⁴² *New York Times* 4 March 1866. The paper was impressed by the scene, adding: “It should be said that there was far less indulgence in intoxicating beverages than might have been expected. Not a drunken man was visible until after three o’clock, and then our reporters counted only three, and these were neither boisterous nor conspicuous.”

from the record.”⁴³ Two days later, the *Times* again supported McCloskey when he said:

“If our people persist, as unfortunately they have persisted thus far, in a movement which all sensible men and all true friends of Ireland consider one of folly, which must result in nothing but destruction and mischief, it will not only incite England to oppress Ireland still more, and to rivet still more securely the chains upon her people, but it will invite perhaps the anger and disgust of the American people themselves against us. And I say in all the sincerity of my heart that I look to this movement with deep apprehension, for the reason of the spirit that has been evinced by those whose counsel the people have followed in this movement, that it will raise up against Irishmen, first as Irishmen, and then as Catholics, in this land, a spirit of persecution equal to that under which they have so long groaned in their own land. I appeal to all men, and beg of them for their own sakes, and for the sake of their religion and their God, to withdraw themselves from a movement that has already gone too far.”⁴⁴

The *Boston Pilot* counseled some accommodation for the Brotherhood, commenting “in light of the great things it has wrought, Fenianism commands our respect ...should Fenianism confine its operations to enrolling hosts and making a tremendous display of great physical force, but hold itself in masterly inactivity, as an avenging sword over the head of England, it can accomplish still greater results.”⁴⁵ The battle between republican

⁴³ A year later, in a “Letter on the Catholic Church and the Fenian Organization”, one journalist surmised: “For every Irish Catholic who was lost to the Church and consequently lost to God, there was an American soul gained.” *The Irish Republic* 6 July 1867. Some American politicians suggested that the revolutionary organization might have value in prying the larger Irish American community from the domination of the Catholic clergy. John J. Patrick. “The Cleveland Fenians: A Study in Ethnic Leadership,” *The Old Northwest* 9 No. 4. (Winter 1983-84): 307-329.

⁴⁴ *New York Times* 6 March 1866. The *Times* was not alone in the condemnation. *The Irish American* of 10 March 1866, in an effort to convince its readers that the Roberts wing was more respectful of Church authority, relayed the following tale: “During the session of the Fenian Congress in Philadelphia last October, a Sunday intervened; it was proposed by John O’Mahony to spend the Sabbath in what they termed ‘working for Ireland.’ The motion was vigorously opposed by William Roberts as a desecration of a day devoted to the worship of God...the true nationalists are as much opposed now, as they were then, to all acts that could in any way draw down censure or condemnation in a cause which every true Irishman holds, next to his devotion to his Creator, as the most sacred principle to be cherished in this life.”

⁴⁵ *Boston Pilot* 31 March 1866. The same paper believed that an official condemnation would be premature, since Fenianism advocated order in Ireland, a “wiser order of government that prevented starvation and forced emigration.” The mutual respect and antagonism between Irish nationalists and Catholic editors could best be seen in the reluctance by either group to openly denounce the other. As late as 20 January 1866, *The Freeman’s Journal*, wary of the strength of the organization, thought it “unwise to denigrate a movement that attracted so large a measure of support from those who were willing to undergo prison in defense of its aims.” A chastened John Mitchel later added that he was mindful of the Church’s

nationalists and the Catholic Church was one that would dominate the Irish American experience for years to come.

During the raids into British North America, Canadian prelates were of a singular voice in denouncing the Brotherhood and excoriated all those Canadian Catholics who did not defend their country in the hour of need. Bishop Joseph Lynch of Toronto informed his congregants that it was their duty as loyal subjects to repel invasion and defend their homes; “for loyalty is a virtue, as it is also a duty towards the government under which we have liberty, protection, and just laws.” Bishop Farrell of Hamilton called the Fenians “a treasonable and contemptible organization” and maintained, “no man who is a good Catholic could possibly countenance the proceedings of an unholy, unlawful, and illegal association.”⁴⁶ Some in the movement were less than mortified by the opposition. This was expressed by O’Mahony when he commented: “the principal opposition encountered by the Brotherhood during the past year came from certain Catholic clergymen; however, they do not seem to have done us much material injury, considering the great progress we have made in so short a time. We ought perhaps, to thank the Reverend opponents for the publicity they gave to our association.”⁴⁷ Later, *The Irish People* added that the Fenians need not fear excommunication for their activities, and that if they needed God to hear them, “the best prayer they could offer was the music of a rifle.”⁴⁸

The movement was dealt a severe blow on 12 January 1870 when the Catholic

power and influence and “did not consider it judicious to come into open collision with the priesthood.” *The Irish Citizen* 1 January 1870.

⁴⁶ Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, 39.

⁴⁷ *Irish American* 11 February 1865.

⁴⁸ *Irish People* 3 February 1866.

Church condemned the Brotherhood and vowed to excommunicate any who remained a member. The Fenians at first failed to believe the condemnation, attributing initial reports to British troublemakers.⁴⁹ When they recognized that the statement was legitimate, the Brotherhood responded by calumniating the Holy See:

“What England failed to accomplish through the agency of pliant judges, packed juries, and paid informers she now seeks to effect by the cunning diplomacy of a few bishops of British proclivities... If love of country be such a heinous sin, the bulk of Irish Catholics have been outside the pale of the Church for the last seven hundred years.”⁵⁰

While the Papal pronouncement no doubt cost the Brotherhood a good many members, the martial plans of the Fenians continued irrespective of the spiritual consequences, and unmindful of the wishes of their spiritual advisors.⁵¹

While Catholic journals were universally opposed to the Brotherhood on theological and moral grounds, the manner in which native American editors treated the aspirations and activities of the Fenians was generally linked to larger political, diplomatic, and social concerns. Levels of support fluctuated according to issues over which the Brotherhood had relatively little, if any, control: for example, the Brotherhood generally received positive interpretations during times of American animosity towards Great Britain, though this could change during elections to reflect political viewpoints. During periods of political quiescence and diplomatic peace, when designing journalists could no longer use the movement to their own advantage, the overriding interpretation

⁴⁹ *Irish People* 12 March 1870. Four days earlier, the same paper had blamed the condemnation on the work of a segment of the press that considered itself the “champions of Catholicity.” The condemnation was not on the basis that the Brotherhood was a secret society, but that it worked for the overthrow of legitimate authority. See also *Irish Citizen* 21 February and 12 March 1870.

⁵⁰ *Irish People* 19 March 1870.

⁵¹ McMaster offered condolences, telling the Fenians that while their aim was legitimate, their means were not. *Freeman's Journal* 26 February 1870.

was one of ridicule or contempt.

The end of the Civil War found the Fenians not only in a position to staff and equip an army of liberation, but in a favorable climate of opinion in which to mature their plans. Indeed, a more propitious moment could scarcely be imagined. The majority of Americans were peeved at the conduct of Great Britain during the preceding four years; although ostensibly neutral, England had acted in a somewhat spurious manner. Several times during the conflict, her behavior elicited a barrage of criticism from Northern legislators and journalists alike. As one Fenian commented: "On every side we found the deepest interest manifested in the cause of Ireland, and received the warmest expressions of encouragement and support from Americans as well as from our own people. Indeed, in some places it would be difficult to decide which were the most interested to strike at England."⁵² Wrote one correspondent to the Fenian hierarchy:

"I have been reading with a great deal of interest the proceedings of the Fenian Brotherhood, and although I am an American, my heart and prayers are with the movement. I hope to see or hear of Ireland being a free and independent government; she has submitted long enough to the tyranny of England. The Irish have been brave and noble soldiers in the great rebellion, and I see no reason why if they will brave so many dangers for their adopted country, they should not brave all dangers for their native land."⁵³

Echoed Charles Sumner:

"The course of Great Britain towards the United States during the Civil War had left a deep sense of wrong in the minds of our people...There was a disposition among our people to make our power felt against any war in which she might hereafter be engaged...the nation was pressed by anti-English feeling and sympathy with Fenianism."⁵⁴

⁵² Proceedings of the Fourth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, 24.

⁵³ Mary Phelps to T.W. Sweeny, 11 February 1866, T.W. Sweeny papers.

⁵⁴ Charles Sumner, Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner, 4 vols., (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1894), 4: 290-292.

Several wartime incidents had pushed the two countries to the brink of war, a situation not lost on the Fenian leadership.⁵⁵ The diplomatic fallout over the *Trent* affair was the first of these incidents.

In the fall of 1861, a scant six months after the war erupted, a Union vessel, the *USS San Jacinto*, intercepted the British mail steamer *Trent* en route to Europe, removing Confederate envoys James Mason and John Slidell. Imprisoned in Boston as “contraband of war,” their plight, tied to larger issues of freedom of the seas and the rights of neutrals, threatened to push the two nations into armed conflict; in fact, Secretary of State William Seward privately expressed the hope that such a foreign war would reunite his divided nation.⁵⁶ Irish Americans were particularly vocal in calling for a war against the British, hoping that such an event would result in the liberation of their homeland. *The Irish American* saw in the *Trent* Affair a casus belli for war between the United States and Great Britain, and counseled its readers to prepare for the long-awaited conflict with the Saxon oppressor.⁵⁷ In time, the proceedings against Mason and Slidell were dropped, and with them the fear (some might say hope) of global combat; but it was clear to contemporary observers that all was not well in the field of Anglo-American relations.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ “The news of a probable war between England and the United States gives the people much satisfaction...England was never in such a state of trepidation. She knows that her cup of iniquity is full and that a chastisement is nigh.” William G. Halpin to O’Mahony, 18 October 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁵⁶ In anticipation of war with the United States, Great Britain vastly expanded the size of her forces in Canada. In 1860 the British spent a mere £295,612 to keep a force of about 4500 soldiers in North America; by the end of 1862, the tensions produced by the American Civil War saw the expenditures rise to £939,424 for almost 17,000 officers and men. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, 17.

⁵⁷ *The Irish American* 21 December 1861.

⁵⁸ Added James Gordon Bennett’s *New York Herald* as early as 26 September 1861: “Let them remember, however, when the termination of our civil conflict shall have arrived, it may be the turn of our foreign enemies to suffer the consequences of the mischief they are attempting to do to us.”

Another major incident that served to exacerbate the already tenuous relationship between the United States and Great Britain occurred late in the war. On 19 October 1864 a band of twenty-one Confederate agents crossed the Canadian-American border and raided the town of St. Albans, Vermont. Before escaping back across the border, the raiders robbed three banks (netting \$200,000) and claimed one civilian casualty. Despite being later captured by British authorities, the bandits were released after trial. Incensed at the attack as well as the acquittal, the Northern press clamored for revenge.⁵⁹ Wrote the *Rochester Union and Advertiser*:

“Let them understand how it is to be alarmed. Let their men walk the streets in arms. Let their women and children pass a few sleepless nights, as did ours. Nay more; let their citizens in some peaceful village, like St. Albans, be shot down by some Fenian band to show them that justice is sure to overtake the guilty.”⁶⁰

Concurred diarist George Templeton Strong:

“The Great Britons are in a blaze over their plotting, rebellious Fenians...very natural Irishmen should incline to a little secession after the talk of most organs of English opinion for the last four years about the iniquity of attempting to coerce a people that desires independence and the impossibility of doing it...we should follow the example of England. We should proclaim ourselves neutral as between the two ‘belligerent powers,’ and proceed with due caution to prevent by process of law the sailing of ‘Irish Rams’ from any American port...we should be unable, of course, to prevent reckless speculators from trying to run the blockade with cargoes of Springfield rifles, and privateers would get out of our ports, in spite of all we could do, and burn British merchantmen by the hundred.”⁶¹

Later, Strong added:

“The fright and worry and expense that Fenianism is inflicting on our Northern neighbors are a just retribution for their treatment of us during the war— for their harboring and petting the vilest conspirators, assassins and poisoners of Secessia,

⁵⁹ *The Toronto Globe* of 12 December 1864 predicted that the Fenians would be exploited by both parties south of the border and warned that if Canada continued to tolerate Confederate raids into the United States, the Fenians might be encouraged to launch similar raids in the opposite direction.

⁶⁰ *Rochester Union and Advertiser* 19 March 1866.

⁶¹ Strong, *Diary*, 4: 38-39.

for the St. Albans raid and the Coursol decision. A specially comforting feature of the case is that this ‘invading army’ of outlaws and land-pirates appears to have been officered by ruffians formerly in the Confederate service, and therefore beloved of all Canadians two years ago.”⁶²

This and similar calls for revenge reverberated throughout the Union; the cry did not fall on deaf ears.

Perhaps the most serious point of contention that antagonized Anglo-American relations both during and immediately after the Civil War was the ongoing dispute over the so-called “*Alabama* claims.” Not to be settled via international arbitration until the Washington Conference of 1871, the dispute centered on damages inflicted against Union shipping by the British-built confederate raiders *Alabama*, *Florida*, and *Shenandoah*. Clearly a violation of international law concerning the behavior of neutrals towards belligerents, the case threatened to plunge the two powers into war. Throughout America, newspapers and politicians demanded forceful action to make England come to terms. Editorialized the *New York Times*:

“The language and conduct of the British Ministry were expressly adopted to aid and comfort a rebellion that was striking at our national life. Weak as this Fenian movement is, we say to-day, unhesitatingly, that it needs from America but the same support that the Southern rebellion received from England to give it a force that would rock the British Kingdom to its foundations.”⁶³

In a St. Patrick’s Day editorial, the *Times* added, “*The London Times* has for four years

⁶² Ibid., 4: 89. Three days later, after the pronouncement of the Neutrality Proclamation, Strong added: “The Fenian army — minus artillery, baggage, commissariat, and transportation...while inflicting on our Northern neighbors a just retribution for their treatment of us during the war...have been met with a vigorous and honest proclamation. If Lord John Russell, etc., had done their international duty as loyally three years ago, the name of England would be less hateful on this side of the Atlantic. If our government had only practiced neutrality according to British precedent, I think Canada would be in hot water today!”

⁶³ *New York Times* 20 May 1865. Likewise 28 September 1865. On 15 September 1865, the *Times* added: “The wrongs of Ireland are solemn realities that must some day be atoned for...the course of England is the real motive of Irish hostility.” As late as 9 March 1867, the *Times* called for the liberalization of English rule, adding: “unless the British concede abolition of State Church and reform of the tenantry system, they deserve to be tormented by the Fenians night and day.”

taught the people of England to believe that the rebel Confederacy was a permanent and indestructible political fabric.”⁶⁴ The implication was that now that the war was over, there was a score to settle. Others concurred. “It would be interesting to see what effect the appearance of one, two, or half a dozen *Alabamas*, sailing under Fenian colors, would produce upon the nerves, as well as the commerce of our English cousins” opined the *Tribune*’s Horace Greeley.⁶⁵ This popular call for vengeance was complemented by the usual political rhetoric; while most demanded that Great Britain reimburse the United States for the actual value of ships sunk and cargo lost (estimated at approximately \$8,000,000), others sought to sue England for upwards of \$125,000,000, arguing that her actions led to the prolongation of the conflict by at least two years. Of course, support for the Fenians was far from universal. Editorialized one paper:

“The avowed object of the Fenian Brotherhood is the liberation of Ireland from the ‘Saxon yoke.’ That object, of course, is only to be achieved by waging war successfully against Great Britain. To organize war against Great Britain on the soil of the United States is, of course, a violation of our neutrality laws which must subject all who engage in it to the liability of arrest and punishment...The Fenians claim that they are raising money to prepare to fight. This claim is either true or it is untrue. If it is true, then the Fenians are guilty under our treaty with Great Britain of a flagrant crime. If it is not true, then the ‘Irish Republic’ is a humbug and the Fenian leaders are a set of imposters and swindlers obtaining money under false pretense...this has gone far enough. Let them be forced to take either one horn or the other of the dilemma. Let them be forced to the admission either that they are common cheats or that they are guilty for violating the laws to which they have sworn allegiance and support.”⁶⁶

Still, throughout the Atlantic world, tensions rose as this debate dominated legislative houses as well as headlines. Indeed, as early as the autumn of 1865, reports circulated of a Fenian force heading towards the Canadian border from New York City and Hartford,

⁶⁴ *New York Times* 17 March 1865.

⁶⁵ *New York Tribune* 2 March 1866.

⁶⁶ *Chicago Tribune* 23 November 1865.

with volunteer regiments being dispatched from Montreal and Toronto to meet the threat.⁶⁷

It is against this background then, of a highly contentious era in Anglo-American relations, that one must view the activities of the Fenian Brotherhood. Emboldened by the often ambiguous, sometimes openly accommodating gestures of the American government and people, the organization cannot be to blame for believing that their schemes would meet with anything less than rousing success and complete approval.⁶⁸ Indeed, their expressed aim of humbling the British was concomitant with the view of the majority of Americans; many regarded the Brotherhood as a “bulldog kept on a leash by the American government, which could relax its grip occasionally to frighten the British.”⁶⁹ One concerned paper commented, “The Fenian organization is now a power, and one which cannot be scattered by the arrest of a few of its members in Ireland.”⁷⁰ Added a Canadian journal: “Since Stephens and O’Mahony first hatched the Fenian egg, the prospects of the Brotherhood have not been brighter than they are at present, if we are to judge from the situation as it presents itself in the United States. It is now one of the

⁶⁷ *New York Times* 1 November 1865.

⁶⁸ The support was not limited to politicians and journalists. Wrote Fannie Jackson of Pulaski, Tennessee on 28 February 1866: “All success to the glorious Fenian movement...anything to torment John Bull!” T.W. Sweeny papers. Added another: “The Fenian Brotherhood represents one of the most important revolutionary organizations ever called into existence and receiving, we are led to believe, the tacit and open sympathy of the national departments and the people of the United States.” Preface to Fenianism, 3. In the aftermath of the June raids, *The Irish American* explained the actions of the Fenians thusly: “having fought and sacrificed for the Union, it was only natural that the Irish here should think that a trial of their hands for their own land would not be out of order.”

⁶⁹ *The Irish Citizen* 22 February 1868. Earlier, the *Manchester Courier* (20 September and 11 October 1867) expressed similar claims: “That the government of the United States has any real love for the Fenians no one will pretend. It, or rather the dominant party, uses the organization for the sake of its influence on the politics of the country.” “It is more than ever evident that Fenianism has been fostered by the American Government, in order to secure the United States a means of keeping down the power of England, and of inflicting incessant annoyance upon her.”

⁷⁰ *London Times* 9 January 1866.

most powerful organizations in the Old or New World and bids fair to give plenty of trouble to the cause of its origin.”⁷¹ When viewed in this light, as being a small part of a larger, more complicated era, the Fenians can be seen as neither “burlesque belligerents” nor “carnavalesque conspirators,” but as pragmatic patriots who were victims of both their own self-delusion as well as of the times in which they lived.

The outward support given to the Brotherhood during this time was subject to change. While many in the American community were willing to support their aims, few were willing to countenance any actions that might threaten to embroil the United States in armed conflict with Great Britain. As early as February, the *New York Times* began a long campaign designed to ridicule the movement and discredit its leaders. Commenting on the very existence of the group, it cautioned: “Great Britain has done us grievous wrong; we have abundant cause of complaint; but we can never be so far wronged as to imitate her base example, and to permit upon our soil the organization of expeditions aimed at her safety.”⁷² When the Fenians could no longer be used to cajole the British, they were discarded, ignored, or categorically blasted by New York’s editors and journalists. At least one journalist recognized this. Wrote *The Freeman’s Journal*: “we consider the Fenian organization has had a fictitious importance attached to it by the recruiting agencies of the Federal Government. That government will now fling them to the dogs, having no more use for them.”⁷³ Others realized the potential of using the Fenians for their own personal gains. This was particularly true during political

⁷¹ *Irish Canadian* 24 August 1866.

⁷² *New York Times* 21 February 1866.

⁷³ *The Freeman’s Journal* 26 August 1865.

campaigns, when the Fenians were employed as weapons for or against any number of candidates.

No better barometer of mainstream American feelings towards the Fenian can be found than in the varied press reports surrounding the main activities of the Brotherhood. The treatments afforded the organization ranged from open support to downright ridicule, and were more often a reflection of contemporary political, economic, and diplomatic conditions than they were of any level of understanding of Irish nationalism. A look at press treatments of the Fenians in America offers an interesting glimpse into the world of mid-nineteenth century New York City.

