

**FAITH, FATHERLAND AND THE
POLITICS OF EXILE: THE IRISH PRESS
IN MID-VICTORIAN ENGLAND**

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To my children Aine, Roisin and Eilise, and to my partner Angela, who knew only
the hardships of the last three years of study and none of the joys, which were
mine alone

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Abstract

The subject of this study is the attempt to establish a press amid the Irish immigrants in mid-Victorian England. There had long been a notable Irish contribution to English journalism, and the first Irish papers to be printed in England had been founded soon after the Act of Union.

The press of the 1860s was to be different, however. Earlier papers had been aimed at a small, political elite but the massive immigration following the Famine meant that there was now, potentially, a large reading public.

It was a public which was defined to a great extent by two ideas, nationality and religion—in the parlance of the time, faith and fatherland. These two elements crucially shaped the responses of both the migrants and of the wider English society to each other. Where Irish life in England was organised, it was Catholic and the secular, nationalist journalists of this study, wrote for a community and within a social organisation which was confessional.

They were also operating at this time, against a political background of increasing turbulence—which led as the decade progressed, to rebellion and repression and which saw both the last public execution in Britain and the deaths of civilians on the streets of London.

The central question for the press of the migrants was how to produce and sustain newspapers in a hostile political environment, which were at the same time secular but operated within a system of distribution particularly sensitive to clerical control.

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Introduction

Ever since the pioneering work of JA Jackson in 1963,¹ the Irish in Britain have been slowly emerging from the obscurity to which they had been consigned by history. A picture of continuously improving clarity and depth is being created, piece by piece, by a disparate community of scholars from the fields of history, geography, sociology, economics and literature, which is gradually exposing both the old myths and caricature which for far too long have been the received wisdom on Britain's oldest and largest migrant group. From being a mass which was distinguished only for its poverty, Irish migrant society is now being perceived as dynamic and variegated—overwhelmingly poor, yes—but not uniformly so. Transient too, but which put down long-lasting roots. In its majority, Catholic, but with sizeable numbers of Protestants.² Hewers of wood and drawers of water, but also doctors, lawyers, engineers, politicians and writers.

There are gaps in the canvas and much of the detail is missing, and it is to fill one of these blank spaces that the present work aspires. The Irish in Britain appeared in Victorian writing disproportionately as a problem, both to observers like Engels who, had, (or developed) some sympathy for them, and to the many others who did not. Subsequently, they disappeared—though they have comprised four fifths of the Catholic congregation, they have been largely written out of the history of English Catholicism, their place taken by the high profile converts from Anglicanism, who with their cradle Catholic countrymen continued to hold the leading positions in the church.³

What has crucially been missing, is what the migrants have written about themselves. Considering their numbers, they have left scant records behind them, but it is also true that what they have written has been overlooked. Liam

¹ Jackson JA (1963) *The Irish in Britain*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

² In the USA, because the first Irish migrants were Protestants, their descendants outnumber Catholics.

³ Gilley, S (1999) 'Roman Catholicism and the Irish in England' in *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Special Issue *Immigrants and Minorities* vol 18 nos. 2&3, July/November 1999. p148-9

Harte, a researcher who is compiling an anthology of Irish migrant autobiography, commented recently that there has been an assumption that there is nothing to be found in the record before the 1960s, when the facts, as he has established, are otherwise.⁴

The Irish press in Britain has been similarly marginalised and the partial record which remains of it has been largely overlooked. Newspapers have generally more often been a tool of the historian rather than the object of study, and this is particularly so in the case of the Irish press, at home and in the diaspora. ML Legg recently published a very welcome addition to a small field with her study of the Victorian Irish provincial press⁵ but even in the USA, where more has been written on Irish migrants than anywhere else, those who have looked⁶ have very similar complaints to make about the failure to survive of primary, and the non-existence of secondary sources on the Irish press in America. Authors of major works on US journalism such as Frank Luther Mott have ignored the Irish-American press. One of the most famous of all, Robert E Park, is another example—he only included the non-English language press in his (1922) *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, thus excluding the Irish, who were none the less 'outsiders' or 'immigrants' for being anglophone. This is an attempt at redressing the balance and at re-opening a closed chapter.