The press reports of the abortive Campo Bello raid began even before the first Fenians crossed the border in April 1866. The pro-Fenian *New York World* of 2 April reported "Excitement in Hamilton...the entire military force called out today...rumors of an invasion."⁷⁴ Three days later, that same journal offered a full report of the planned Campo Bello raid.⁷⁵ Soon reports that "the Irish... of New York are in the most intense state of excitement as to the possibility of the success of their movement" and of "conflict between English soldiers and American citizens and Fenians" filled their pages.⁷⁶ Only after the definitive defeat of the Fenians, but still acknowledging "the money continues to pour in" did the paper counsel "an end to speech making until the blow is struck."⁷⁷ After the fact, the *World* was quick to add: "The O'Mahony bubble has burst at last. The gross frauds perpetrated upon the masses of the Fenian brotherhood for the last four

⁷⁴ *New York World* 5 April 1866.

⁷⁵ *New York World* 8 April 1866.

⁷⁶ *New York World* 7 and 14 April 1866.

⁷⁷ *New York World* 19 April 1866.

months in the name of patriotism have at last come to a close.”⁷⁸

Others were more optimistic. The *New York Herald* of 16 April carried fanciful reports of the raid on Indian Island (“The Green above the Red!”) and on 18 April it disseminated rumors of a fifteen vessel Fenian fleet ready to be launched on the Great Lakes.⁷⁹ Earlier it counseled the Canadians to watch their step:

“We advise the monarchy-loving subjects of Great Britain in Canada not to let their passions become too violent. Their loyalty to the Crown may be established without resorting to extreme or cruel measures toward those who differ with them. Let them keep their tempers cool and their powder dry. When the bugle sounds to arms they have the right to take that side whither their inclinations, their instincts, take them. They can fight for the monarch who rules them three thousand miles away, or they can take the side of the friends of free and liberal government, who are their neighbors, and who wish to live on amicable terms with them. They have the right to choose; and upon them rests the responsibility of making a mistake.”⁸⁰

When the raid was proven to be a fiasco, the *Herald* defended the Fenians from punishment and innuendo:

“We should be sorry to hear that the Fenians had done any of these things. Such acts are simply horrible pieces of barbarism. This we thought and said when they were committed on our soil by men who had the encouragement and assistance of the Canadians, Nova Scotians, and New Brunswickers. But, much as we regret such acts, it seems to be doubtful whether, in the existing state of neutrality laws, any restraint can be exercised by our government until after the harm is done. If we accept definitively the experience of the Canadian government, it is not possible for us to prevent the Fenians doing what they will for we must suppose that the Canadian and other provincial governments made their utmost efforts to do their duty in restraining the Confederates, and we all know what poor success they had...The Irish have violated no law...bad intentions are not criminal; attempt is not success and rumor is not evidence. What a farce it would make of justice to arrest men on the mere possibility that they might have such horrible intentions.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ *New York World* 1 May 1866.

⁷⁹ *New York Herald* 16 and 18 April 1866.

⁸⁰ *New York Herald* 13 April 1866.

⁸¹ *New York Herald* 14 April 1866.

The New York Times was less objective. “The Fenian organization have their army of a score or two threatening to seize a fisherman’s dumping ground of a few miles square— three thousand miles distant from Ireland— on which to found an Irish Republic...This New Brunswick invasion is simply too absurd to warrant even the little notice we have been careful to give it in our news columns.”⁸² Still, the paper could not help but offer some scathing commentary in the days that followed:

“From the far off corner of Maine comes an unceasing peal of uproarious fun and folly, the only drawback to which lies in the fraud that taints the whole affair...the carrying away of a revenue flag might have been performed as easily by one smart Yankee schoolboy as by the Fenians upon whose prowess Killian dwells with evident pride. ‘Go to Indian Island to steal a flag, then proclaim a victory,’ we said to ourselves; ‘why five stevedores might any day or night do the same ten times over without leaving New York.’ These mighty movements of the O’Mahonyites, however are evidently unpalatable to the Sweeny faction, whose glories are thus eclipsed by the warlike Killian. Something must be done to sustain Roberts in the Presidency and Sweeny as the great Fenian Generalissimo. What shall it be? The capture of one of the Thousand Isles? A descent upon Manitoulin in Lake Huron? A feint to threaten Goat Island in the Niagara? Martial reader be more moderate in your exactions. Messrs. Roberts and Sweeny are going— yes are positively going, are advertised to go, and unquestionably will go— to a *public meeting* to be held in this city tomorrow evening!”⁸³

Two weeks later, the *Times* derisively referred to the movement as “The ridiculous Fenian fizzle” commenting that “all the silly dupes” had been ordered to go home.⁸⁴ In a lengthy editorial, the *Times* stated: “it is not England that the Fenians are making war upon, but the United States. It is our neutrality laws that they are violating...they are attempting to disrupt our interests and our peaceful relations. They

⁸² *New York Times* 14 April 1866.

⁸³ *New York Times* 17 April 1866.

⁸⁴ *New York Times* 27 April 1866.

are involving our government in expense.”⁸⁵ Later the *Times* added: “All the while they will be laboring to embroil this Government with that of Great Britain, to bring about some collision that may make England’s necessity Ireland’s opportunity.”⁸⁶ The editors castigated the Fenians for forgetting that they were now Americans and that they should forswear any allegiance to Ireland: “The United States invites, and has room for emigration from any quarter of Europe, but if it comes she claims the hands and hearts it brings for her own service. The Republic of America is that whose flag they must defend, and the dream of arraying themselves under any other must be forgotten.”⁸⁷ Observing the propensity of the Fenians to hold grand rallies, pic-nics, and mass meetings, the *Times* commented that the Brotherhood was better off engaging in these recreational pursuits than in martial ones:

“In any case, they will find it much more profitable and much more cheap to proceed with their antics within sight of Union Square than in a neighborhood where they will come under the cognizance of the United States marshals, and may get into the hands of the British hangman.”⁸⁸

The Irish American, organ of the Roberts-Sweeny wing attributed a more sinister explanation to the O’Mahonyites: “The real purpose of Killian,” it believed, “was to create a row by breaking the neutrality laws in order that the government might be compelled to issue a proclamation which could only result in breaking up the plans of

⁸⁵ *New York Times* 21 April 1866.

⁸⁶ *New York Times* 5 March 1866.

⁸⁷ *New York Times* 24 April 1866.

⁸⁸ *New York Times* 18 April 1866. Several months earlier, the same journal blasted the Fenians as: “demagogues and self-seekers ready to traffic in national humiliation and rise upon any wave of popular emotion that promised to hoist them into power or notoriety. We should heartily rejoice if to-day every native of the island could be sent back to its green shores.” *New York Times* 26 July 1865.

Colonel Roberts and General Sweeny.”⁸⁹

Coverage of the June raids was even more sensational. For days the headlines blared with reports and rumors of Fenian successes and defeats. As late as 30 May some discounted reports of a raid. The *Times*, which had declared Fenianism “dead and altogether beyond recognition” following Eastport, carried the following column, which sought to dissuade Fenian supporters from being cajoled by duplicitous leaders:

“Its true character must be explained for the benefit of the poorer class of our Irish fellow-citizens who may be deluded by it into paying money to keep alive Fenianism. One of the appliances of the dramatic stage is the ‘army’ or the ‘mob’ or the ‘cavalcade’ or what not. No theatre could place a brigade on stage, nor exhibit a procession of over a few yards. So they have a sort of endless chain of personages, who having crossed the stage in view of the audience, rush back behind the scenes, and are ready to pass again in full view as many times as necessary to produce the desired effect. Such is the composition of the Fenian armies. And then the secrecy! This too is managed in a theatrical way! The bandit, or rightful heir, or murdered ghost wants to be invisible, but he must be seen too. So he stalks before the audience in preposterous boots or rises from the floor with blue light and soft music, whereat the audience are speechless and panic-stricken; nobody on stage sees him, but the spectators are in the secret—they know all about it. So with Fenian raids. They are mysterious and terrible and all the rest. The Provincial people are kept in the dark; a dreadful fate is theirs! But the audience—the audience that pays—must see the whole catastrophe. What would, indeed, be the use of paying if there were nothing to see?”

That same day, the paper attempted to shame Sweeny into compliance with the law:

“We remarked yesterday that no one is better acquainted than General Sweeny with the knavish, selfish, and mercenary character and objects of the men who are associated with him in the Roberts-Fenian movement. Does it not become an honest and brave soldier like General Sweeny, who has been guided in this matter by the most generous impulses, and by an unselfish love for Ireland, to cease at once giving countenance to an imposture which is only working damage to confiding Irishmen here, and ruin to them in their native land?”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ *The Irish American* 12 May 1866.

⁹⁰ *New York Times* 30 May 1866. The *Brooklyn Daily Union* had less regard for Sweeny. On 7 June 1866 it reported: “Sweeny may do much harm...no one expects that he will do much good.” G.T. Strong was perplexed by Sweeny’s involvement. “Sweeny has heretofore shown himself an officer of as much conduct and sagacity of spirit. Strange he should be mixed up with such a piece of folly as this invasion.” Strong, *Diary*, 4: 90.

Despite earlier pronouncements that the Fenians were far from newsworthy, the *Times* belied this myth by giving ample, if biased, coverage to the June raids. On Friday 1 June, the *Times* sardonically reported “The Fenian ghost is walking again, although dead these past few months...we await in feverish anxiety the great news of the conquest of Canada and the raising of the green above the red on the battered and subjugated citadel of Quebec.” The same paper continued: “Fenianism Galvanized...all sorts of stories from all sorts of sources... several dozen unarmed men gone somewhere...rumor says the British lion to be slaughtered this very night!”⁹¹ The following day, it carried “a bewildering maze of conflicting rumors, with...dispatches from everywhere, telling all sorts of stories...and dispatches from everywhere else contradicting all those previously sent!” The affair was described as “peculiarly Hibernian, and as clear as mud...The following dispatches, rumors, reports and opinions are given as nearly as possible in the order in which they came to us. Any attempt to put them in any intelligible shape or coherence would be a waste of time and patience. There is scarcely an assertion that is not speedily contradicted by another equally positive, so that the bewildered reader must be left in a state of dazed dubiousness little short of insanity.” The Fenian army was characterized as “heroes of the stamp who bravely led the retreat at Bull Run, who helped make up the great army of bounty jumpers, and who, when they cease to be stipendiaries of the War Department, usually draw their rations from the Commissary of corrections, [they are] the curse of American society, and a perpetual social and political scourge upon the American people.” The invasion was downplayed, with editors sarcastically noting “a piece of ordnance and a whole caisson across the line;” the object of their

⁹¹ *New York Times* 1 June 1866.

maneuvering, Fort Erie, was portrayed as a “deserted dunghill,” and the paper took singular delight in describing the “apathy of the people of this city over the news.”⁹² On June 3, the headlines reported that the Fenians, “in light order and without weapons, baggage or prisoners” had “thrown away their arms and were taking to their legs,” but only after they had pillaged a whiskey shop.⁹³ The *Times* took pleasure in ridiculing the leaders of the scheme, observing that “Quebec, Montreal, and Kingston were still in the hands of the hated Saxon” while condemning the entire movement and organization.⁹⁴ By 9 June, the *Times* observed “the end of the Great Fenian Fizzle...the heroes of Green Erin troubled with homesickness...the glorious thrashing of the British lion indefinitely postponed.”⁹⁵ The inglorious retreat was likewise mocked: “Bold movement upon Boston...New York and other large cities in imminent danger...”⁹⁶

⁹² *New York Times* 2 June 1866. A subsequent headline trumpeted: “Fenian army takes to its heels in the dark...He who fights and runs away, may live to run another day!” *New York Times* 4 June 1866. George Templeton Strong was uncharacteristically objective. “The Fenian invasions of Canada are not wholly a farce. Real powder has been burned and real blood drawn.” Strong, *Diary*, 4: 89.

⁹³ *New York Times* 3 June 1866. These allegations may well have been true. On 9 June 1866 the friendly *New York Herald* reported: “Drunkenness prevails to an alarming extent...half of General Spears army was beastly drunk.” *Brooklyn Daily Union* of the same day reported a series of depredations being carried out by Spears’ men. Prior to the raids, Sweeny had issued orders to his commanders that no depredations be committed, and that “should it become necessary to take any property from citizens, it will be done by staff officers who will give receipts for the same. These receipts will be paid at the end of the war to all who remain friendly to our cause.” Sweeny to Murphy, 30 May 1866, T.W. Sweeny papers. *The New York World* of 2 June 1866 reported “Colonel O’Neill threatened to bayonet a man who attempted to appropriate to himself the use of a large woolen shawl found in a public house. The Fenians assert that no pillaging will be allowed nor depredations permitted, as they don’t make war on the people of Canada, but on the English government.”

⁹⁴ *New York Times* 8 June 1866. Echoed the *New York Evening Post* of 7 June 1866: “Sweeny, the chivalrous and warlike leader of the Fenian army of invasion, has been arrested by United States authorities in St. Albans, Vermont. He took good care that his arrest should not occur on the **other** side of the Canada line. The impulsive Sweeny!”

⁹⁵ *New York Times* 9 June 1866.

⁹⁶ *New York Times* 11 June 1866. On 7, 9, and 12 June the *Times* defended the administration, attacking those editors (particularly of the *Tribune*) who assailed Johnson for upholding the law and preserving the peace.

The *Brooklyn Daily Union* echoed these derisive reports, and demanded stricter accountability of both the Fenian leaders and the American government. On 1 June it noted the onset of hostilities, commenting that the Fenians were in motion and that the English were retreating.⁹⁷ As early as 2 June, however, it saw the end of Fenianism, declaring the movement

“...one of the most marvelous swindles that the sun ever shone upon. It was fraud, open and outrageous, and it was absolutely certain from the beginning that it must fail. For the poor fellows who made up this wild expedition we have the respect compelled by courage and sincerity. They have proved their real interest by imperiling their lives in what they believed would lead to its triumph. They but exemplify the whole Irish-American people, who have been ready during all the excitement to sacrifice everything for their country, under the lead of those they fondly but mistakenly considered to be their country’s friends. But for the leaders, who have bled the people without running the risk of bleeding themselves, whose valor has been exhibited at safe mass meetings, and whose patriotism never impelled them to anything more self-sacrificing than vainglorious speeches and unlimited whisky, we have nothing but an inexpressible contempt.”⁹⁸

Three days later it reported:

“All over the country the interest of the Irish is aroused and intensified by the departure of small bands of men ‘for Canada’ and this is availed of, in the most natural way, to extort large sums of money from the innocent and befooled...The prominent feature in the whole business continues to be the unparalleled impudence of the swindling leaders, coupled with the miserable gullibility of the deluded rank and file.”⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *Brooklyn Daily Union* 1 June 1866. “The Fenians have actually commenced their war upon England by way of Canada. This is the work of the Roberts and Sweeny faction, and will for a time— until the expedition is driven back— give the stock of that branch an upward tendency in the market and secure a corresponding increase in revenues. If the expedition succeeds in maintaining its hold for any length of time, it will require, we fear, a severe defeat, which will be sure sooner or later to break the spell of the new delusion in which our Irish population will be involved.”

⁹⁸ *Brooklyn Daily Union* 2 June 1866. Two days later the paper hedged its bets, stating “the project is not dead yet, inasmuch as there are several well-known, able, and gallant soldiers engaged in the enterprise, which seems to be conducted with brains as its basis...some of the officers engaged in this business won renown in our late war, and their identification with the main movement inspires some degree of confidence and interest among others of our citizens.” *Brooklyn Daily Union* 4 June 1866.

⁹⁹ *Brooklyn Daily Union* 5 June 1866.

As the days wore on the paper was harsh in its denunciations of the Fenian leaders and supportive of the administration's response. The editors agreed: "whatever may be the result of the Fenian movement, it will be plain that the United States did its whole duty promptly, completely, and calmly, without prevarication and without hypocrisy."¹⁰⁰ The paper hoped that the ignominious end to the invasion would refocus the energies of the still-divided nation on more important tasks.

Other New York journals expended as much ink, if less vitriol, on the Fenians. The *New York World* saw the raids as "either a feint or an act of foolhardy desperation... a desperate and brainless venture, hazarded by the Fenian leaders to redeem their organization from contempt."¹⁰¹ The *World* was originally optimistic, but quickly turned against the movement:

"After a spirited and gallant fight on Saturday, in which the Fenians did no discredit to the Irish reputation for uncalculating courage, they retreated to the Niagara River before nightfall; made themselves drunk by liquor taken on empty stomachs; lost their resolution before morning; attempted to recross to the American side; were captured in the attempt by the United States authorities, in whose custody they remain. Whatever may have been the purpose of the Fenian leaders in its inception, it is now safe to pronounce it a complete failure. Nothing could be more absurd."¹⁰²

That paper, which proclaimed itself as the "leading organ of the Democratic party of the State of New York", saw Johnson's proclamation as both necessary and beneficial:

"Aside from the imperative sense of duty which is binding on the President as an official sworn to enforce the laws, his interposition, at the present time, is doubtless a mercy to the Fenians...the lives of our Irish citizens are too valuable to be thrown away in a hopeless undertaking, and, in their interest, the government does well to interpose and save them from the fate on which, with

¹⁰⁰ *Brooklyn Daily Union* 7 June 1866.

¹⁰¹ *New York World* 2 June 1866.

¹⁰² *New York World* 4 June 1866.

uncalculating bravery, they are ready to rush. We trust they will now abandon their enterprise; that the government will treat them all, leaders as well as followers, with lenity; and that, in consideration of its vigor, the Canadian authorities will not deal too harshly with the unfortunate Fenians now in their hands.”¹⁰³

The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* was equally reserved in their comments.¹⁰⁴ On 2 June that paper placed the Fenian raids into the context of Reconstruction and counseled lenity to both the Brotherhood and the former Confederacy. “Is there not in all this a lesson for the blood-thirsty and vindictive Radicals here, as well as for the English government? They propose to treat the South as England treated Ireland...the English government kept alive the memory of rebellion; it would not permit Ireland to forget that she had rebelled.”¹⁰⁵ The paper felt that “for the sake of the cause, in itself commendable, we desired to see those engaged in it get out of the undertaking without dishonor. The sincerity of the Roberts-Sweeny party has saved Fenianism from absolute contempt...Fenianism is today stronger than ever before.”¹⁰⁶

On 2 June, the *New York Herald*, a journal long supportive of the Fenians,

¹⁰³ *New York World* 8 June 1866. The following day the *World* added: “there should be no harshness in either case. Nobody doubts that to visit the full severity of the law on Mr. Roberts and Mr. Sweeny would be the surest way to strengthen the Fenian organization. Living as we do in the midst of Irishmen, we easily understand how such injudicious rigor would operate.” *New York World* 9 June 1866.

¹⁰⁴ In an editorial chronicling the history of the movement in Brooklyn, the *Daily Eagle* of 3 June 1866 surmised: “Rapid as was the spread of Fenianism in New York and in many cities out West, yet in no portion of the United States did its spirit penetrate the masses of the people so rapidly and quickly as in Brooklyn.”

¹⁰⁵ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 2 June 1866. *The Irish American* of 9 June 1866 agreed. “Before the orders were issued there was a manifest disposition on the part of radical office-holders, both civil and military, to oppose the Fenian movement. It was part and parcel of the Radical design to alienate from the President the regards of as large numbers of the people as possible, and no piece of political dodgery could have been more conducive to that end than this sudden over-zealousness on the score of our neutrality laws.”

¹⁰⁶ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 8 June 1866. The paper added: “The news of Uncle Sam’s interference does not discourage them in the least, but they regard it as having a peculiar significance which promises well for the cause...and the men, though shamefully deluded and cheated by some of those in whom they had reposed confidence, still their faith in the ultimate success of the movement was not shaken.”

devoted considerable space to the raids; the journal reported that Fort Erie had been captured, and the mayor of the town killed. Despite acknowledging, “the general feeling of the Americans seemed to be indifference, apathy, or moderate sympathy,” an editorial thanked the Fenians for teaching the Canadians a lesson in neutrality.¹⁰⁷ Several days later, the *Herald* revisited this theme, contrasting British and American neutrality:

“British neutrality was a sham; American neutrality is real. British neutrality was merely a diabolical device to aid the rebellion without openly fighting us; our neutrality is so uncompromising that it assists our enemies, the British, and hurts our friends, the Fenians. We have not recognized the Fenians as a belligerent power, nor allowed Fenian *Alabamas* and *Shenandoahs* to leave our ports, nor supplied the Fenians with arms, ammunition, artillery, uniforms, and provisions. Had we done so, or had we done nothing, the Fenian flag would now be floating over Montreal and Toronto. If the Fenians be defeated it will be by our government and not by the British regulars and Canadian militia.”¹⁰⁸

On 3 June, the *Herald* carried reports of a “sanguinary engagement” complete with accounts of the “admirable behavior of the victorious invading army,” and how they “outwit their pursuers.”¹⁰⁹ Where others mocked the move, the *Herald* saw in the raid proof of Irish determination; where others saw disgrace, the *Herald* prophesied ultimate success.

“The Roberts-Sweeny organization are resolved at least to give the Saxon some convincing proof that they mean to strike him where they can most convincingly

¹⁰⁷ *New York Herald* 2 June 1866. That same day, the *New York Leader* demanded that the leaders of the movement be brought to justice for deceiving their countrymen. That day’s *New York World* advised the New York Irish to heed the advice of their priests and abandon the cause.

¹⁰⁸ *New York Herald* 6 June 1866.

¹⁰⁹ *New York Herald* 3 June 1866. The *Herald* had long enjoyed the support of Irish nationalists. One Fenian tract contained the following preface: “in compiling this pamphlet, we are indebted in a measure to a number of very able and truthful articles, published from time to time in the *New York Herald*, which we have considered to be of too much importance to pass by, containing as they do much valuable information. It is to us a source of great pleasure to see this, the most eminent journal on the American continent, championing so earnestly the cause of Irish freedom.” *Preface to Fenianism*, 1. The *Irish Republic* of 25 May 1867 did not share this benign interpretation, referring to the *New York Herald*, *World*, and *Times* as “English and un-American papers...unfortunately subsidized by and reliant upon Irish American support.”

find him The move will serve to consolidate the Irish race throughout the world and to convince England that without large concessions to the just demands of the Irish people they must henceforth be a constant source of danger to the integrity of the British empire, not only in Ireland, but in every corner of the globe...though Sweeny may fail in his immediate objects, his daring adventure will at least excite a new agitation of the Irish question, to which the great impending events in the Old World may bring a righteous and satisfactory settlement.”¹¹⁰

When the neutrality proclamation was issued, the *Herald* was incredulous:

“The rigor with which our government is carrying out the neutrality doctrine is part and parcel of the same system of subserviency to foreign powers that has characterized the policy of the State Department since Mr. Seward assumed control of it. We owe England nothing. We have no sympathy with her political system or her government of Ireland. She has shown herself on every occasion inimical to and jealous of this country. Mr. Seward is too apt to toady to foreign governments and to sacrifice American pride and interests to their wishes. This is not a policy for a great nation to pursue. Let not our government be too severe itself on those who have erred, and let it not fail to give all the protection possible to its citizens who may have fallen into the hands of the British. Let us be just; let us even be generous in our dealings with other powers, but do not let us compromise either our interests or our dignity.”¹¹¹

When the raids were proven to be unsuccessful, the *Herald* offered this explanation:

“It is manifest...from the number of fighting Fenians gathered along our frontier and from the large amounts of their arms and materials of war captured en route to the northern border that they had men enough, arms enough, and munitions enough to open a campaign that would have carried them from Toronto to Halifax...American neutrality has rescued her Britannic Majesty’s North American possessions from what would have been a terrible and bloody war had our government adopted Lord John Russell’s British neutrality.”¹¹²

Only later did the journal acknowledge the hopelessness of the raids, though it clung to

¹¹⁰ *New York Herald* 3 June 1866.

¹¹¹ *New York Herald* 8 June 1866. The following day the *Herald* claimed: “The offended public sentiment of the country revolts at the idea of this never-ending, still-beginning flunkeyism to England.” *New York Herald* 9 June 1866.

¹¹² *New York Herald* 10 June 1866. Two days later, the *Herald* revisited this issue: “From all the facts developed in this case it seems evident that had it not been for the interference of the government there would have been fifty thousand men thrown into Canada; that Montreal and Ottawa would have been in possession of the invaders before this time, and that in less than six months there would not be a British flag flying in North America.” *New York Herald* 12 June 1866.

the hope that it might be revived. That same day it admitted defeat, but clung to the hope of regeneration: "The slurs cast upon the movement by the partisan press who have styled it a failure and a fiasco are all nonsense. The Fenian idea, though baffled now, is not a failure. It is still full of vitality, and will, no doubt, show itself at no future time and very probably with some force at the next elections. It will retain a significance that may be noticeable by and by in the politics of this country."¹¹³

The *Tribune*, among the most sympathetic of journals, was equally optimistic. The movement was defended as a sincere expression of Irish nationalism, and all charges of it being a fraud were turned aside.¹¹⁴ While acknowledging the futility of the plan, it stood by the idea of Fenianism:

"Let us presume then— as almost everyone does— that the Fenian invasion of Canada will speedily be drowned in blood— that the wreck of General Sweeny's forces will soon be fleeing across the border— it will be a very great mistake to calculate that this will annihilate Fenianism. It will do nothing of the kind. The body may perish, but the spirit will survive. The aspiration of the Irish to nationality and independence has outlived so many crushing defeats that it is most unlikely to be extinguished by any fresh disaster."¹¹⁵

The *Tribune*, like the *Herald*, was most indignant at the President's proclamation. The

¹¹³ *New York Herald* 12 June 1866. The *Herald* added: "The political organs of this city have all made a great mistake about the Fenians. The democratic papers have abused them and the republican papers have abused them. But the Fenians are by no means dead, and it is not improbable that they will hold the city politicians rigidly accountable at the next election. There is plenty of time to organize a Fenian party during the summer and to run a Fenian ticket independent of all political parties. Should this be done, as it probably will be, under the leadership of Fernando and Benjamin Wood, the regular machines will be very badly smashed. A Fenian ticket would be supported not only by the Fenians but by all sympathizers with Fenianism, who rather outnumber the Fenians themselves. Thus the political leaders may be left without a corporal's guard and the green banner may float in triumph over the City Hall."

¹¹⁴ *New York Tribune* 2 June 1866. "The random talk of some of our city journals has been calculated to misguide the public mind. The Fenian movement is not mere pretense or parade— it is deeply and painfully earnest."

¹¹⁵ *New York Tribune* 2 June 1866. Two days later, the same paper argued, "the moment one man fell on the Canada line, the heart of every Irishman yearned to go to his side to share his fate or avenge his memory."

paper blasted Johnson's overly zealous prosecution of the Fenians, stating that the administration had done much to nurse the movement into activity and should not now remove its support. A few days later, the paper laid the blame squarely on Andrew Johnson.

"The Neutrality Acts are not to blame... The President assumed the responsibility of so interpreting that act as to frustrate the Fenian expedition, while it was equally open to him to have omitted the extraordinary employment of the military in the defense of the Canada border...He chose, instead, to treat the Fenians as malefactors, and Great Britain as a power that must be conciliated and for whose behalf the armies of the United States were to be employed as a Canadian police."¹¹⁶

Thus we can see that larger political and diplomatic issues determined the public perception of the Fenian movement, and these determinants were largely out of the direct control of the Brotherhood. Editors and journalists interpreted the movement along political lines, viewing their activities through ideological filters and lenses. Only when there was a shared outrage at a clear miscarriage of justice did the native press and the ethnic editors agree. The commentary surrounding the Manchester Martyrs best exemplifies this confluence of native and ethnic sentiment.

Whereas many observers had compared British and American concepts of "neutrality", the pro-Fenian *Herald* used the executions to compare American and British treatment of political prisoners. The paper argued that the harsh penalty would only serve to invigorate radical Irish nationalism. "Hundreds of thousands of lives have been sacrificed by the acts of those with whom England sympathized on this side of the Atlantic, and no one has suffered an ignominious death, except for the crime of willful

¹¹⁶ *New York Tribune* 12 June 1866. *The Irish American* of 9 June 1866 agreed: "Must international obligations be binding on us alone? Must our officers be spies and informants in the interest of England? Must our army and navy become a vast police to protect England's colonial possessions?"

murder or revolting inhumanity to prisoners of war. But the rescue of two prisoners and the shooting of one officer during a riot on British soil has cost three of the participants their lives upon the scaffold. This will only serve to bring forth even more bitter fruit than the tree of Fenianism has yet produced.”¹¹⁷ John Mitchel’s *Irish Citizen* agreed: “The English people demanded blood and they have got it...all over the Earth, wherever our countrymen are scattered, this Manchester murder will be taken as a declaration of war. And what a war! Irishmen must begin to comprehend that there is no law for them...England has thrown down the gauntlet: either Irish nationality must go down, or she.”¹¹⁸ *The Irish American* felt that the Manchester victims “did more to consolidate Fenianism than all the preaching of orators could have done for years.”¹¹⁹ Even the ultramontane *Freeman’s Journal* agreed:

“Brutal England wades into blood, in a farther crushing out of Irish life that will not die. We look on the execution as murder. The old detestation of British cruelty revives in us. We want the American people to make common cause with the Irish against England! A government so false, and so brutal in its behests, ought to be blotted from the map of considerable peoples. What stupid beasts these English officials must be. Vile, besotted, and treacherous England, that knows neither to conciliate nor to govern a distinct people! May the day come, soon, when hostile banners shall cluster round your rainy coasts as to leave you no recourse except to content yourself with the trade and traffic you can make out of the people of your own island!”¹²⁰

As stated earlier, similar themes were expressed by the *New York Times*, *Tribune*, *Herald*, and sundry other publications.

While it may seem that the religious press was unabashedly anti-Fenian, and that political journals use the Fenians as a tool to assault their enemies, the rancorous

¹¹⁷ *New York Herald* 24 November 1867.

¹¹⁸ *The Irish Citizen* 30 November 1867.

¹¹⁹ *The Irish American* 21 December 1867.

¹²⁰ *Freeman’s Journal* 30 November 1867.

treatment of the Fenians was not reserved to these periodicals. The ethnic press was no less ambiguous in their treatment of the Fenians than were other commentators. On the whole, Irish editors supported the aims of the Brotherhood, but often clashed over the means used to achieve Irish independence. Perhaps the tendency of earlier scholars to focus on the bitter factionalism of the organization can be traced to the extensive paper trail left by the major players in the movement. The pages of *The Irish American*, *The Irish People*, *The Irish Republic*, and *The Irish Citizen* are filled with amusing attacks and vituperative columns defending the organization against friend and foe.¹²¹ The bitter attacks tell us much of the internal history of the movement, and offer us a window into the mindset of the Fenian hierarchy. They also show a level of commitment and dedication to the cause of Irish independence that cannot be taken lightly.

Superficial accounts of the American Fenian movement have concentrated on the organization's bitter infighting because of the sheer volume of ink and space that all parties expended on personal attacks. For example, *The Irish People* issued the following diatribe against Fenian Senator (and publisher of the rival *Irish American*) Patrick Meehan:

“The most bitter enemy of Ireland and the Irish race, the most devoted advocate of English rule in that unhappy country, or the most cruel and relentless of the myrmidions of Saxon law could not evince more undisguised satisfaction and delight at the recent disappointment which our people have encountered than does the evil genius who presides over *The Irish American*....”¹²²

The same paper later added to the belief that Meehan had long opposed the plans and operations of the Brotherhood, obstructing it at every turn.

¹²¹ Apparently much had changed since 16 June 1850, when *The Irish American* declared: “we shall never, for any price, become the vehicle of private attack or personal animosity.”

¹²² *The Irish People* 19 January 1867.

“Since this man (Meehan) entered its ranks, not the slightest symptom of dissension had appeared to mar the harmonious working of the organization. He was the evil genius of all the misfortunes that befell the Fenian Brotherhood, and the greatest obstacle to a reunion of the two factions into which the American branch has been split. What must PJ Meehan be if not a false deceiver, a vile calumniator, a base betrayer of his country, and the infamous destroyer of the greatest and most powerful organization for its redemption that any age has seen.”¹²³

The Senate wing, for their part, replied in kind. Contemplating a reunion with the O’Mahony branch it wrote:

“Nothing but evil could result by uniting to the bloated carcass of gaseous Manhattanism...they have betrayed the Irish people. Such sham leaders, who are without caution or preparation, or the necessary means to accomplish their object, bring only ruin and disgrace to their dupes and followers.”¹²⁴

Referring to John O’Mahony as “the warrior of the bloodless sword” and “the mischief-maker of Clan-hattan” the editors of *The Irish Republic* commented:

“We had almost made up our minds that nothing good could come out of Manhattan. We knew that there was material enough to almost redeem our country in New York City alone, but we were afraid that the sea of filth that swept over that city in the last two years had smothered the national feeling. Those chiefs and madmen (and bad men) have been read, and they should be thrown aside, like those immoral French novels which first entice and then disgust.”¹²⁵

The Irish American circulated rumors that Stephens was in the pay of the English government, and that O’Mahony had sold out his country to procure a healthy pension from the United States. *The Irish People*, for its part, responded by declaring the Roberts

¹²³ *The Irish People* 9 February 1867. Earlier John O’Mahony speculated: “This present ‘secession’ that has brought so much disgrace upon all Irishmen, and that has inflicted such lasting injury upon our cause, is a continuation of the treason of Mr. Meehan.” To the Senate and House of Delegates of the Fenian Brotherhood, 10.

¹²⁴ *The Irish Republic* 4 May 1867. The same column referred to Stephens and O’Mahony as “the Siamese twins of swindling patriotism.”

¹²⁵ *The Irish Republic* 28 September 1867. On 23 November 1867, *The Irish Republic* added: “Manhattan in the past has done much to merit the censure of the country at large by her boisterous and bullying conduct in Fenian affairs. Let Manhattan remember, that though the citizens of New York City think they own the rest of the nation, the rest of the nation doesn’t think so too.”

wing to be in the pay of the Radical Republicans. Other, ostensibly neutral observers wished a pox on both houses of the movement, saying that the factionalism brought the work of all committed Irish nationalists into disrepute.

Even when union was proposed, the rancor was obvious. Responding to a call by *The Irish Republic* to reconstitute the Brotherhood as it existed prior to the schism, *The Irish American* replied: "Two branches is the glib quotation on the lips of those driveling idiots. There may have been two branches, gentlemen, but there is only one now. The other is dead; it was always rotten. It never bore any fruit but misery and treason. And should foolish men allow this poisonous fungus to now touch the healthy body, it will kill that too."¹²⁶

Tiring of the seemingly interminable squabbling, John Mitchel avowed that his new journal, *The Irish Citizen*, would stand above the fray.¹²⁷ In the initial issue of his journal (in which the rabid Anglophobe "took notice of the steady progress of the British government in impoverishing and depopulating Ireland") Mitchel acknowledged the relative glut in the newspaper market but felt "there is both room and a need for a new Irish organ, detached from all parties and from both factions of Fenianism."¹²⁸ Many recognized that the discord bought opprobrium upon the entire body of nationalists. "I

¹²⁶ *The Irish American* 14 March 1868. *The Irish Republic* of 15 June 1867 countered by declaring any statements uttered by its rivals the equivalent of "the croaking of cowards."

¹²⁷ Mitchel was not alone. *The Irish People* of 26 January 1867 wrote: "We candidly admit that the rivalries, bickerings, exaggerations, consequent upon a division in the ranks gave much cause for harsh criticism but we positively assert that with all our failings and shortcomings...there was less selfishness, speculation, or knavery shown than in any other political or speculative body...it is high time that this wholesale condemnation should come to an end."

¹²⁸ *The Irish Citizen* 19 October 1867. *The Irish People* of that same day begged to differ. "The first number of John Mitchel's paper has appeared. On the subject of Irish revolution, *The Irish Citizen*, while holding itself independent of all the existing organizations for that object, and while it never once mentions the term 'Fenian' in its editorial columns, is as truly Fenian in its sentiments and teachings as any sensible Fenian could desire. The policy it advocates differs in nothing from that upon which the Fenian Brotherhood was originally started."

believe in the wisdom, might, and grandeur of silence. See what discussion does for journalistic rascaldom: it gives them bread, which they will relish not for the ordure, to say nothing of the consequences to us.”¹²⁹ A short time later, Mitchel ran this editorial to drive home the point:

“A letter has been sent us, already in type (sent we presume for publication) signed John O’Neill, President, FB, and addressed to Mr. John Savage. We decline to print it, because it is discourteous: and our readers are probably tired, like ourselves, of all this bickering. At any rate these columns shall not be made the medium for such accusations. We shall soon address ourselves, in *The Irish Citizen*, to develop some considerations connected with the subject of Ireland. In the meantime it is enough to say that no union has been affected between these people, and that none is likely. They are pining in dungeons or moldering in their graves, while the two fag-ends of what was once a national Irish power in America are hopelessly wrangling over we know not what trifles; not hurting, nor likely to hurt, the British government at all, but terribly injuring one another. That national power must be reorganized, but it will never, never more rise upon the ‘wings’ of Fenianism.”¹³⁰

While one cannot help but notice the passion behind these missives, there is much more to be learned from these tracts than the mere fact that the Fenians were a fractious bunch.¹³¹

¹²⁹ James Stephens to Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, nd, Fenian Brotherhood Records. This mirrors sentiments expressed a generation earlier. “Why is it, how comes it...that we should growl and recriminate, and thereby keep the misfortunes of our own people as an occasion for sneer and amusement, before the eyes of our American friends? Let us, at all events, give berated Ireland the charity of silence.” *The Irish American* 9 September 1849. In 1866 John O’Mahony stated: “It is not true Fenian practice to parade operations to friend and foe alike,” adding “the patriotism which has not honesty for a pedestal is, at best, of a very doubtful and uncertain quality.” To the Senate and House of Delegates of the Fenian Brotherhood, 34.

¹³⁰ *The Irish Citizen* 18 January 1868. Apparently the warning fell on deaf ears, for it was repeated less than a month later. “Fenian circles, which desire to abuse the other wing, or its President, by a series of Resolutions, need not send those resolutions to *The Irish Citizen*. No man shall in these columns, charge another with violating his word of honor.” *The Irish Citizen* 15 February 1868. These same themes had earlier been carried by *The Irish People* in an article titled “The Fenian Creed.” *The Irish People* 14 December 1867.

¹³¹ In a letter of 9 April 1868 to the “Editors of *The Irish People* from the IRB” Mitchel was singled out for praise. “Though his inconsistency since the advent of *The Irish Citizen* will account for the indifference of our organization due to his unwise intermeddling in the affairs of the Fenian Brotherhood, we would be ungrateful if we failed to thank him for having squelched the disorganizers...his confidence in Stephens and his want of confidence in Roberts and his ‘Senate’ were very decided.”

Perhaps the most obvious impression involves self-identification and characterization. Besides the conscious and conspicuous espousal of republican sentiment, those who were active in the Fenian movement portrayed apathetic Irishmen as traitors to both their homeland and to the United States. Early in the history of the movement, James Stephens characterized Fenians as “earnest men involved in a noble cause,” while referring to those who remained aloof as “dead to duty or even ambition...bipedal carrion who would rather rot in their doom than give their hot blood for Ireland.”¹³² These remarks were echoed by Roberts:

“The time has come when every Irishman who loves his country and believes in the ultimate independence of his native land must take his place beside the Fenian Brotherhood in asserting that Irish liberty can only be won by fighting for it. The time has come when Irishmen must take sides, and those who are not with us are against us. The man who holds back now, shrinking and doubtful, is no warm lover of his land and his patriotism is like the poor man’s blanket: too short at one end and not long enough at the other.”¹³³

The Irish American, linking Fenianism with “true Irishness” appealed to many when it stated, in a St. Patrick’s Day editorial: “Surely none with Celtic blood coursing in his veins will prove recreant to his country.”¹³⁴ In a lengthy column titled “Procrastinating Patriots,” *The Irish Republic* surmised:

“Were one fourth of the Irishmen of America active Fenians, the fate of the British Empire would be sealed and the unhappy destiny of Ireland reversed. Evidently the world at large (our enemies included) have given the Irish people credit for a more generous patriotism; but we can sorrowfully bear witness that this much talked of Fenian Brotherhood has no bitterer foes— no more glorious opposition— than men of Irish birth and blood. There are millions of Irish people in the United States who, by their criminal passiveness, render the arm of the Fenian Organization comparatively powerless. It has been our fate to be

¹³² Stephens to O’Mahony, 17 October 1859, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

¹³³ *New York Times* 26 July 1865.