A newspaper is the perfect vehicle through which to explore the politics of a given time and place. Both conduit and actor, a newspaper is at the centre of political life. Irish public life in the 1860s was dominated by the IRB and the Fenian movement. The distinction is necessary—the Irish Revolutionary or Republican Brotherhood was an underground, armed conspiracy, whereas what might be characterised as the Fenian movement was (as well, as being the US arm of the organisation), a growing politics of separatism and a refusal on the part of those who had hitherto been powerless in both Irish and English society, to assert their

⁴ Harte, L 'Lives of Irish emigrants the history books forgot' *Irish Times* Tuesday, October 24, 2000

⁵ ML Legg (1999) *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press 1850-1892*. Dublin: Four Courts Press

⁶ Clark, D (1991) *Erin's Heirs: Irish Bonds of Community* University Press of Kentucky, p101

defiance of the status quo and their independence of present power structures, both of the church and of the state. It was possible to be a Fenian in this broad sense and not belong to the conspiracy-though it was difficult for many, such as Martin A O'Brennan, the editor of the *Irish News*, to persuade church and state that membership of the former category did not of necessity imply the same of the latter.

A study of the newspapers of the Irish migrants gives us a window onto the complex of relationships which shaped their lives-with each other, their English fellow Catholics, the Catholic church and the state. Where Irish life in England was organised, it was Catholic and both journalists and readers lived within a structure that predated them and was in many instances resistant to their influence. The Irish brought their religion with them to an England that though it was overwhelmingly and militantly in some cases, Protestant, was, nevertheless, home to a Catholic tradition as proud as the Irish one. It was within this pre-existing and often hostile structure that Irish journalists had to find their way.

In the period of this study, the decade of the 1860s, for their own distinctive reasons, both secular nationalists and the Roman Catholic church desperately wished to communicate with a reading public, which owed its existence in large measure to the massive immigration of the years of the Famine. It is the interplay between the secular, separatist politics of the Fenians and both the English Catholic church and state that has been the object of this study.

It is broken into six sections—an introductory exposition of the world the Irish migrants found themselves in, followed by a detailed discussion of the role of three London papers: The *Universal News*; the short-lived *Irish Liberator*; and the even shorter-lived *Irish News*. Then follows a discussion on methodology and finally a concluding chapter which seeks to situate the work within current debates in communications and cultural theory. Parts two, three and four, on the individual papers are not case studies only, but exemplify in their widely divergent careers different responses to what was the central question for the Irish press in England, namely how to produce and sustain newspapers in a hostile political environment, which were at the same time under secular control but operated within a system of

distribution particularly sensitive to clerical influence. The *Universal News*, which had the longest life span, adopted strategies dependant on the exigencies of the time and on the personalities of those involved, of co-operation, compromise and then, when all else failed, opposition. The Irish Liberator, the journal of the London Fenians burned brightly and expired under pressures, both external and internal, commensurate with its status as revolutionary organ. The Irish News, barely caught spark before it disappeared under an avalanche of clerical condemnation occasioned by the editor's prior career in Ireland.

What has emerged, somewhat surprisingly, in view of what appeared at first to be an unpromising body of evidence, is a picture, not so much of the newspapers as institutions, but on a more intimate level, of the people involved in their production and consumption. It is incomplete, of course, but we do get an impression of the journalists, editors and proprietors struggling to come to terms with their situation-trying to satisfy the conflicting demands of conscience, both religious and political-in an uneven battle against forces that were far stronger than they were, and who could not be defeated outright but might at best be subverted or out-manoeuvred. There are also glimpses of the papers' supporters, shareholders and readers. They were overwhelmingly from the artisan and labouring classes and through their societies, reading rooms, libraries and public discussions were staking their claim to a place in the public life both of their homeland and of their adopted country.

Central to these activities were their newspapers. To establish the position of these newspapers in relation to both church and state is therefore essential in understanding the wider position of the Irish in England. I will contend that whereas in Ireland, 'advanced' nationalist papers were seized by the authorities, and writers and editors prosecuted, in England, the Roman Catholic church took upon itself the role of censor in public communication.