¹³⁴ *The Irish American* 17 March 1866.

constantly brought into contact with men of this stamp— men who would fly into a rage were we to assert that they were untrue to their nationality, but who contend their minds and soothe their patriotic consciences by ‘drowning the Shamrock’ on Patrick’s morning or by indulging in fierce songs about the ‘sunburst’, the ‘Saxon’, and so forth. Some of these ‘patriots’ carry with them from Ireland the absurd, cowardly, and slavish political teachings of the Irish agitators; others of them dosed and drugged by the anti-Irish teachings of the pro-English Catholic prelates; others of them possessed of a stupid belief in the invincibility of the British power and the hopeless weakness of Ireland and finally many, who in the strife of American politics— in the scramble for power and place— or in the dazzling sunshine of prosperity, have forgotten that they are Irish at all, and if they have not, would wish others to forget it. All these classes have been greater allies of England than have been her own strong legions. Our more wealthy countrymen were either too ‘respectable’ to associate with them, too ‘religious’ to hate England, or too miserly or cowardly to give their money or expose their lives in the strife for Irish independence. This movement places Irishmen on their trial before mankind. If they work all together, be patient, constant, and brotherly, success must crown their efforts. Every Irishman should now be a Fenian, for Fenian means all that is national of Ireland. The Irish people in America can make it a success, and from all the signs of the times it will be sooner than our friends expect or our enemies desire.”¹³⁵

Thus, the ethnic press was vocal in its belief that the Fenians were the true representative of the Irish race in America, and saved some of their most bitter denunciations for those in the Irish community who differed with their plans. The best example of this internecine quarrel can be viewed in the rancorous dispute between the Fenians and John Mitchel, which culminated in February of 1868.

Mitchel had long espoused physical force nationalism, and was considered the leading luminary of Irish nationalists in America. From his early days in this country he espoused striking at England wherever she could most conveniently be found, but he was disenchanted with the Fenians prospects of success. Several times he turned down the presidency of the Brotherhood, believing that any attempt to liberate Ireland were futile so long as England was at peace. He also believed that the United States would never

¹³⁵ *The Irish Republic* 4 May 1867.

sanction the fitting out of any expeditions on her soil against a nation with which she was at peace, and that while unscrupulous politicians might support the organization in principle they were most likely fair weather friends who would abandon the Fenians once the next election had passed. Mitchel made these points public (he had expressed them in private correspondence ad nauseum) in an open letter "To John Martin of Kilbroney" in the 22 February issue of *The Irish Citizen*.¹³⁶ The response of the Fenians was immediate and vicious. *The Irish American* of the following day posited that Mitchel had "set before himself the task of squelching Fenianism in America," and wondered why the man who advocated "striking England wherever she might be found" now counseled nothing but waiting.¹³⁷ Several weeks later a correspondent asked:

"Mr. Mitchel says that Fenianism is utterly unavailable for any Irish purpose. We ask: has it not been the medium through which the wrongs and sufferings of our people from English tyranny have been diffused, and by which the world recognizes the Fenian Brotherhood and sympathizes with them? If ever we are to be successful, we must make our own opportunity, and not depend upon others to make it for us..."¹³⁸

Mitchel replied:

"Mutual vilification and expressions of confidence in two opposite systems form the only action which Fenianism in America is now making, or is able to make ...In its present form, on its present basis, it will forever do nothing, or less than nothing. The whole concern is regarded by English statesmen, not as the bolt that is to strike the British Empire, but as the lightning-rod that is to conduct the dangerous element safely into the ground; not as the millstone that is to ground the tyrants to dust, but as the fly-wheel that is to waste the power."¹³⁹

The discord and rancor would continue throughout the Brotherhood's existence,

¹³⁶ *The Irish Citizen* 22 February 1868. Mitchel suggested that the editors of *The Irish Republic* could "never effect the existence of any such thing except as on paper."

¹³⁷ *The Irish American* 23 February 1868.

¹³⁸ *The Irish American* 14 March 1868.

¹³⁹ *The Irish Citizen* 11 April 1868.

but should not be seen as the determining factor in assessing the movement. The level of animosity and bitterness is a reflection of the Fenians' sincerity, and allows one to see how the members and leaders viewed themselves. The changing interpretations and perceptions of the Fenian Brotherhood tell us much of the movement and of the society in which they were active. Creatures of a contentious era in Anglo-Irish and Anglo-American relations, they were also subject to assaults from religious spokesmen and ethnic leaders who disagreed with their tactics and timing. While they may have been unsuccessful in realizing their stated objective of creating a free and republican Ireland, the ultimate legacy and historical impact of the movement is considerably more complicated than earlier treatments have supposed.

CHAPTER EIGHT

“If we ever hope to see Ireland free, we must honor the attempt as well as the triumph. So long as sacrifice and suffering meet only with scorn and contempt, or at best with a mawkish sentimental sympathy, which savors more of condemnation than encouragement, we need not expect to see Ireland free.”¹

Having now recounted the story of Fenianism in New York City, and having analyzed and interpreted the movement, we are left to gauge the legacy and historical importance of this organization. Building on the evidence and inferences already offered we can critically evaluate the Fenians to establish what the Brotherhood meant to Irish nationalism and to New York City.

Despite the claims of earlier studies, the Fenian Brotherhood was historically significant for several reasons. While their ultimate aim of liberating Ireland may not have come to fruition, there are alternative ways to gauge the success of the movement. As a political lobby, as a vehicle for ethnic expression, and as a publicizing agent for Irish nationalism, the Fenians made a lasting impression on their society. Perhaps it is most appropriate to begin by looking at the impact the Fenians made on the course of Irish nationalism and Anglo-Irish relations. Indeed, this transatlantic context is indispensable to understanding the Brotherhood, and by extension, much of Irish American history.

The Fenians were always convinced that their movement would succeed. Even when they acknowledged that their grand schemes of establishing an independent, republican Ireland would not come to fruition, the Brotherhood believed that they were accomplishing much good. As one Fenian document said:

¹ *Dublin Nation* 3 March 1877.

“We have attracted the attention of mankind. We have laid the wrongs of Ireland before the world, so that there is an Irish question to settle... for every dollar this movement has cost the Irish race, it has cost England thousands, kept her in a state of quasi war, and practically excluded her from a voice in the council of Europe.”²

Echoed another: “By our past exertions, we have brought the wrongs of Ireland before the tribunal of mankind; they are discussed in courts, cabinets, and legislative halls, while the best thinkers of England are employed in suggesting the most feasible means of saving their threatened empire from impending ruin.”³ By publicizing English misdeeds, the Brotherhood kept alive for later generations the Anglophobia on which nationalism was based. As one contemporary observed: “We have renewed the knowledge of the Irish question among our people— a question which has been so shamefully and disastrously neglected among us since 1849.”⁴ Echoed another:

“Having lain for ten years so noiselessly that the world suspected not their existence, it may have been deemed advisable to demonstrate to friends at home and abroad that a soul remained in Old Ireland still. The English press has been active and powerful in teaching Europe to forget that a disaffected Ireland was knocking for justice at her door, and Ireland could not afford to let this policy obtain full success, among progressive communities whose sympathy was as desirable to them as it was clearly their due. Whatever their design, the result has been to inspire hope in many a languid breast, to irritate bigots, to cheer liberal seekers and friends of liberty everywhere, and to expose the innate weakness of British government by compelling it to resort to its old dodge of pestering the peasantry, muzzling republican journals, and proclaiming silly rewards for assumed leaders.”⁵

Indeed, beset by problems of assimilation and integration, of economic survival and cultural shock, it was startling that Irish nationalism survived in the Diaspora. As John

² Sixth National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood, 4.

³ To the centres and members of the Fenian Brotherhood, 6 January 1868, Gallagher papers.

⁴ P. Fox Andre to Mrs. O'Donovan Rossa, nd, Fenian papers, CUA

⁵ Preface to Fenianism, 8.

Mitchel reported, acknowledging the legacy of early Irish American nationalist movements:

“In 1854, a goodly acorn was planted in the soil where the cradle of American liberty was rocked. The plant at first seemed unhealthy, owing to some poisonous weeds by which it was surrounded. Being transplanted, it immediately took root and became a vigorous sapling. Opposition made it thrive. Watered by the dews of heaven and assailed by storms from every point of the compass, from the pulpit, the altar and the press, as well as by those who professed to be friends of Irish liberty, it was strengthened by every assault. Its roots stretched downward and took firm hold of the earth, its limbs extended over the land and now every good man proclaims, “Hail to the oak, the Irish tree.”⁶

In addition to maintaining the tradition of physical force nationalism, the Fenians have been credited with coercing British authorities into liberalizing their treatment of Ireland. Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone saw the Brotherhood as the direct result of Parliament’s procrastination in facing Irish problems “British rule in Ireland is in my opinion, so long as it continues, an intolerable disgrace, and a danger so nobly transcending all others, that I call it the only real danger of the noble Empire of the Queen.”⁷ Acknowledging that such mistreatment had given rise to the Brotherhood, liberal parliamentarians orchestrated a campaign predicated upon “justice for Ireland.”⁸ The Brotherhood, in short, convinced powerful English statesmen of the need for change, leading to such improvements as the Irish Land Act of 1870 and the Irish Church Act of

⁶ *The Citizen* 15 December 1855.

⁷ John Morley, *Life of William Ewart Gladstone* 3 vols., (New York: Greenwood Publishers, 1911), 2: 293. As early as 1865 one Fenian observed that the Brotherhood was causing panic in London: “The *Times* says the Irish are worse than the lower animals and that the Fenians are very dangerous. A few weeks ago they contended that Fenianism was a myth but now they admit that it is widespread and dangerous. Every new arrival from the US adds to their alarm. The people are withdrawing their deposits from the banks to such an extent that interest has gone up to 8 per cent.” William G. Halpin to John O’Mahony, 18 October 1865, Fenian Brotherhood Records.

⁸ “If Fenianism had failed to effect the independence of Ireland, it had not been devoid of significance...the measures successfully proposed by Gladstone in 1869 and 1870 testified to this.” Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations*, 318.

the previous year.⁹ As the Fenians themselves trumpeted:

“We have penetrated the armor of English prejudice, and wrung from the fears of our enemy the confession that our organization is today the supreme source of uneasiness to her guilty conscience. Today England stands ready to concede to the present generation of Irish people that religious equality which she refused to those that preceded them; and admits that it is you who have forced the measure upon her... The hands of England were tied by the bold and resolute character, the aggressive purpose, and the great power of the Fenian Brotherhood. Our stand and action lent not only courage, but strength and daring to every nationalist in Ireland. We were a continual menace with which they threatened the tyrant; and our existence enabled them to demand rights, instead of pleading for mercy. I found this view of the question amongst all classes of nationalists in Ireland. Each and all felt that our position was their greatest strength and argument against England, and confessed that to a great extent, Ireland’s fate was in our keeping. The great good of the Brotherhood he regarded to lie in the fact that it compelled England to act, in a measure, on the defensive. By keeping up its organization, and by threatening armed hostility, he believed that England would, in the end, be compelled to grant their rights to the people of Ireland.”¹⁰

Echoed another: “Yes, fellow countrymen, this cry of justice is the child of her fears. Your steady resolve, your constant preparation, and your armed attitude, has been the lash that has forced her Legislature, laid prostrate the Established Church, and is now giving a Land Bill, all very good as evidence of the deep dyed villainy of her legislation.”¹¹ In short, Fenianism’s radical agenda, while failing to liberate Ireland, did allow for the adoption of reforms that alleviated some of the conditions under which many had been forced to live.¹² As one journalist put it: “The worst enemies of the Fenian Brotherhood must admit that it has accomplished one great object, and that is, to unmask the tyranny of England, the most false and cruel that ever cursed the children of

⁹ The Irish Church Act of 1869 disestablished the Church of Ireland and made it a voluntary body on par with the other religions in Ireland. The Land Act of 1870 introduced some measures to protect Irish tenants, including compensation for improvements made on the land if they were evicted.

¹⁰ Seventh National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood, 15.

¹¹ Address of the Executive Committee of the Senate, FB, 23 March 1870, Gallagher papers.

¹² For the psychological impact Fenianism had on the British government, see the *New York Times* of 9 March 1866, which carried the text of a lengthy debate on the subject in the House of Commons.

men, and to fix on it the attention and abhorrence of all nations.”¹³

These sentiments were voiced by English, as well as Fenian, journals. If there was any good to come out of the Fenian outbreaks, many papers believed, it was that they had alerted the British people and government to the need for further reform in Ireland. Hoping that Fenian atrocities would not blind the administration to the need for reforms in Ireland, the *Daily Telegraph* (a paper closely associated with Gladstone and the Liberal Party) claimed, “it would be unworthy of the English nation if its anger against Fenianism should render it deaf to the just discontent of the Irish people against wrongs that English legislation still sustains—an alien Church, and a land system that makes Irish agriculture miserably poor. We may hang convicted Fenians with good conscience, but we should also thoroughly redress these evils distinctly due to English policy, and still supported by English power...Fenianism is a very expensive petition to the House; but it is a petition, however insane in its form; and it must be heard.”¹⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* concurred, acknowledging that what support the movement had was only possible because of real grievances that warranted attention by the British government: “Fenianism can be conquered nowhere but in Ireland, and perhaps the grievous social and economic condition of that country will be considered in more earnest and practical spirit when it is found that a policy which breeds injustice and discontent in Ireland is avenged

¹³ *The Irish Republic* 20 July 1867. This, in fact, was one of the stated objects of the Fenians. In a missive, *To the Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood*, the Senate directed its members: “You will concentrate upon the Irish question the public opinion of the Irish race all over the world, and bring to bear upon it the sentiment of all who love liberty...the long-preached doctrine that ‘England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity’ has at length been made a reality by your labors and sacrifices; and even those who have opposed our organization in the past now admit that to it, and it alone, Ireland owes the brighter prospects which are now beginning to illuminate her political horizon.” 10 July 1869, Gallagher papers.

¹⁴ *Daily Telegraph* 11 March 1867.

in the thoroughfares of our principal towns.”¹⁵ Echoed the *Manchester Examiner*: “Fenianism derives its strength from admitted abuses, from legislating evils which we have failed to remedy, and raises up against us in wholesome warning the ghosts of historical misdeeds.”¹⁶ The *Birmingham Daily Gazette* opined, “The weed itself may be of transatlantic origin, but it could not have arrived at its present noxious luxuriance on our shores unless there was congenial soil for it upon which to fatten. Until our legislators can alter ‘the present state of Ireland’—the most troublesome legacy left to us by our forefathers—Fenianism, under some name or other, is ineradicable.”¹⁷ The *Illustrated London News* was a consistent advocate for reform, believing that by removing Irish grievances you would deny the Fenians political fodder. The paper described Fenian activities as “but outward symptoms—it is the disease they indicate which English statesmen should set themselves seriously to cure.” The paper suggested: “when we have effectually grappled with Fenianism and choked it—as we trust we shall be able to do—we must do our best, by wise and genial legislation—to kill the disaffection which takes so monstrous a shape.”¹⁸

The Fenians likewise had a definite impact upon the city’s Irish American community. The Brotherhood stirred nationalistic feelings in the hearts and minds of many Irishmen and their activities left a lasting impression on the consciousness of Irish emigrants. The appearance of the Brotherhood prevented the cause of Irish nationalism from fading into oblivion; indeed, they preserved nationalist sentiment amidst a most

¹⁵ *Manchester Guardian* 21 September 1867.

¹⁶ *Manchester Examiner* 18 December 1867.

¹⁷ *Birmingham Daily Gazette* 9 October 1867.

¹⁸ *Illustrated London News* 1 December 1866.

unsympathetic American environment. The American Irish provided intellectual guidance and lucrative material aid to their brethren in Europe; as one Parliamentarian put it, "American gold is seducing Irish people, stirring up sedition and dissatisfaction."¹⁹ Subsequent generations adopted the Fenians chauvinism and their obsession with the liberation of Ireland. As James Stephens explained it: "If Fenianism had not aroused the Irish race from its torpor, a generation would have passed away without any uprising against English supremacy; and the succeeding generation might possibly bury the hatchet forever, and accept accomplished facts."²⁰

In addition to effecting changes in Anglo-Irish relations, and keeping alive in immigrant hearts the cause of mother Ireland, the Brotherhood performed several vital functions for Irish immigrants in the United States. The central years of the nineteenth century were ones of intense ethnic consolidation for Irish immigrants, and the Fenians helped these individuals to preserve and express their ethnic identity and cultural uniqueness in a socially uncomfortable environment. Immigrant nationalism familiarized and educated the Irish immigrant to American values, explained the lowly status of the Irish in terms of English exploitation and misrule, and allowed binding ties among the Irish when they suffered a radical loss of community in the wake of immigration. The Brotherhood gave social cohesion to Irish immigrants and their descendants who were often bewildered by life in the new world, establishing, in the process, a "community of consideration." Their demonstrations and picnics, their fairs and balls, were among the

¹⁹ Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Ser., 181 (1866): 1031. The British press often saw the Fenian movement as an American phenomenon, perpetrated by Irish-Americans who co-opted naïve Irishmen into their schemes. See Michael de Nie, " 'A Medley Mob of Irish-American Plotters and Irish Dupes': The British Press and Transatlantic Fenianism," Journal of British Studies 40, no.2 (April 2001): 213-240.

²⁰ Neidhardt, Fenianism in North America, 133

first—and most important — manifestations of Irish ethnicity and consciousness. By flaunting their ethnicity, the Fenians coincidentally served as the catalyst that inspired many of their countrymen to openly express pride in their heritage and to find inner satisfaction in their status as Irish-Americans. As one Fenian document declared: “If the Fenian Brotherhood becomes extinct tomorrow, it would not have lived in vain. It has sown the seed of self-reliance in the minds of Irish-Americans, which will hereafter exalt our race and country, whether we succeed or fail in our undertaking.”²¹

The Fenians were also important in the political arena, drawing power towards themselves and, by extension, all Irish Americans. In the process, the Fenians served as a powerful lobby that succeeded in becoming the first immigrant group to develop a vote of sufficient strength to sway American policy. The turbulent political environment on both the national and local level suggested to the Fenians that they might be able to barter Irish votes in exchange for toleration of their plans. Indeed, by mid-century the New York Irish had become so powerful that they represented the balance of power between the two parties in state elections. The fact that the electoral vote of New York was so large gave the Irish a tremendous influence in national affairs as well. Using the threat of a negative Irish vote successfully, the Fenians created an interface between American politics and Irish aspirations that made the tumultuous political climate of the Reconstruction era all the more interesting.

Despite the claims of Fenian leaders that their organization could erode the traditional Irish commitment to the Democratic Party, most Irish remained fiercely loyal to the Tammany Hall political machine and to the Democratic Party that controlled it. Even after the debacle of the 1866, most Irish remained committed Democrats on the

²¹ Proceedings of the Fifth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, 35.

local, state, and national levels. As we have seen, even when the Fenians asserted that Democratic politicians had subverted their plans and dreams, the Brotherhood was unable to fracture the New York Irish attachment to the Democrats. While one historian noted “it was the Fenian movement which first split the Irish support of the Democratic Party in America to an appreciable degree,” this was not necessarily true.²²

In the months immediately following the end of the Civil War the New York Irish followed the usual Democratic Party position. As the Reconstruction policy embroiled Andrew Johnson in a controversy with the Radical republicans, the Irish supported the President.²³ Even in the wake of the failed June raids and amid rampant reports that the Irish would abandon the “duplicitous Democrats,” the Republicans suffered defeat in those areas where the Fenian vote was strongest. In 1867 the Republicans lost the state of New York, allegedly due to the fraudulent activities of New York City’s Tweed machine.²⁴ Not even the impassioned pleas on the part of some editors who sought to fracture Irish allegiance to the Democrats could change the result. *The Irish Republic* of

²² Gibson, *Attitudes of the New York Irish*, 190.

²³ For example, *The Irish American*, with the failed raids still fresh in the minds of its readers, admitted “For Andrew Johnson we care not one whit. But the impeachment ought to fail because there is no crime or misdemeanor, because impeachment is impolitic; it could constitute a dangerous precedent for future cliques and parties; it is simply a question between the radical party and one of its own backsliding members.” *The Irish American* 25 May 1868

²⁴ The *New York Tribune* of 2 November 1866 claimed that the Democratic majority of some 60000 votes in 1866 was aided by 20,000 illegally cast ballots. The paper revisited this theme in 1868. On 2 November 1868, the *Tribune* commented: “It is rumored that Judge McCunn has issued an order naturalizing all the lower counties of Ireland, beginning at Tipprerary and running down to Cork...Judge Barnard will arrange for the northern counties at the next sitting of chambers.” In 1868, the Republicans would investigate Tammany for electoral fraud, claiming that in some wards voters outnumbered residents. During that year’s municipal elections, the courts created some 60,000 new citizens; McCunn himself naturalized some 2109 petitioners in a single day, an average of three per minute! The *Tribune* of 11 January 1869 demanded a reform of the naturalization laws, an investigation deemed unnecessary by *The Irish Citizen* of 18 July and *The Irish American* of 24 October 1869. *The Nation* revisited this theme on 8 September 1870 claiming that while the: “total (men, women, children) population of the Tenth District of the Sixth Ward was 870, in the May election for judges, 934 votes were cast there.” *The Nation* 11, no. 272: 147.

8 June 1867, in an effort to link the failed Canadian ventures to the duplicitous attitude of the Democratic administration, offered:

“The tenacity with which the Irish population of America have stuck to the Democratic Party deserves no other name, can be expressed by no other name, than downright infatuation. One would suppose that common decency would prevent Democratic papers from vilifying and turning into ridicule every effort that Irishmen make towards freeing their unfortunate country from a tyranny that has no parallel in modern times.”²⁵ Later, that same journal characterized “those calling themselves Democrats” as “the destructionists of liberty, the panderers to popular vices, and the exonerators and repudiators of sacred national duties and obligations.” It further suggested, in a column titled “Why the Irish are not Republicans”: “The Irish in this country are so attached to the once sacred name of Democracy that the party bearing that title would receive their support though it should favor the annexation of the United States to the Dominion of Canada, with the devil or D’Arcy McGee for its king.”²⁶ Opined the editors of another such journal:

“Of all the American political parties which has been trafficking in the Irish vote, none has derived a larger amount of profit than the Democrats, and yet, whenever anything is proposed to be done for the freedom of Ireland or the benefit of her people, there is none that give it more bitter opposition. We trust that our Irish born fellow citizens will remember the fact here recorded when next their suffrages are solicited by that party and its associate Sachems. Our people shall not, if we can help it, be any longer deluded in American politics.”²⁷

Added the *New York Tribune* in an editorial labeled “An Irish Mayor:” “Have not the

²⁵ *The Irish Republic* 8 June 1867.

²⁶ *The Irish Republic* 16 November 1867.

²⁷ *The Irish People* 25 May 1867.

Irishmen of New York been excluded from the offices long enough? Awake, slumbering sons of Ireland...Irishmen stand up for your rights and the mayoralty is yours!"²⁸ The *Tribune* later added: "How do you know that Fernando Wood will not turn around, enforce the liquor law as he did before, and bother ye all like mischief? Don't trust the tricky dogs. Nominate an Irishman, elect an Irishman, and then, when ye call upon him at the City Hall, you've got an Irish mayor as sure as there's never a snake nor a toad in Ireland."²⁹ But the pleas were in vain; the Irish remained true to the Democratic Party; apparently jobs and the psychological security that came with party membership were more important than vapid promises of support for "the men in the gap."

In the following years, the Democrats retained New York, electing Tweed's crony, John Hoffman, Governor. Fenian support of George Francis Train as Congressman from New York's fifth district was inconsequential as he was trounced by Tammany's candidate, James Morrissey.³⁰ The same fate met John Savage, Fenian Head Center who was defeated by the Tammany candidate in his campaign for the ninth New York

²⁸ *New York Tribune* 21 November 1867.

²⁹ *New York Tribune* 26 November 1867. On 14 December 1867, *The Irish People* published a letter of support and appreciation for Hoffman, and of disgust for Fernando Wood. Two weeks earlier, *The Freeman's Journal* also blasted Wood: "Fernando Wood, as he grows older seems to grow more shameless and more reckless. We rejoice to add that he has grown more feeble politically. It would be a great disgrace to the Democratic city of New York if Wood were to be elected Mayor. Fernando Wood is hated as a designing and dangerous demagogue. He is hated for his own personal bad qualities." *The Freeman's Journal* 30 November 1867. Wood, who one historian characterized as "the first American politician thoroughly to organize the Irish of New York behind him politically and to use their support over a long period of years to advance his own interests," had fallen so low in the eyes of his constituents that *The Irish Citizen* of 23 November 1867 commented: "Agitation is keen, preparing for the Mayoralty election. The Democratic candidates, one belonging (we are informed) to an 'inner ring' and the other to an 'outer ring' are Messrs. Hoffman and Fernando Wood. We are indifferent between them, having no knowledge of either of the rings. There is a Republican candidate in the field; Mr. Darling. About him, of course, we are not indifferent, trusting that he will be defeated by tremendous majorities, and are in favor of whichever of the rings, outer or inner, is best able to give the Republicans a sweeping defeat." Gibson, *Attitudes of the New York Irish*, 91.

³⁰ *Irish People* 14 November 1868. The same paper declared that the Republicans had gained 10,000 Irish votes in New York City, but that these were offset by "lager loving" Germans who voted Democratic in antipathy to the Excise Tax that Fenton had passed as governor.

Congressional district.³¹ Not even the candidacy of O'Donovan Rossa could change this. Rossa's candidacy was supported by both the *New York Tribune* (28 October 1871) and *New York Herald* (31 October 1871). *The Tribune* commented: "Rossa, though of Irish birth, is an American citizen; he is a true man who will wage determined war against every form of corruption." *The Herald* added: "As the representative of the common cause of his race against British despotism over Ireland, and as an honest, talented, and patriotic Irishman, devoted to city reform, he ought to get the vote of every Irishman of his district." Despite these platitudes and overwhelming evidence of Tammany's massive fraud, *The Irish American* supported Tweed.³² *The Irish American* 11 November 1871.

The Irish American was unswerving in its support, hailing the Democratic victory as "emancipation;" *The Irish Citizen* likewise defended the ring from Republican attacks.³³ Some, of course, were less blind to the situation, and counseled the Irish to abandon their slavish commitment to the Democrats. At a meeting held at the Cooper Institute on 25 October, Horace Greeley addressed a group of Irish American Republicans by pointing out that Grant had released the Fenian prisoners from jail. The *New York Times* hailed the meeting as one "dedicated to honesty and decency."³⁴ While some Irish American Republicans denounced the ring, most observers agreed with the prescient commentary that the number of Irish voters for the Republican Party equaled

³¹ *The Irish American* continued to speak out against Tweed, calling on its readers to repudiate the ring. The ring had been launched the previous January with the election of Mayor Hoffman. In the campaign for city comptroller, Tweed's candidate, Richard Connolly, outpolled the favorite of that paper, Michael Connolly, leading to calls for an investigation. *The Irish American* 1 December 1866.

³² *The Irish American* 11 November 1871.

³³ *The Irish Citizen* 8 October 1870.

³⁴ *New York Times* 26 October 1870. See also *New York Tribune* 26 October 1870.

the number of Irishmen appointed by the GOP to government jobs.³⁵ During the 1868 presidential campaign, *The Irish American* went so far as to posit that Grant's campaign buttons had been printed in England, which was fitting as "he was her candidate."³⁶ Thus, despite their growing numbers and increasing political clout, the Irish remained committed Democrats, thereby denying themselves the influence that would have accompanied political pragmatism. To be sure, the Irish would never have a true voice in national affairs as long as the Democrats could count on their votes; as one observer noted, "while Democrats could always rely on them and Republicans could never hope for their support, their political influence would be negligible."³⁷

The Irish World recognized the futility and folly of this policy. "The future of our race in this country will depend largely on their capability of assuming an independent attitude in American politics."³⁸ Obviously, the Irish would get more for themselves if they remained politically independent, and were the Irish capable of adopting hostility to Great Britain instead of the independence of Ireland and to pursue objects which would appeal to American interests rather than to American sympathies, their influence in the

³⁵ *The Irish American* 24 July 1880. Among those who benefited from Grant's election were Fenians John Savage and James Haggerty, who, in 1868, were nominated to consular vacancies at Leeds and Glasgow, respectively.

³⁶ *The Irish American* 12 October 1872. In later years, in an effort to dissuade loyal Democrats from crossing to the GOP, the journal issued denials that Republican Rutherford Hayes was an Irishman. *The Irish American* 30 September 1876.

³⁷ Gibson, *Attitudes of the New York Irish*, 385.

³⁸ *The Irish World* 8 October 1892. That paper had earlier supported James G. Blaine, as evidenced by editor Patrick Ford's attendance at a 28 July rally held in the candidate's honor at New York's Chickering Hall; this position was ridiculed by *The Irish American* of 7 June 1884. Blaine's connection with "rum, Romanism, and rebellion" ruined any chance for continued Irish American support. *The Irish American* supported Grover Cleveland, noting "His selection would be particularly gratifying to our people, who remember with gratitude his action in their behalf in the old Fenian times, when it was neither fashionable nor profitable to be a friend to Ireland's cause." *The Irish American* 31 May 1884.

country would become far more dangerous. Some realized this. Tiring of paper pronouncements and moral support, *The Irish American* declared unequivocally: “Promises of future help in the contest against Erin’s hereditary foe avail nothing against the effective action of the immediate present.”³⁹

Any study of Fenianism in New York must acknowledge the changing social and economic position of Irish Americans in that municipality. The election of Irish born William R. Grace as New York’s mayor in 1880, a year when 42.5% of the city’s residents were all or in part of Irish ancestry, proved the newfound place of Irishmen in America. New York City was the center of Irish America’s middle class, and the election of Grace as first Irish Catholic mayor symbolized the stability of Irish America, the decline of virulent nativism, and the success of a viable portion of the Irish American community. This alone represents one of the most obvious reasons why the Fenian Brotherhood withered. The movement waxed and waned in large part on its supporters degree of successful adjustment to life in America, and the degree to which they had or had not made new “homes”— both material and psychological— in this country, and on the degree to which material prospects and social integration had vitiated what was a collective sense of (or self-perception as) exiles. The changing class and employment structure of the New York Irish, therefore, is crucial to understanding the fate of Fenianism.⁴⁰ During the formative years of Fenianism, the Catholic Church in America was weak; in such a vacuum, Irish nationalism could, and did, take on a radical bent. But

³⁹ *The Irish American* 1 September 1888.

⁴⁰ As young, unmarried men were replaced by “settled livers” – and as the balance between Irish and American born, between old and new immigrants, and within the age structure in general changed— there was a noticeable slackening of support for radical nationalists such as the Fenians and a pronounced commitment to legal, economic, constitutional and moral protests as expressed by the Land League.

as the Church grew in influence and power, and as Irish-Americans climbed the social ladder to respectability, many perceived the Brotherhood to be beyond the pale, thereby fating the Brotherhood to failure.⁴¹ Several forces worked to doom the Brotherhood; its condemnation by the Catholic Church, its inability to sway pivotal elections, and its decreasing appeal to an upwardly mobile constituency proved to be too much for the Fenians to survive.⁴²

A final historiographical debate that must be addressed involves the alleged duplicity of the United States government in its dealings with the Brotherhood. Aside from the obvious miscalculations concerning the supposed strength of their forces and the anticipated success of the invasion, the Fenian leaders made a tragic assumption in believing that their plans would be met by anything less than outright disapproval and forceful action by the government and armed forces of the United States. In light of the evidence available, it is puzzling as to why the Fenians would have supposed this to be the case.

One month prior to the aborted April raid, having been tipped off by British intelligence as to the plans of the Brotherhood, General Ulysses S. Grant sent the following communication to General George Gordon Meade, the Commanding Officer for the Military Division of the Atlantic:

⁴¹ As an example of the increasing conservatism of the city's Irish American community, see *The Irish American* of 20 December 1873 which carried a report of a workingmens meeting held at Cooper Institute. The paper found it unfortunate that it was dominated: "in its management and direction, by men whose only efforts seem to be aimed at social revolution, and who conceive it a much nobler exploit to annihilate than to build up." The paper was likewise antagonistic towards Henry George's failed New York City mayoralty campaign, a stance that found it accompanied by the city's leading conservative organs.

⁴² As the Irish in America became more prosperous, they tended to distance themselves from nationalist movements and focused instead on labor organizations and other outlets. According to one interpretation, it was internal incoherence, rather than external pressures, that ultimately doomed the Brotherhood. Oliver P. Rafferty, "Fenianism in North America in the 1860s: The Problems for Church and State" *History* 84, no. 274. (April, 1999): 257-277.

“In view of the threats of a Fenian invasion of Canada, from the United States, direct officers commanding troops on that frontier, within the limits of your command, to use all vigilance to prevent armed or hostile forces or organizations from leaving the United States to enter British Provinces. I do not feel authorized to direct any interference with Fenian meetings within the United States; but as the intentions of the Brotherhood seem to be very public their proceedings should be closely watched, and advantage taken of this publicity to thwart their intentions if their object is to organize in the United States for the purpose of making war upon a foreign power with which we are at peace. During our late troubles neither the British Government nor the Canadian officials gave themselves much trouble to prevent hostilities being organized against the United States from their possessions...but two wrongs never make a right and it is our duty to prevent a wrong on the part of our people.”⁴³

On 31 March, Meade wrote to Major General Joseph Hooker directing the seizure of any “arms, munitions, or other contraband of war, which are being collected on the frontier with a view to equipping forces for the invasion of Canada.” He continued: “all acts tending to a violation of neutrality will be discountenanced,” and ordered “if there are any troops available, to increase the forces on the frontier, occupying particularly the lake harbors, from whence expeditions would be likely to sail.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, in mid-April, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton telegraphed Meade: “You will immediately proceed in person to Eastport, Maine and take such measures as may be proper to enforce the neutrality laws of the United States.”⁴⁵ On 19 April, Meade responded that he had “found a vessel loaded with arms...have directed her seizure: find that there are numerous points on the coast where arms can be landed and therefore urge the immediate sending of several Naval vessels to prevent this.” Meade brought with him a company of artillery and two additional companies of infantry to accomplish his mission; when

⁴³ Grant to Meade, 12 March 1866, Papers of US Grant, 16: 107.

⁴⁴ Meade to Grant, 19 April 1866, Papers of US Grant, 16: 109.

⁴⁵ Stanton to Meade, 16 April 1866, Papers of US Grant, 16: 108.

Killian and the Fenians argued that they had no intention of invading the provinces, that their object was to go fishing on the banks, and that they needed their sidearms as they anticipated Canadian opposition to “American fishing rights” (long a point of contention between American and Canadian fishermen in the rich waters off the Maine coastline), the General considered it his duty to prevent the departure of any armed fishing party “and shall not permit any arms or munitions of war to be landed, or to pass into the hands of private parties” lest the United States government become involved in some way on the fishery question. He thus seized boxes containing carbines and muskets with the necessary equipments and ammunition; the owner, an Irishman from New York, disclaimed any affiliation with Fenianism or any intention to violate the neutrality laws but could not explain grounds on which he, a stranger, expected to find a market in Eastport for such articles— nor the coincidence of his arrival with his goods simultaneously with the concentration there of Fenians.⁴⁶ Likewise, on 23 April. Meade reported the following:

“At sundown two citizens started across the border and were stopped by British soldiers and were refused passage as they were believed to be Fenians. Upon being refused one drew a pistol and fired upon the sentries, and both then fled. My guard arrested them on this side and I have turned them over to the civil authorities.”⁴⁷

The Fenian beliefs that their later actions would be handled in a less forceful manner seem ludicrous when we realize how vigorously the United States sought to uphold its international obligations in April 1866.

This steady course of governmental vigilance and forbearance can be effectively

⁴⁶ Meade, *Life and Letters*, 2: 285.

⁴⁷ Meade to Grant, 23 April 1866, *Papers of US Grant*, 16: 111.

traced through the June raids. On 14 May, Grant cabled Meade once more:

“The papers of which the enclosed are copies have just been referred to me by the Secretary of War. You may direct military commanders nearest the points of deposit of munitions of war pointed out by the British Minister, to make immediate investigation and if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that these stores are intended to be used unlawfully, seize and hold them until satisfactory security is given that they will not be used against any power with which the United States is at peace.”⁴⁸

He followed this with a communication two weeks later:

“The Mayor of Buffalo telegraphs that he has reliable information that six hundred Fenians have left Cleveland for that place. The Secretary of State has also sent a copy of an order from Fenian Secretary of War directing Col Rice Fourth Fenian cavalry Boston to proceed to St. Albans... Take the best steps you can to prevent these expeditions leaving the United States.”⁴⁹

Just one day earlier, Secretary of State William Seward had written to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton instructing him to order Meade “to seize all arms and equipments intended for the Fenians, calling on civil authorities for such aid as cannot be supplied by the military.”⁵⁰ Stanton obliged. On 1 June he telegraphed the General: “The Secretary of State has just transmitted to this Department a telegram...which indicates that the long threatened design to violate the neutrality laws of the United States is about to be carried into effect... you will take any further measures to prevent a violation of the neutrality laws and to aid the civil authorities as may be proper with the forces under your command.”⁵¹ Clearly, the United States was intent on upholding international law; the

⁴⁸ Grant to Meade 14 May 1866, Papers of US Grant, 16: 194.

⁴⁹ Grant to Meade 30 May 1866, Papers of US Grant, 16: 215.

⁵⁰ Seward to Stanton 30 May 1866, Papers of US Grant, 16: 215.

⁵¹ Stanton to Meade 1 June 1866, Papers of US Grant, 16: 216. Meade was instructed to “seize all arms and equipments intended for the Fenians, calling on civil authorities for such aid as cannot be supplied by the military.” The following day, acting on information that a body of Fenians had departed

Fenians should have heeded the ominous warnings of the American military more, and the obvious posturing of American politicians less.

More than any of these other acts or proclamations, however, it was the issuance of the Neutrality Proclamation by President Andrew Johnson that most seriously affected the Brotherhood. For such a high-ranking government official to openly denounce the Fenians' actions as representing "high crimes and misdemeanors against the government and people of the United States" was utterly disastrous. Furthermore, this was the first military directive issued by Johnson against the Fenians. Now, as Stanton telegraphed Meade, "... you are authorized under the Neutrality Act of 1818 to employ the land and naval forces to break up the expedition against Canada, and are directed to arrest and prosecute Sweeny, Roberts, and all engaged with them in the present breach of our neutrality laws. It seems to me this course is demanded by a proper respect for our laws and national dignity. This operates substantially as martial law."⁵² Grant issued a similar order to Major General Edward Ord, Commander of the Department of the Ohio, authorizing the use of any and all forces to crush the Fenians.⁵³ This communication network shows beyond reasonable doubt that the Johnson administration was going to forcibly pursue any violation of their neutrality legislation; the actions that the government took were not the hallmarks of perfidious betrayal but rather the continuation of a months long policy of watchful waiting. In the face of such consistent opposition, it

Cleveland for Buffalo, Stanton authorized the military to "take the best steps you can to prevent these expeditions leaving US."

⁵² Stanton to Grant, 6 June 1866, Papers of US Grant, 16: 217.

⁵³ "Under the President's proclamation in support of the neutrality laws of the United States, you may use all power necessary to see that United States laws are not violated, and if it becomes necessary, to use the Military and Naval power of the United States, and the Militia of the States to do so." Grant to Ord, 7 June 1866, Papers of US Grant, 16: 219.

is ridiculous that the Fenians would have expected anything other from the military and political forces of the United States.

Thus, the actions that the United States authorities took in response to the Fenian raids represent not an abrupt change of policy but merely the extension of a prudent course initiated earlier in the spring of 1866 by which the administration showed an unequivocal commitment to international comity and its engagement to uphold the neutrality laws. The paper trail left by Grant, Johnson, Seward, and others belied the Fenian contention that a sudden reversal of policy doomed the Brotherhood to failure. While the Fenians interpreted the lack of American denunciation of their organization as *carte blanche* for their plans, it was obvious that while the Johnson administration would entertain the idea of noninterference in exchange for the important Irish vote, they would never countenance actions that might endanger an already tenuous relationship with Great Britain. Despite statements issued by Fenian leaders and a sympathetic press following the failure of their Canadian ventures that a lack of promised American support led to the observed results, this is not the case. The United States government, although admittedly never openly denouncing the movement, never officially sanctioned it either; there was never any mention of overt or covert support for the Fenians.

Furthermore, the Fenian strategy was based on several questionable assumptions. Perhaps the most egregious of these was their belief that prior American noninterference with their organization would translate into a later acceptance of their designs on Canada. Contrary to Fenian claims that American officials had served them notice that accomplished facts would be recognized, the American government had made it clear that they were not turning a blind eye to the Brotherhood. Thus, the failure of the Fenian

invasions was due more to the self-delusion of the Brotherhood than the bad faith of the Johnson administration.

Indeed, the defining characteristics of the American Fenian movement might well be the twin themes of self-delusion and self-justification. In 1866, the Fenians badly needed to take some concrete action soon or face the inevitable and rapid disintegration of the movement; unfortunately for them, this happened to be a year of major political turmoil in the United States. For example, on 9 April 1866 top Fenians met with Andrew Johnson and sought to convince the President that “our organization contemplates no breach of American law, nor the dragging of America into any imbroglio for the sake of Ireland but... we do need the sympathy and material aid of America.” The administration, confronted with the growing Republican ascendancy in Congress, was not prepared to lose the support of the Irish vote by undue concern over Fenian sword-rattling. Rather than lose for his party the support of the Irish vote at this crucial moment a declaration would be construed by the Fenians as being favorable to their cause. Seward didn’t reply until November— after the pivotal elections— that he “did not find it compatible with the public interest to engage in any form of official correspondence with the Fenian organization.”⁵⁴ What the Brotherhood failed to notice was that on 27 March,

⁵⁴ On 2 June, Welles commented: “the occasion and condition of the country and of our public affairs were such that I thought it would be wise to have the public authorities fully heard...the Irish element was a strong one and clannish, and if a movement against an organization of theirs was to be made, I wished to see others besides the President moving.” Welles, *Diary*, 2: 451. Writing of subsequent cabinet meetings, Welles observed: “These men are very chary about disturbing the Fenians; Seward was in a fog, he wants me to do duties which belong to him and thus enlist the Irish element against the Administration. Stanton wanted nothing to do with them, suggesting that the Fenian prisoners be allowed to run away from the jails.” *Ibid.*, 486. When the President finally issued his proclamation, Welles suggested that it had been delayed at Seward’s insistence, so as to inflame the Fenians and throw the Irish against the Administration, “or make them, at all events, indifferent towards it, whereas this all might have been different.” Welles wrote effusively about the political chicanery that characterized the White House during this pivotal election year. “There is in the Cabinet not that free interchange of opinions on the great questions before the country that there should be. Minor matters are talked over, often at great length.” *Ibid.*, 2: 520. This

President Johnson had vetoed the Civil Rights Act, a crucial test of his adherence to Republican principles. This act redrew the political lines of the United States, and Johnson was therefore anxious to secure the allegiance of any potential ally versus the “violent party of the North” and deny its political enemies fodder. While the domestic political situation might have allowed the Fenians to believe that their actions would be countenanced by the United States, a deeper investigation disproves this argument.

Moreover, the political pandering that accompanied the Fenian movement was as much a ploy by designing politicians as it was a sincere expression on their part. The failure of the Fenians to achieve their ultimate aims, then, might best be interpreted as a tragic misunderstanding. The organization put the government of the United States in the delicate position of trying to balance its international obligations with the exigencies of domestic policies, and the affair suggested the extent to which immediate domestic political considerations might dictate the course of America’s international relations. The ultimate success or failure of the Brotherhood depended chiefly on the American governments’ continuously favorable disposition towards the cause. But whereas the United States was willing to overlook many of the activities of the Brotherhood for the sake of the Irish vote, it was clear from the 1866 raids that the Americans might temporize with the Irish but in the end the neutrality laws would be enforced.

While the Brotherhood certainly benefited from the strained relations between the United States and Great Britain that was then extant, the fractious political environment in America served to both encourage and then trample the hopes and dreams of the Brotherhood. By laying the blame for their failure on the alleged duplicity of the Johnson

was a pet peeve of Welles, who observed on several occasions “the want of frankness and freedom in the cabinet” and the “want of cordial and free intercourse among its members.” *Ibid.*, 2: 522, 524.

administration, the Fenians were letting themselves off the collective hook while providing themselves with a safety net; they would be remembered as the one movement that would have succeeded in the task of liberating the Emerald Isle, were it not for the backstabbing tactics of the American authorities.

Poorly equipped, wracked by dissension, plagued by infiltrators, and expected to carry out a complicated invasion scheme in the face of a unified defense, it would have been more surprising had the Brotherhood succeeded in its plans than had it failed.

The Brotherhood did not fail for lack of effort; with their Secretary of War, adjutant general, inspectors general, and quartermasters, their ordnance, subsistence, medical and pay departments, the Fenian Brotherhood tackled the problems of military organization not only with seriousness but also with professional care and knowledge. However, its success was seriously impeded by the very same peculiarities that had given rise to the movement, and when these circumstances changed, what had formerly captivated the Atlantic world would be relegated to the back pages of the penny press. Perhaps it is the ultimate irony that Fenianism, which enjoyed so vigorous a start and was promised so rosy a future, could have no less disastrous and ignominious an end.

Still, the Fenian Brotherhood achieved a great deal even in defeat: developing a transatlantic organization that raised substantial revenues from thousands of working class benefactors was a tremendous accomplishment. The remarkable advent of Fenianism in the aftermath of the pitiful Young Ireland rebellion, furthermore, was dramatically important because it kept the nationalist torch burning. The Land League and other late nineteenth century organizations were clearly distinct from the Fenians, but these organizations developed their respective agendas upon a solid foundation of

militant republican opposition to British authority. Furthermore, the development of a full-fledged Irish American identity involved the reworking of multiple immigrant identities in nationalist terms; indeed, the Irish identity could have— perhaps should have— disappeared in the wake of the Hunger. Without land, and scattered across the globe, it is as surprising that Irish nationalism grew than that it did not. As a product of the Hunger and its accompanying psychological scars, Fenianism served as a means of mobilizing the immigrant community and helped to give it some coherence. One could argue that it is made these bedraggled Irish immigrants into a community, giving the masses a language of nationalism, and allowing for the evolution and maintenance of ethnic consciousness. Indeed, Fenianism provided an institution around which many in the community could rally, and which reminded the Irish in America of the suffering that had led to emigration in the first place.

The Fenians were not the irrational band of bomb-throwing radicals that earlier treatments have made them out to be. Nor were they the romantic figures that others made them to be through myth and legend. A closer investigation along lines of research and interpretation reveals levels of complexity, subtlety and malleability that earlier treatments have missed. The men who ascribed to Fenianism were sincere and complex actors who were trying to make their place in the world in which they lived. The story of the Fenians, told from the margins of the normative experience, allows us illuminate the Irish American experience and to move beyond superficial accounts and arrive at a more serious, multi-dimensional appreciation of the issues that confronted this group. Their story is important not because it divides, but because it unites, and it needs to be told.

Beset by internal factionalism, and by national and international situations over

which they had little control, it is not surprising that the Brotherhood failed to achieve its stated objectives. But they succeeded in establishing diasporic nationalism, in providing a social network on which others could rely for support, and in providing a model that later political and nationalist organizations could use to better effect. In accomplishing these goals, the Fenians of New York made significant contributions to their cause and to the city they called home.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES: MANUSCRIPTS

BOSTON COLLEGE

George D. Cahill Papers

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Fenian Brotherhood Records

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Charles P. Daly Collection

Maria (Lydig) Daly Papers

Jenny Mitchel Letters

Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa Papers

James Stephens Diary

T.W. Sweeny Papers

Samuel J. Tilden Papers

PHILADELPHIA ARCHDIOCESAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH CENTER

Frank B. Gallagher Papers

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

John Baptist Purcell Papers

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

William H. Seward Papers

WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

William Sullivan Papers

PRIMARY SOURCES: BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

- Anonymous. A Brief Account of the Fenian Raids on the Missisquoi Frontier, in 1866 and 1870. Montreal: Witness Steam Printing House, 1871.
- . Address to the Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood, on the State of the Organization, and its Attempted Disruption. New York: Baker and Godwin, 1868.
- . An Expose of Fenianism in the United Kingdom and the United States. London, 1883.
- . Arrest and Escape of James Stephens, Head Centre of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. New York, 1866.
- . Bylaws of the Emmet Circle of the Fenian Brotherhood. N.p., n.d.
- . Circular of the Corresponding Secretary, Fenian Brotherhood, for the Period Commencing 10 September and Ending 28 October 1865. New York: O'Sullivan and McBride, 1865.
- . Constitution and Bylaws of the Fenian Brotherhood of Colorado Territory. Denver: Byers and Dailey, 1866.
- . Correspondence Respecting the Publication in the United States of Incitements to Outrages in England. London, 1882.
- . Correspondence Relating to the Fenian Invasion and the Rebellion of the Southern States. Ottawa: Hunter, Rose and Company, 1869.
- . Fenians, Informers, and Habeas Corpus. London: William Freeman, 1866.
- . James Stephens, Chief Organizer of the Irish Republic, Embracing an Account of the Origins and Progress of the Fenian Brotherhood. New York, 1866.
- . Lecture by W.R. Roberts, Delivered Before The Fenian Brotherhood of New York, at Cooper Institute, on Wednesday, September 27, 1865. New York: J.Craft, 1865.
- . Life of James Stephens and Fenianism. New York, 1866.
- . Oration of Delphin Michael Delmar, Delivered to the Corcoran Circle of the Fenian Brotherhood, San Jose, California. City Hall, July 4, 1867. N.p., n.d.

- . Preface to Fenianism, or the Irish Republic: Its Origins and Progress, By a Prominent Member of the Fenian Congress. New York, 1865.
- . Proceedings of the Fifth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, at Troy, New York, September 1866; With Message of Wm. R. Roberts, President of the Fenian Brotherhood. Philadelphia: James Gibbons, 1866.
- . Proceedings of the First General Convention of the Fenian Brotherhood of the Pacific Coast, Held in San Francisco, California, September 1864. San Francisco: George W. Stevens and Company, 1864.
- . Proceedings of the First National Convention of the Fenian Brotherhood, Held in Chicago, Illinois, November 1863. Philadelphia: James Gibbons, 1863.
- . Proceedings of the Fifth National Convention of the Fenian Brotherhood, at Troy, New York September 1866, with the Message of William R. Roberts, President of the Fenian Brotherhood. Philadelphia: James Gibbons, 1866.
- . Proceedings of the Fourth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 1866. With the Constitution of the Fenian Brotherhood and Addenda Thereto. New York: J. Craft, 1866.
- . Proceedings of the Second National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, Held in Cincinnati, Ohio, January 1865. Philadelphia: James Gibbons, 1865.
- . Reply of W.R. Roberts, President, Fenian Brotherhood, to the Mis-Statements of B. Doran Killian; With Report of Gen. T.W. Sweeny, Secretary of War, Fenian Brotherhood. New York: J. Craft, 1866.
- . Report of the Trial of John Warren, for Treason-Felony, at the County Dublin Commission. Dublin: Alexander Thom, 1867.
- . Second Annual Convention of the Irish National Land League of the United States, Held at Washington, D.C., April 12 and 13, 1882. Buffalo: Union and Times Print, 1882.
- . Seventh National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood. Proceedings of the Senate and House of Representatives of the Fenian Brotherhood in Joint Convention at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 24,25,26,27,28, and 29,1868. Philadelphia: James Gibbons, 1868.
- . Sixth National Congress, Fenian Brotherhood. Proceedings of Joint Convention of Senate and House of Representatives. N.p., 1867.
- . Stephens' Fenian Songster: Containing all the Heart-Stirring and Patriotic Ballads and Songs. New York: W.H. Murphy, 1866.

- . The Fenian Progress: A Vision. New York: Bradburn, 1865.
 - . The Fenian Raid at Fort Erie, June the First and Second: with a Map of the Niagara Peninsula, Showing the Route of the Troops, and a Plan of the Lime Ridge Battle Ground. Toronto: Chewett, 1866.
 - . The Government Proceedings Against Fenianism. London, 1865.
 - . The Repeal of the Union Conspiracy, or, Mr. Parnell, M.P. and the I.R.B.. London: William Ridgeway, 1886.
 - . Third Annual Convention of the Irish National Land League and First Convention of the Irish National League of America, Held at Philadelphia, PA April 25, 26, and 27, 1883. Buffalo: Union and Times Print, 1883.
 - . To the Senate and House of Delegates of the Fenian Brotherhood, in Congress Assembled, January, 1866. New York: J. Craft, 1866.
 - . Official Report of the Investigating Committee of the Department of Manhattan, Fenian Brotherhood. A Full and Complete Report of the Investigation of the Management of Affairs, Financial, Military, and Civil, of the Officials at the Fenian Headquarters, Moffatt Mansion Union Square, New York. Statement of Monies Received and Expended, Bonds Issued- Full History of the "CampoBello" Fizzle. New York: J. Craft, 1866.
- Barnes, James J. ed. Private and Confidential: Letters from British Ministers in Washington to the Foreign Secretaries in London, 1844-1867. Selingsrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1993.
- Beach, Thomas Miller. Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service: The Recollections of a Spy. London: W. Heinemann, 1892.
- Bodkin, D.G. The Fenian Catechism, from the Vulgate of St. Lawrence O'Toole. New York, 1867.
- Brady, W. Maziere. Rome and Fenianism: The Pope's anti-Parnellite Circular. London: Robert Washbourne, 1883.
- Cavanagh, Michael. Memoirs of General Thomas Francis Meagher, Comprising the Leading Events of his Career Chronologically Arranged, with Selections from his Speeches, Lectures, and Miscellaneous Writings, including Personal Reminiscences. Worcester: Messenger Press, 1892.

- Colfax, Schuyler and John O'Neill. Speeches of Hon. Schuyler Colfax and General J. O'Neill, Delivered at the Great Fenian Pic Nic, Chicago, August 15, 1866. N.p., 1866.
- Cullen, Paul. The Pastoral Letters and Other Writings of Cardinal Paul Cullen. Edited by P.F. Moran. Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1882.
- Davis, Richard, ed. To Solitude Consigned: The Tasmanian Journal of William Smith O'Brien, 1849-1853. Sydney: Crossing Press, 1995.
- Davitt, Michael. Leaves from a Prison Diary: Lectures to a Solitary Audience. London: Chapman and Hall, 1885.
- Denieffe, Joseph. A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood. Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969.
- Dennison, Major George T. The Fenian Raid on Fort Erie with an Account of the Battle of Ridgeway, June, 1866. Toronto: Rollo and Adam, 1866.
- . Soldiering in Canada. Toronto: G.N. Moran, 1900.
- Denvir, John. Life Story of an Old Rebel. Dublin: Sealy, Breyers, and Walker, 1910.
- Devoy, John. Recollections of an Irish Rebel. Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969.
- Doheny, Michael. The Felon's Track. Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1918.
- Duffy, Charles Gavan. My Life in Two Hemispheres. London: T.F. Unwin, 1898.
- Grant, Ulysses. The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant. Edited by John Y. Simon. 26 vols., Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969.
- Gregg, George R. And E. P. Rowland. Trials of the Fenian Prisoners at Toronto. Toronto: Leader Steam Press, 1867.
- Griffin, George W.H. And George Christy. The Fenian Spy, or John Bull in America. New York, 1873.
- Halpine, Charles G. Baked Meats at the Funeral: A Collection of Essays, Poems, Speeches, Histories, and Banquets. New York: Carleton, 1866.
- Hammond, Harold Earl, ed. Diary of a Union Lady: Maria Lydig Daly, 1842-1894. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1962.

- Heron, Denis Caulfield. The Speeches of Denis Caulfield Heron, Q.C.:In the Cases of Queen v. Captain McClure and Others. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867.
- Hunter, Charles. Reminiscences of the Fenian Raid of 1866. Ft. Erie: Niagara Historical Society Press, 1911.
- Johnson, Andrew. Papers of Andrew Johnson. 16 vols. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999.
- Kiernan, Brigadier General James Lawler. Ireland and America Versus England from a Fenian Point of View: A Lecture Delivered in the Principal Towns and Cities of the West. Detroit, 1864.
- Lisgar, John Young. Claims of Canada for Losses Sustained by H.M. Subjects in Repelling Fenian Invasions. Ottawa: Hunter, Rose, 1869.
- MacDonald, John A. Troublous Times in Canada: A History of the Fenian Raids of 1866 and 1870. Toronto: W.S. Johnston and Company, 1910.
- McGee, Thomas D'Arcy. The Irish Position in British and Republican North America. Montreal, 1866.
- McMicken, Gilbert. The Abortive Fenian Raid of Manitoba: An Account By one Who Knew Its Secret History. Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press, 1888.
- Meade, George Gordon. The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade. 2 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.
- Meagher, Thomas Francis. Speeches on the Legislative Independence of Ireland. New York: P.M. Haverty, 1855.
- Mitchel, John. Jail Journal. Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1913
- . An Ulsterman for Ireland. Dublin: Candle Press, 1917.
- O'Brien, William. Irish Ideas. London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1893.
- . Recollections. New York: Macmillan and Company, 1905.
- O'Brien, William and Desmond Ryan, eds. Devoy's Post Bag: The Letters of John Devoy, 1871-1928. Dublin: Fallon Press, 1948.
- O'Leary, John. Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism. 2 vols. London: Downey and Company, 1896.

- O'Neill, John. Official Report of the Attempt to Invade Canada, May 25 1870. Also a Report of the Battle of Ridgeway, Canada West, Fought June 2 1866. New York: J.J. Foster, 1870.
- Pease, Zephaniah and George Anthony. The Catalpa Expedition. New Bedford, 1897.
- Pigott, Richard. Personal Recollections of an Irish Nationalist Journalist. Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, 1883.
- Roney, Frank. Frank Roney: Irish Rebel and California Labor Leader. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1931.
- Rossa, Jeremiah O'Donovan. Prison Life: Six Years in English Prisons. New York: PJ Kenady, 1876.
- Rutherford, John. Secret History of the Fenian Conspiracy: Its Origins, Objects, and Ramifications. London: Routledge Press 1877.
- Ryan, Mark. Fenian Memories. Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1945.
- Savage, John. American Citizens Prisoners in Great Britain. New York, 1870.
- . Fenian Heroes and Martyrs. Boston: P. Donahoe, 1868.
- . The Irish Cause on the Pacific: Account of the Visit of John Savage to the Pacific Coast. New York: American News Company, 1870.
- . Ninety-Eight and Forty-Eight. New York: Redfield, 1860.
- Seward, William. The Works of William H. Seward, 1853-1884. Edited by G.E. Baker, 5 vols., New York: Redfield, 1884.
- Strong, George Templeton. The Diary of George Templeton Strong. Edited by Allan Nevins and M.H. Thomas, 4 vols., New York: Octagon Books, 1952.
- Sturtevant, Julian Monson. Three Months in Great Britain: A Lecture on the Present Attitude of England Towards the United States. Chicago: J.A. Norton, 1864.
- Sumner, Charles. Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner. Edited by E.L. Pierce. 2 vols., Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1894.
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles. An Appeal to England against the Execution of the Fenians. Manchester: William, Freeman, 1867.
- Train, George Francis. My Life in Many States and in Foreign Lands. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902.

Weed, Thurlow. The Life of, Including his Biography and a Memoir. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884.

Welles, Gideon. Diary of Gideon Welles, 1861-1869. 3 vols. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911.

PRIMARY SOURCES: PERIODICAL LITERATURE

Anonymous. "Fenian Brotherhood." Blackwood's Magazine 190 (1911): 378-393.

---. "Fenianism: By One Who Knows." Contemporary Review 19 (1871): 301-316.

---. "Fenianism in America." Bentley's Miscellany 63 (1868): 129-133.

---. "Fenianism- Why is It?" Putnam's Monthly Magazine (May, 1868): 543-548.

---. "Force and Feebleness in Fenianism." Blackwood's Magazine 131 (1882): 454-467.

---. "Transatlantic Fenianism." Blackwood's Magazine (May, 1867): 590-606.

Cluseret, Gustave P. "My Connection with Fenianism." Littell's Living Age 94 (July, 1872): 353-365.

Donovan, Herbert. "Fenian Memories in Northern New York." Journal of the American Irish Historical Society 27 (1930): 148-152.

Junor, David. "Taken Prisoner By the Fenians." Canadian Magazine 37 (1911): 85-91.

Larmour, R. "Personal Reminiscences of the Fenian Raid of June 1866." Canadian Magazine 10 (1896): 121-127

O'Dowd, Cornelius. "Fenians." Blackwood's Magazine 51 (January, 1867): 58-62.

Sweeny, Thomas W. "Official Report of General Thomas W. Sweeny, Secretary of War for the Fenian Brotherhood and Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Republican Army." Journal of the American Irish Historical Society 23 (1924): 193-204.

PRIMARY SOURCES: PERIODICALS

Harper's Weekly, 1859-1877

McGee's Illustrated Weekly, (New York) 1866-1867

The Nation, 1865-1877

The Sunday Union, (New York) 1881-1913

The Weekly Freeman's Journal, (Dublin) 1847-1850, 1881

The Weekly Union, (New York) 1881-1886

PRIMARY SOURCES-- PUBLIC PAPERS AND GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, edited by J.D. Richardson. 10 vols. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903.

United Kingdom. Colonial Office. British North America. Claims of Canada for Losses and Damages Sustained by H.M. Subjects in Repelling Fenian Invasions. London: HMSO, 1867.

United Kingdom. Foreign Office. America, United States of. Papers Relating to the Fenian Brotherhood. London: HMSO, 1868.

United Kingdom. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3rd. ser., vols.89, 177-208.

United States. Congress. *Congressional Globe*. 46 vols. Washington, D.C., 1866-71.

United States. Congress. *House Journal*. 39th-40th Congresses.

United States. Department of State. Diplomatic Correspondence, 1866. 3 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867.

United States. Department of State. General Records. Record Group 59. Diplomatic Instructions and Diplomatic Dispatches. Notes to Foreign Legations and Notes from Foreign Legations, Great Britain. National Archives Branch Depository, Berkeley, California.

United States. Department of State. General Records. Record Group 84. Records of the United States Foreign Service, Great Britain. National Archives Branch Depository, Berkeley, California.

United States. Department of War. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880.

PRIMARY SOURCES: NEWSPAPERS

CANADA

Toronto Globe, 1864-1867

GREAT BRITAIN

Birmingham Daily Gazette, 1866-1867

Daily Telegraph (London), 1866-1867

The Illustrated London News, 1866-1868

London Times, 1858-1886

Manchester Guardian, 1866-1867

Manchester Examiner, 1866-1867

IRELAND

The Dublin Nation, 1848-1850, 1877

The Irish News (Belfast), 1856-1860

The Irish People (Dublin), 1863-1865

The Shamrock (Dublin), 1866

The United Irishman (Dublin), 1848

UNITED STATES

The American Celt, 1851-1854

Boston Pilot, 1861-1886

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 1866-1871

Brooklyn Daily Union, 1866-1867

Buffalo Daily Courier, 1866

Buffalo Evening Post, 1866

Buffalo Morning Express, 1866

Buffalo Morning News, 1866

Chicago Tribune, 1863-1867

Cincinnati Enquirer, 1866-1867

Cleveland Leader, 1864-1867

The Citizen, 1854-1856

The Emerald (New York), 1868-1869

Freeman's Journal, 1849-1889

Illustrated Irish Nation, 1859

The Irish American, 1849-1886

The Irish Citizen, 1867-1872

The Irish Miscellany, 1858

The Irish Nation, 1881-1885

The Irish News, 1856-1861

The Irish People, 1866-1868
The Irish Republic, 1867-1868
The Irish World, 1870-1892
National Intelligencer, 1866
New York Herald, 1848-1877
New York Sun, 1861-1886
New York Tablet, 1858-1866
New York Times, 1851-1886
New York Tribune, 1848-1883
New York World, 1865-1868
Philadelphia Inquirer, 1866
San Francisco Irish News, 1866-1868

SECONDARY SOURCES- BOOKS

- Adams, William Forbes. Ireland and Irish Immigration to the New World from 1815 to the Famine. New York: Russell and Russell, 1967.
- Akenson, Donald H. Being Had: Historians, Evidence, and the Irish in North America. Ontario: P.D. Meany, 1985.
- . The Irish Diaspora: A Primer. Toronto: P.D. Meany, 1993.
- Alba, Richard D. Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Allen, Theodore. The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control. New York: Verso, 1994.
- Amos, Keith. The Fenians in Australia, 1865-1880. Kensington: New South Wales Press, 1988.
- Anbinder, Tyler. Five Points: The 19th - Century New York City Neighborhood that Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum. New York: Free Press, 2003.
- . Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know-Nothings and the Politics of the 1850's. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities. London: Verso Press, 1991.
- Armstrong, John. Nations Before Nationalism. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

- Athearn, Robert G. Thomas Francis Meagher: An Irish Revolutionary in America. Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1949.
- Bagenal, Philip H.D. The American Irish and Their Influence on Irish Politics. London: K. Paul, Trench and Company, 1882.
- . Parnellism Unveiled: The Land and Labour Agitation of 1879-1880. Dublin: Hodges, Foster, and Figgis, 1880.
- Bayor, Ronald H. And Timothy J. Meagher, eds. The New York Irish. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Beals, Carleton. Brass-Knuckle Crusade: The Great Know-Nothing Conspiracy, 1820-1860. New York: Hastings House, 1960.
- Beckett, J.C. The Making of Modern Ireland. London: Faber and Faber, 1966.
- Bernstein, Iver. The New York City Draft Riots: Their Political and Social Significance in the Civil War Era. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Berwanger, Eugene H. The British Foreign Service and the American Civil War. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994.
- Best, Geoffrey. Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-70. London: Suffolk Printing, 1979.
- Bew, Paul. Land and the National Question in Ireland. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1979.
- Billington, Ray Allen. The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of Nativism. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938.
- Birmingham, Stephen. Real Lace: America's Rich Irish. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997.
- Blessing, P.J. The Irish in America: A Guide to the Literature and Manuscript Collections. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992.
- Bodnar, John. The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1985.
- Bourke, Marcus. John O'Leary: A Study in Irish Separatism. Tralee: Anvil Books, 1967.
- Bourne, Kenneth. Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

- Boyce, D.G. The Irish Question and British Politics, 1868-1986. New York: St. Martins Press, 1986.
- Bridges, Amy. A City in the Republic: Antebellum New York and the Origins of Machine Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Brown, Thomas N. Irish-American Nationalism, 1870-1890. New York: J.B. Lippincott Press, 1966.
- Butt, J. And Clarke I.F., eds. The Victorians and Social Protest. Newtown Abbort: David and Charles, 1973.
- Byrne Stephen. Irish Immigration to the United States. New York: Arno Press, 1969.
- Callow, Alexander B. The Tweed Ring. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Campbell, Christy. Fenian Fire: The British Government Plot to Assassinate Queen Victoria. London: Harper Collins, 2002,
- Campbell, J.H. History of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, and of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland. Philadelphia: The Hibernian Society, 1892.
- Carroll, F.M. American Opinion and the Irish Question. New York: St. Martins Press, 1978.
- Clark, Dennis. Erin's Heirs: Irish Bonds of Community. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991.
- . Hibernia America: The Irish and Regional Cultures. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986.
- Cole, John Alfred. Prince of Spies: Henri le Caron. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984.
- Coleman, Terry. Passage to America: A History of Emigrants From Great Britain and Ireland to America in the Mid-Nineteenth Century. London: Hutchinson and Company, 1972.
- Comerford, R.V. Charles J. Kickham: A Study in Irish Nationalism and Literature. Portmarnock: Wolfhound Press, 1979.
- . The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society, 1848-1882. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985.
- Cooke, Adrian. The Alabama Claims: American Politics and Anglo-American Relations, 1865-1872. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.

- Corfe, Tom. The Phoenix Park Murders. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1968.
- Crawford, Martin. The Anglo-American Crisis of the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Times and America, 1850-1862. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987.
- Cronin, Sean. Irish Nationalism. New York: Continuum Publishing, 1981.
- Cullen, J.H. Young Ireland in Exile. Dublin: Talbot Press Limited, 1928.
- Curran, Thomas J. Xenophobia and Immigration, 1820-1930. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975.
- Curtis, L.Perry. Anglo-Saxons and Celts. Bridgeport: University of Bridgeport Press, 1968.
- . Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971.
- D'Arcy, William. The Fenian Movement in the United States, 1858-1886. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947.
- Dillon, William. Life of John Mitchel. London: K. Paul, Trench and Company, 1893.
- Diner, Hasia. Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.
- Dolan, Jay P. American Catholic Parish Life. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.
- . Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience, 1830-1900. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978.
- . The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1965. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.
- Doyle, David and Edwards Owen Dudley, eds. America and Ireland, 1776-1976. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Drudy, Patrick, ed. The Irish in America: Emigration, Assimilation, and Impact. London: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Dunne, Robert. Antebellum Irish Immigration and Emerging Ideologies of "America": A Protestant Backlash. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2002.
- Erie, Stephen. Rainbow's End: Irish Americans and the Dilemma of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

- Ernst, Robert. Immigrant Life in New York City. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994.
- Evans, Anthony G. Fanatic Heart: A Life of John Boyle O'Reilly, 1844-1890. Newlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1997.
- Fallows, Marjorie. Irish Americans: Identity and Assimilation. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1979.
- Fanning, Charles, ed. The Exiles of Erin: Nineteenth Century Irish American Fiction. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987.
- Fitzpatrick, David. Irish Emigration, 1801-1921. Dublin: Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, 1984.
- . Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- French, Charles ed. Biographical Dictionary of the American Irish. Chicago: American Biographical Publishing Company, 1897.
- Frost, Thomas. The Secret Societies of the European Revolutions, 1776-1876. London: Sampson, Law, and Company, 1876.
- Funchion, Michael. Chicago's Irish Nationalists. New York: Arno Press, 1976.
- . Irish-American Voluntary Organizations. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983.
- Gibson, Florence. The Attitudes of the New York Irish Towards State and National Affairs, 1848-1892. New York: AMS Press, 1968.
- Gellner, Ernest. Nations and Nationalism. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1983.
- . Thought and Change. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964.
- Glazer, Nathan and Moynihan Daniel P. Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970.
- . Ethnicity: Theory and Experience. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976.
- Golway, Terry. Irish Rebel: John Devoy and America's Fight for Ireland's Freedom. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- Gordon, Michael A. The Orange Riots: Irish Political Violence in New York City, 1870 and 1871. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

- Greeley, Andrew M. Ethnicity in the United States: A Preliminary Reconnaissance. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974.
- . That Most Distressful Nation: The Taming of the American Irish. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1973.
- . An Ugly Little Secret: Anti-Catholicism in North America. Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1977.
- Greene, Victor. American Immigrant Leaders, 1800-1910: Marginality and Identity. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Griffin, William D. Portrait of the Irish in America. New York: Scribner, 1981.
- Gwynn, Denis. Young Ireland and 1848. Cork: Cork University Press, 1949.
- Hall, John ed. The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Harmon, Maurice, ed. Fenians and Fenianism. Dublin: Scepter Books, 1968.
- Handlin, Oscar. Boston's Immigrants: A Study in Acculturation. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Hernon, Joseph. Celts, Catholics and Copperheads: Ireland Views the American Civil War. Columbus: Ohio State Press, 1968.
- Higham, John, ed. Ethnic Leadership in America. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- . Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925. New York: Atheneum, 1963.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds. The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Hueston, Robert F. The Catholic Press and Nativism, 1840-1860. New York: S.N.Books, 1976.
- Hutchinson, John and Anthony D. Smith, eds. Nationalism. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Ignatiev, Noel. How the Irish Became White. New York: Routledge Press, 1994.
- Jenkins, Brian H. Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969.

- Jones, John Paul. The Irish Brigade. Washington, D.C.: R.B. Luce, 1969.
- Joyce, William. Editors and Ethnicity: A History of the Irish-American Press. New York: Arno Press, 1976.
- Kee, Robert. The Bold Fenian Men. London: Quartet Books, 1976.
- . The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972.
- Keneally, Thomas. The Great Shame: and the Triumph of the Irish in the English Speaking World. New York: Nan A. Talease, 1999.
- Knobel, Dale T. Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1986.
- Laubenstein, William J. The Emerald Whaler. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960.
- Leonard, Ira M., ed. American Nativism, 1830-1860. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971.
- Lester, DeeGee. Irish Research: A Guide to Collections in North America, Ireland, and Great Britain. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987.
- Levine, Edward M. The Irish and Irish Politicians: A Study of Cultural and Social Alienation. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966.
- MacCall, Seamus. John Mitchel: A Biography. London: Nelson and Sons, 1938.
- Macdonagh, Oliver, WF Mandle, and Paurie Travers, eds. Irish Culture and Nationalism, 1750-1950. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983.
- MacSuibnhe, Peadar. Paul Cullen and His Contemporaries. Naas: Leinster Leader, 1961.
- Mansergh, Nicholas. The Irish Question, 1840-1921. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965.
- McAllister, Thomas G. Terrence Bellew McManus, 1811-1861. Maynooth: Maynooth Historical Society, 1972.
- McCaffrey, Lawrence. The Irish Diaspora in America. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976.
- . The Irish Experience. New York: Prentice Hall, 1989.

- . The Irish in Chicago. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
- . Textures of Irish America. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992.
- Metress, Seamus. The American Irish and Irish Nationalism. Dublin: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995.
- . The Irish American Experience: A Guide to the Literature. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981.
- Miller, Kerby. Class, Culture, and Immigrant Group Identity in the United States: The Case of Irish American Ethnicity. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- . Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Montgomery, David. Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans. New York: Knopf, 1967.
- Moody, T.W. Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846 -1882. New York: Clarendon Press, 1981.
- . The Fenian Movement. Cork: Cork University Press, 1968.
- Morris, Richard K. John Holland: Inventor of the Modern Submarine. Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1966.
- Murphy, Richard C. The History of the Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick in the City of New York, 1784-1955. New York: The Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, 1962.
- Neidhardt, W.S. Fenianism in North America. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975.
- Neill, John. A Famous Conspiracy: The Attack on the Prison Van in Hyde Road, Manchester. Manchester: Daisy Bank Printing and Publishing Company, 1909.
- Newsinger, John. Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain. London: Pluto Press, 1994.
- Norman, Edward. Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965.
- O'Brion, Leon. Fenian Fever: An Anglo-American Dilemma. New York: New York University Press, 1971.

- . Revolutionary Underground The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, 1858-1924. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976.
- O'Dea, John. The History of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and Ladies' Auxiliary. Philadelphia: AOH Press, 1923.
- O'Grady, Joseph P. How the Irish Became Americans. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973.
- O'Luing, Sean. The Catalpa Rescue. Tralee: Anvil Books, 1965.
- O'Sullivan, Patrick, ed. Patterns of Migration. New York: Leicester University Press, 1992.
- . Religion and Identity. New York: Leicester University Press, 1996.
- O'Tuathaigh, Gearoid. The Emigrant Experience. Galway: Galway Labor History Group, 1991.
- . Ireland Before the Famine. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972.
- Poirteir, Cathal, ed. The Great Irish Famine. Cork: Mercier Press, 1995.
- Pollard, H.B.C. The Secret Societies of Ireland. London: P. Allan, 1922.
- Potter, George W. To The Golden Door: The Story of the Irish in Ireland and America. Boston: Little, Brown, 1960.
- Pozetta, George E., ed. Nativism, Discrimination, and Images of Immigrants. New York: Garland, 1991.
- Quinlivan, Patrick. The Fenians in England, 1865-1872: A Sense of Insecurity. New York: Riverrun Press, 1982.
- Rafferty, Oliver P. The Church, the State, and the Fenian Threat. New York: St.Martins Press, 1999.
- Renan, Ernest. What Makes a Nation? Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1882.
- Ridge, John T. Erin's Sons in America: The Ancient Order of Hibernians. New York: Ancient Order of Hibernians 150th Anniversary Committee, 1986.
- . The St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York. New York: St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee, 1988.

- Rodecheko, James P. Patrick Ford and His Search for America: A Case Study of Irish American Journalism, 1870-1913. New York: Arno Press, 1976.
- Roediger, David R. The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class. London: Verso Press, 1991.
- Rose, Paul Bernard. The Manchester Martyrs: The Story of a Fenian Tragedy. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970.
- Rosenwaike, Ira. Population History of New York City. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972.
- Rothschild, Joseph. Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.
- Royce, Anya Peterson. Ethnic Identity, Strategies of Diversity. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Ryan, Desmond. The Fenian Chief: A Biography of James Stephens. Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1967.
- . The Phoenix Flame: A Study of Fenianism and John Devoy. London: A. Barker, 1973.
- Scherzer, Kenneth A. The Unbounded Community: Neighborhood Life and Social Structure in New York City, 1830-1875. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.
- Schrier, Arnold. Ireland and the American Emigration, 1850-1900. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958.
- Senior, Hereward. The Fenians and Canada. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978.
- . The Last Invasion of Canada: The Fenian Raids, 1866-1870. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991.
- Shannon, William V. The American Irish. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966.
- Shea, Anne and Marion Casey. The Irish Experience in New York City: A Select Bibliography. New York: New York Irish History Roundtable, 1995.
- Short, K.R.M. The Dynamite War: Irish American Bombers in Victorian Britain. Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1979.
- Sollors, Werner. Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American History. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

- Steinberg, Stephen. The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America. New York: Atheneum, 1981.
- Stevens, Peter. The Voyage of the *Catalpa*: A Perilous Journey and Six Rebels' Flight to Freedom. New York: Carroll and Graf, 2002.
- Tansill, Charles C. America and the Fight for Irish Freedom, 1866-1922. New York: Devin Adair, 1957.
- Thompson, Richard H. Theories of Ethnicity: A Critical Appraisal. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.
- Tucker, Philip Thomas, ed. The History of the Irish Brigade: A Collection of Historical Essays. Fredricksburg: Sgt. Kirkland's Museum and Historical Society, 1995.
- Walker, Mabel Gregory. The Fenian Movement. Colorado Springs: Ralph Miles, 1969.
- Wallace, Mike and Edwin G. Burrows. Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Waters, Mary C. Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Williams, Desmond. Secret Societies in Ireland. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973.
- Winks, Robin. Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1960.
- Wittke, Carl. The Irish in America. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956.

SECONDARY SOURCES- ARTICLES

- Baker, W. "Squelching the Disloyal, Fenian-Sympathizing Brood: T.W. Anglin and Confederation in New Brunswick, 1865-6." Canadian Historical Review 55, no. 2 (1974): 141-158.
- . "Turning the Spit: Timothy Anglin and the Roasting of D'Arcy McGee." Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers (1974): 135-155.
- Barry, James P. "US- Canada Border Frictions: The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Border." Inland Seas 45, no. 4 (1989): 256-271.
- Bateman, Robert J. "Captain Timothy Deasy, Fenian." Irish Sword 8, no. 31 (1967): 130- 137.

- Belchem, John. "Republican Spirit and Military Science: The 'Irish Brigade' and Irish American Nationalism in 1848." Irish Historical Studies 39, no. 113. (May 1994): 44-64.
- Bisceglia, Louis R. "The Fenian Funeral of Terence Bellew McManus." Eire-Ireland 14, no. 3. (Autumn 1979): 45-64.
- . "The McManus Welcome, San Francisco, 1851." Eire-Ireland 16, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 6-20.
- Brown, Thomas N. "Origin and Character of Irish American Nationalists." Review of Politics 18, no. 3 (1956): 327-358.
- Calkin, Homer. "St. Albans in Reverse: The Fenian Raid of 1866." Vermont History 35, no. 1 (1967): 19-34.
- Cameron, James S. "Fenian Times in Nova Scotia." Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections 37 (1970): 103-152.
- Cantrell, James P. "Irish Culture and the War Between the States." Eire-Ireland. 27, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 7-15.
- Chartrand, Rene. "Canadian Volunteer Infantry, 1863-1870." Military Historian 37, no. 1 (1985): 25-36.
- Choille, Brendan MacGiolla. "Fenian Documents in the State Paper Office." Irish Historical Studies 16, no. 63 (1969): 258-284.
- . "Fenians, Rice, and Ribbonmen in County Monaghan, 1864-67." Clogher Review, 6 no. 2 (1967): 221-252.
- . "Mourning the Martyrs: A Study of a Demonstration in Limerick City." North Munster Antiquities Journal 10, no. 2 (1967): 173-205.
- Clark, D. "Letters from the Underground: The Fenian Correspondence of James Gibbons." Records of the American Catholic Historical Society 81 (1970): 83-88.
- . "Militants of the 1860's: The Philadelphia Fenians." Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 95, no. 1 (1971): 98-108.
- Comerford, R.V. "Comprehending the Fenians." Saothar 17 (1992): 52-56.
- . "Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the mid 1860s." Irish Historical Studies 22, no. 87 (March, 1981): 239-250.

- Connor, Walker. "When is a Nation?" Ethnic and Racial Studies 13, no. 1 (1990): 92-100.
- Conzen, Kathleen Neils et al. "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the USA." Journal of American Ethnic History 12 no. 1 (Fall, 1992): 3-41.
- Costigan, Giovanni. "Romantic Nationalism: Ireland and Europe." Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies 3, no. 2 (Autumn, 1973): 141-152.
- Cronin, Sean. "'The Country Did Not Turn Out': The Young Ireland Rising of 1848." Eire Ireland 11, no. 2 (Summer 1976): 3-17.
- Cullen, L.M. "The Cultural Bias of Modern Irish Nationalism." In Rosalind Mitchinson, ed. The Roots of Nationalism: Studies in Northern Europe (Edinburgh: Freebourn Press, 1980): 91-106.
- Cumberland, Barlow. "The Fenian Raid of 1866 and Events on the Frontier." Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada 4 (1911): 85-108.
- Curran, Joseph M. "The Decline and Fall of the IRB." Eire-Ireland 10 no. 1 (Spring, 1975): 14-23.
- Dafoe, John W. "The Fenian Invasion of Quebec." Canadian Magazine 10 (1898): 339-347.
- Davis, Harold A. "The Fenian Raid on New Brunswick." Canadian Historical Review 36, no. 4 (December, 1955): 19-34.
- DeLury, John F. "Irish Nationalism in the Sacramento Region, 1850-1890." Eire-Ireland 21, no. 3 (Autumn, 1986): 27-54.
- de Nie, Michael. "'A Medley Mob of Irish-American Plotters and Irish Dupes': The British Press and Transatlantic Fenianism." Journal of British Studies 40, no. 2 (2001): 213-240.
- De Rosier, Jr. Arthur H. "Importance in Failure: The Fenian Raids of 1866-1871." Southern Quarterly 3 no. 3 (1965): 181-197.
- Duggan, G.C. "The Fenians in Canada: A British Officer's Impressions." Irish Sword 8, no. 31 (1967): 88-91.
- Eid, Leroy V. "Puck and the Irish: 'The One American Idea.'" Eire-Ireland 11, no. 2 (Summer, 1976): 18-35.
- Ellis, Peter Berresford. "The Battle of Ridgeway, 2 June 1866." Irish Sword 16, no. 65 (1986): 245-267.

- . and Joseph A. King. "Fenian Casualties and Prisoners: Fenian Invasion of British North America, June 1866." Irish Sword 18, no. 73 (1992): 271-285.
- Emmons, David M. "The Socialization of Uncertainty: The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Butte, Montana, 1880-1925." Eire-Ireland 30, no. 2 (Spring, 1995): 74-92.
- Fitzpatrick, David. "The Geography of Irish Nationalism." Past and Present. 78 (1978): 113-144.
- Flanagan, Richard. "The Passing of John O'Mahony and the Fenian Brotherhood." San Jose Studies 9, no. 1 (1983): 16-23.
- Fleming, Thomas. "The Green Flag in America." American Heritage 30, no. 4 (1979): 50-63.
- Foner, Eric. "Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League and Irish America." In Eric Foner, ed. Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980): 150-200. First published in Marxist Perspectives 1 (summer 1897): 6-55.
- Fuchs, Lawrence H. "The Invention of Ethnicity: The Amen Corner." Journal of American Ethnic History 12, no. 1 (Fall, 1992): 53-58.
- Funchion, Michael F. "Irish Nationalists and Chicago Politics in the 1880's." Eire-Ireland 10, no. 2 (Summer, 1975): 3-18.
- Gans, Herbert J. "Ethnic Invention and Acculturation: A Bumpy Line Approach." Journal of American Ethnic History 12, no. 1 (Fall, 1992): 42-52.
- . "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America." in Herbert J. Gans, et al, eds On the Making of Americans: Essays in Honor of David Reisman. (Philadelphia, 1979):
- George, Jr. Joseph. "Very Rev. Dr. Patrick E. Moriarty, OSA: Philadelphia's Fenian Spokesman." Pennsylvania History 48, no. 3 (1981): 221-233.
- Goble, Bill. "On to Canada Again: A History of the Fenian Invasion of 1872." Military Images 16, no.5 (1995): 22-25.
- Green, E.R. "Fenians." History Today 8, no. 10 (1958): 698-705.
- . "The Founding of the Fenian Brotherhood." Bulletin of the Irish Committee of Historical Sciences 83 (1958): 2-3.

- Griffin, Brian. "Scallions, Pikes, and Bog Oak Ornaments: The Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Chicago Fenian Fair, 1864." Studia Hibernica no. 29 (1995-97): 85-97.
- . "Social Aspects of Fenianism in Connacht and Leinster, 1858-1870." Eire-Ireland 21, no. 1 (Spring, 1986): 16-39.
- Higham, John "Integrating America: the Problem of Assimilation in the Nineteenth Century." Journal of American Ethnic History 1 (Fall, 1981): 7-25.
- Hoslett, S.D. "The Fenian Brotherhood." Americana 34 (1940): 596-603.
- Humphrey, Desmond J. "Fenian Episode in American Politics." Journal of the American Irish Historical Society 15 (1916): 323-329.
- Ireland, John De Courcy. "A Preliminary Study of the Fenians and the Sea." Eire-Ireland 2 no. 2 (Summer, 1967): 36-54.
- . "Fenianism and Naval Affairs." Irish Sword 8, no. 30 (1967): 10-22.
- Jenkins, Brian. "The British Government, Sir John A MacDonald, and the Fenian Claims." Canadian Historical Review 41 (June, 1968): 142-159.
- Jentz, John B. And Richard Schneirov. "Chicago's Fenian Fair of 1864: A Window into the Civil War as a Popular Political Awakening." Labor's Heritage 6 no.3 (1995): 4-19.
- Kelly, Matthew. "Dublin Fenianism in the 1880's: 'The Irish Culture of the Future'?" Historical Journal 43 no. 3 (2000): 729-750.
- Kelton, Jane Gladden. "New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade: Invention of Contention and Consensus." The Drama Review 39, no. 3 (1985): 93-105.
- Keshen, Jeff. "Cloak and Dagger: Canada West's Secret Police, 1864-1867." Ontario History 79, no.4 (1987): 353-381.
- King, Clyde. "The Fenian Movement." University of Colorado Studies 6 (1909): 187-213.
- King, Joseph A. "The Fenian Invasion of Canada and John MacMahon: Priest, Saint, or Charlatan?" Eire-Ireland 23 no. 4 (Winter, 1988): 32-51.
- Knowlton, Stephen R. "The Politics of John Mitchel: A Reappraisal." Eire-Ireland 22 no. 2 (Summer, 1987): 38-55.

- Kostal, RW. "Rebels in the Dock: The Prosecution of the Dublin Fenians, 1865-6." Eire-Ireland 34 no. 2 (1999): 70-96.
- Lester, Dee Gee. "Tennessee's Bold Fenian Men." Tennessee Historical Quarterly. 56 no.4(1997): 262-277.
- Lowe, William J. "Irish Confederates and the Fenians: Radical Mobilization Among the Irish in Britain, 1848-1871." Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1850: Proceedings. 14 (1984): 434-441.
- Lyne, D.C. and Peter M. Toner. "Fenianism in Canada, 1874-1884." Studia Hibernica 12 (1972): 27-76.
- Martin, Michel J. "'A Class of Persons whose Presence is a Constant Danger': Progress, Prohibition, and 'Public Disorderliness' in Burlington, 1860-1880." Vermont History 62, no.3 (1994): 148-165.
- Maume, Patrick. "Parnell and the IRB Oath." Irish Historical Studies 39, no.1 (May, 1995): 363-370.
- McCaffrey, Lawrence J. "Irish Nationalism and Irish Catholicism: A Study in Cultural Identity." Church History 42, no. 4, pp. 1-11.
- McCord, Norman. "The Fenians and Public Opinion in Great Britain." University Review Vol. 4, no. 3 (Winter, 1967): 210-215.
- McCracken, Donal P. "'Fenians and Dutch Carpetbaggers': Irish and Afrikaner Nationalisms, 1877-1930." Eire-Ireland 29 no. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 109-125.
- McCracken, Eileen. "Alfred Aylward: A Fenian in South Africa." Irish Sword 12, no. 49 (1976): 261-269.
- McCracken, JL. "The Fate of an Infamous Informer." History Ireland 9 no. 2 (2001): 26-30.
- McFarland, Elaine W. "A Reality and Yet Impalpable: The Fenian Panic in Mid-Victorian Scotland." Scottish Historical Review 77, no. 2 (1998): 199-223.
- McGee, Owen. "Frederick James Allan: Fenian and Civil Servant." History Ireland 10, no.1 (2002): 29-33.
- McGimpsey, Christopher D. "Internal Ethnic Friction: Orange and Green in Nineteenth-Century New York." Immigrants and Minorities 1 no. 1 (1982): 39-59.
- McGrath, Walter. "The Fenian Rising in Cork." Irish Sword 8, no. 33 (Autumn, 1968): 245-254.

- Meagher, Timothy J. "Irish All the Time: Ethnic Consciousness among the Irish in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1880-1905." Journal of Social History 19 (1985): 173-303.
- Miller, Douglas T. "Immigration and Social Stratification in Pre- Civil War New York." New York History 49, no. 2 (1968): 157-168.
- Moorhouse, B. Ann. "Researching the Irish Born of New York City." The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record 112, no. 2 (April, 1981): 65-71.
- Moran, Gerard. "James Daly and the Rise and Fall of the Land League in the West of Ireland, 1879-1882." Irish Historical Studies 29, no. 114 (1994): 189-207.
- . "The National Brotherhood of St. Patrick in Britain in the 1860s." Irish Studies Review 7, no.3 (1999): 325-336.
- Morgan, Jack. "'The Dust of Maynooth': Fenian Funeral as Political Theatre- St. Louis, 1865." New Hibernia Review 2 no 4 (1998): 24-37.
- . "'Whistle Up A Marching Tune': The Life and Times of Thomas W. Sweeny." Working Papers in Irish Studies (Summer, 1992): 1-32.
- Moss, Kenneth J. "St. Patrick's Day Celebrations and the Formation of Irish American Identity, 1845-1875." Journal of Social History 29 no. 1 (Fall, 1995): 125-148.
- Moynihan, John S. "Fenian Prisoners in Western Australia." Eire-Ireland 3 no.2. (Summer, 1968): 6-13.
- Mullen, Thomas J. "The Fighting Sixty-Ninth." Eire-Ireland 4, no. 4 (Winter, 1969): 13-26.
- Murray, AC. "Agrarian Violence and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: The Myth of Ribbonism." Irish Economic and Social History 13 (1986): 56-73.
- Myers, Phillip E. "The Fenians in Iowa." Palimpsest 62, no. 2 (1981): 56-64.
- Neidhardt, WS. "The Abortive Fenian Uprising in Canada West: A Document Study." Ontario History 61, no.2 (1969): 74-76.
- . "The American Government and the Fenian Brotherhood: A Study in Mutual Political Opportunism." Ontario History 64, no.1 (1972): 27-44.
- . "The Fenian Brotherhood and Western Ontario: The Final Years." Ontario History 60, no. 3 (1968): 149-161.

- . "‘We’ve Nothing Else to Do’: The Fenian Invasions of Canada, 1866." Canada: An Historical Magazine 1, no.2 (1973): 1-20.
- Newsinger, John. "Fenianism Revisited: Pastime or Revolutionary Movement?" Saothar 17. (1992): 46-52.
- . "Old Chartists, Fenians, and New Socialists." Eire-Ireland 17 no. 2 (Summer,1982): 19-45.
- Nolan, Peter. "Fariola, Masey, and the Fenian Rising." Cork Historical Society Journal 75 (January- June, 1970): 1-11.
- Noonan, Gerald R. "General John O'Neill." Clogher Record 2 no. 2 (1967): 277-319.
- O’Cathaoir, Brendan. "American Fenianism and Canada, 1865-1871." Irish Sword 8, no. 31 (1967): 77-87.
- . "Terence Bellew McManus: Fenian Precursor." Irish Sword 16, no. 63 (1985): 105-109.
- O’Donnell, L.A. "Joseph Patrick McDonnell: A Passion for Justice." Eire-Ireland 22, no.4 (1987): 118-133.
- O’Flaherty, Patrick. "Michael Doheny: Young Irelander and Fenian." Irish Sword. 17, no. 67 (1987): 81-89.
- O’Luing, Sean. "The Phoenix Society in Kerry, 1858-59." Journal of the Kerry Archaeological Society 2 (1969): 5-26.
- O’Rourke, Hugh. "The Arrival of the Fenian Exiles to New York: American Politics and The Irish Vote." New York Irish History 8 (1993-1994): 46-50.
- Patrick, John J. "The Cleveland Fenians: A Study in Ethnic Leadership." The Old Northwest 9 no. 4 (Winter 1983-84): 307-329.
- Pritchett, J.P. "The Origins of the So-Called Fenian Raid on Manitoba in 187." Canadian Historical Review 10 (March 1929): 23-42.
- Rafferty, Oliver P. "Cardinal Cullen, Early Fenianism, and the MacManus Funeral Affair." Recusant History 22, no.4 (1995): 549-563.
- . "Fenianism in North America in the 1860’s: The Problems for Church and State." History 84, no. 274 (April, 1999): 257-277.

- Rosen, Bruce. "The *Catalpa* Rescue." Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society 65, no.2 (1979): 73-88.
- Sarbaugh, Timothy J. "Post-Civil War Fever and Adjustment: Fenianism in the Californian Context, 1858-1872." Working Papers in Irish Studies (Fall, 1991): 2-29.
- Sarna, Jonathan D. "From Immigrants to Ethnics: Toward a New Theory of 'Ethnicization'." Ethnicity 5 (1978): 370-378.
- Semple, AJ. "The Fenian Infiltration of the British Army." Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research 52, no. 211 (1974): 133-160.
- Senior, Hereward. "Quebec and the Fenians." Canadian Historical Review 48, no. 1 (1967): 26-44.
- Seoighe, Mainchin. "The Fenian Attack on Killmallock Police Barracks." North Munster Antiquities Journal 10 (1966-67): 157-168.
- Sewell, MJ. "Rebels or Revolutionaries?: Irish-American Nationalism and American Diplomacy, 1865-1885." Historical Journal 29 no.3 (1986): 723-733.
- Shanahan, David. "Young Ireland in a Young Canada: Thomas D'Arcy McGee and the New Nationality." British Journal of Canadian Studies 12, no. 1 (1997): 1-8.
- Sheppard, George. "'God Save the Green': Fenianism and Fellowship in Victorian Ontario." Historie Sociale 20, no. 39 (1987): 129-144.
- Snoddy, Oliver. "Fenian Flags." Irish Sword 8, no. 30 (1967): 1-9.
- Stacey, C.P. "A Fenian Interlude: The Story of Michael Murphy." Canadian Historical Review 15 (June, 1934): 133-154.
- . "Fenianism and the Rise of National Feeling in Canada at the Time of Confederation." Canadian Historical Review 12 (September 1931): 238-261.
- . "Garrison at Ft. Wellington: a Military Dispute During the Fenian Troubles." Canadian Historical Review 14 (June, 1933): 161-176.
- Stouffer, Allen P. "Canadian-American Relations in the Shadow of the Civil War." Dalhousie Review 57 no.2 (1977): 332-346.
- Takagami, Shin-Ichi. "The Fenian Rising in Dublin, March, 1867." Irish Historical Studies 29 no. 115 (May, 1995): 340-362.

- Tarpey, Marie V. "Joseph McGarrity, Fighter for Irish Freedom." Studia Hibernica 11 (1971): 164-180.
- Taylor, John M. "Fenian Raids Against Canada." American History Illustrated 13 no. 5 (1978): 32-39.
- Toner, P.M. "'The Green Ghost': Canada's Fenians and the Raids." Eire-Ireland 16 no. 4 (Winter, 1981): 27-47.
- . "The Military Organization of the Canadian Fenians, 1866-1870." Irish Sword 10, no. 38 (1971): 26-37.
- . "The Military Organization of the Fenians." Irish Sword 10, no. 1 (Spring, 1972): 33-45.
- . "The Unstrung Harp: Canada's Irish." Acadiensis 7 no.2 (1978): 156-159.
- Tremaudan, A.H. de "Louis Riel and the Fenian Raid of 1871." Canadian Historical Review 4 (June 1923): 32-144.
- Walsh, Victor A. "Irish Nationalism and Land Reform: The Role of the Irish in America." Irish Studies 4 (1985): 253-269.
- Waters, Hazel. "The Great Irish Famine and the Rise of Anti-Irish Racism." Race and Class 35 no. 1 (Summer, 1995): 95-103.
- Welch, G.P. "The Fenian Foray into Canada." An Cosantir 18 (1958): 290-301.

UNPUBLISHED SECONDARY SOURCES

- Appel, John J. "Immigrant Historical Societies in the United States, 1880-1950." Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1960.
- Blessing, P.J. "West Among Strangers: Irish Migration to California, 1850-1890." Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1977.
- Brady, Kevin Thaddeus. "Fenians and the Faithful: Philadelphia's Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Diocese of Philadelphia, 1859-1870." Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1999.
- Brushler, Joseph S. "The Fenian Invasion of Canada." Ph.D. diss., St. Louis University, 1943.
- Casey, Marion R. "New York's Irish Middle Class, 1850-1870." MA Thesis, New York University, 1986.

- Connor, Charles P. "The American Catholic Political Position at Mid-Century: Archbishop Hughes as Test Case." Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1979.
- Cornelius, Debra A. "The Packaging of Protest: Press Distortion and Image Dynamics in Radical and Mainstream Irish-American Sociopolitical Groups." Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1990.
- Cuddy, Henry. "The Influences of the Fenian Movement on Anglo-American Relations, 1860-1872." Ph.D. diss., St. Johns University, 1953.
- Curran, Thomas J. "Know Nothings of New York." Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1963.
- Doan, Robert Alan. "Green Gold to the Emerald Shores: Irish Immigration to the United States and Transatlantic Monetary Aid, 1854-1923." Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1999.
- Donnelly, James Francis. "Catholic New Yorkers and New York Socialists, 1870-1920." Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1982.
- Fitzgerald, Marie. "The Saint Patrick's Day Parade: the Conflict of Irish American Identity in New York City, 1840-1900." Ph.D. diss., SUNY Stony Brook, 1993.
- Genan, Arthur. "John Kelly: New York's First Irish Boss." Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1971.
- Gordon, Michael A. "Studies in Irish and Irish -American Thought and Behavior in Gilded Age New York City." Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1977.
- Groneman-Pernicone, Carol. "The 'Bloody Ould Sixth': A Social Analysis of a New York City Working Class Community in the Mid-Nineteenth Century." Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1977.
- Kennedy, Roger T. "Fenianism: A Transatlantic Movement." MA Thesis, Hunter College, 1995.
- Leonard, Ira M. "New York City Politics, 1841-1844: Nativism and Reform." Ph.D. Diss., New York University, 1965.
- Light, Dale B. "Class, Ethnicity, and the Urban Ecology in a Nineteenth Century City: Philadelphia's Irish, 1840-1890." Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1979.
- London, Herbert I. "The Nativism Movement in the American Political Party in New York City, 1843-1847." Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1965.

- McDonnell, Frances. "Historical and Ethnic Retention of Irish Republicanism in a Large Mid Western City." Ph.D. diss., Wayne State University, 1992.
- Moynihan, Kenneth J. "History as a Weapon for Social Advancement: Group History as Told by the American Irish Historical Society." Ph.D. diss., Clark University, 1973.
- O'Flaherty, Patrick D. "The History of the Sixty-Ninth Regiment of the New York State Militia, 1852-1861." Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1963.
- Person, Gustav. "The Role of the New York State Militia in the Civil War." MA Thesis, Queens College, 1992.
- Pieper, Egrett. "The Fenian Movement." Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1931.
- Quigley, Kevin J. "American Financing of Fenianism in Ireland, 1858-1867." MA Thesis, Maynooth, 1983.
- Semple, A.J. "Fenian Infiltration into the British Army." MA Thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1968.
- Takagami, Shin-ichi. "The Dublin Fenians, 1858-1879." Ph.D. diss., Trinity College, Dublin, 1990.
- Truslow, Marion. "Peasants into Patriots: The New York Irish Brigade Recruits and their Families in the Civil War Era, 1850-1890." Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1994.