Part One. An Uneasy Union—The English Catholic Church at Mid-Century: Recusants, Converts and the Irish migrants

1.0 An Immigrant Press

The task ahead is to describe the history of the press which served the Irish migrants in the England of the 1860s. This raises a number of questions. How can one describe a press? A particular press addresses itself to an identifiable group. This may be an interest group, train-spotters for example. Or, as here, a group identified by its ethnicity and/or its religious affiliation. And political aspirations. In the parlance of the times, this press was addressed to those of the Irish 'race' in England. That would have meant those people and their descendants who came from and identified themselves in some way with Ireland. Of course, very many of those from the island of Ireland did not consider themselves to be Irish at all, but British. This was not their press. In the broadest sense it was both Irish and Catholic

At its most basic level, a press is made up of individual newspapers. The task is then something like putting together the pieces of a jigsaw, finding the constituent parts and assembling them. However, in order to understand a newspaper, it is necessary to understand something of its context, of the people who owned it, wrote for it, read it. If we pursue the conceit a little further, what does this do to our jigsaw? What are the individual pieces now? Papers? Writers? What of the content? A jigsaw, is two dimensional, fixed, frozen in time. A paper, moves forward through space and time, and changes, adapts to differing circumstances and influences. Gravitational pull is exerted on it by events, economic conditions and social actors. It, in turn can exert influence on its readers, is itself a social actor, can influence events. All is fluid—proprietors, editors and journalists change and with them so can a paper's policy—journalists work for more than one paper at the same time, readers read more than one paper, and no journal ever reaches all of its potential audience but is engaged in a constant struggle for circulation. The picture then is one of movement, of adaptation to changing circumstances, success and failure, as new ventures appear on the scene only to disappear as fast as they came. What then, of the Irish press in England?

What has to be said first is the obvious, that it was an immigrant press. The next that it was a political press, with political objectives and viewpoints. This leads us to question the nature of the community, if such there was, that it sought to serve. Why did the Irish come to England? How did they live? Where did they settle? What sort of reception awaited them? What were the points of identification between the migrants and the host society, and what separated them? How important were they? Did the migrants assimilate easily or did they remain apart? What, in terms of social organisation, politics, religion did they bring with them and how did this affect their interaction with their new surroundings? In order then, to understand the Irish press in England, we need to know the intellectual atmosphere in which it existed and the cultural, social, economic and political constraints within which it operated. This essay will examine in detail three papers, the *Universal News* (1860), the *Irish Liberator* (1863) and the *Irish News* (1867). All three were published in London. It was not a deliberate choice to concentrate on the capital, even though it had always been, (and still is) the major centre in Britain for Irish journalism, but because in the period in question those papers published in London better exemplify the attempt at producing secular, rather than religious newspapers. Attempt here is used advisedly—the *Universal News* lasted for nine years until 1869, the *Irish Liberator* ten months, and the *Irish News* barely a month. Each adds different elements to the overall picture, each describes different aspects of the experience of Irish journalism in England. Before going on to the case studies in the succeeding sections, the world inhabited by these newspapers will be described.

The one organisation which has held the centre stage of Irish life, and which is only perhaps now in the early years of the twenty first century, reluctantly yielding the influence which it has maintained since the fifth, is, of course, the Roman Catholic church. The continued adherence of the vast majority of the Irish people to the church of Rome has influenced not only their perception of the world, but their sense of themselves. It has shaped the spiritual, moral, social, and political universe in which the Irish, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, have lived and has, crucially, affected relations between Ireland and England. Through all the vicissitudes of Irish history—of invasion, dispossession and colonisation—of the loss of independence, land, and for the most part, language, the Irish and the Roman Catholic church clung tenaciously together: and in the nineteenth century, when they fled in their millions the poverty and oppression which seemed inescapable at home, the Irish brought their religion with them, so not only did they transform English Catholicism, in congregation at least, into an Irish church, they also left their own, indelible mark on the Catholic churches of the English-speaking world.

The Irish brought not only their religion with them to Britain, but their politics. In Ireland, the unity between cleric and congregation, borne of past centuries of shared persecution had been strengthened in the first half of the century by the Catholic nationalism of Daniel O'Connell, as the priests mobilised the people at his behest in the struggles for Catholic Emancipation and then Repeal of the Act of Union. Things were to change, however, after the Famine, and the political disappointments of the 1850s. With the emergence of the secular and in part anti-clerical Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, this long-lived unity of purpose was questioned. Irish nationalists and republicans began to assert their independence in political affairs from the clergy. At the same time, the Catholic hierarchies of both Britain and Ireland were strongly ultramontane in sympathy and policy and this tendency towards centralisation and control was at direct odds with this emergent nationalism. In the case of Britain, Repeal never elicited the same levels of support from English Catholics as had the question of Emancipation. In the USA, and in the rest of the British Empire, Irish emigrants were able to shape, to varying extents, the Catholic churches they found themselves part of, but in Britain this was not possible. English recusants, who had adhered to the Ancient Faith at such cost, for so long, had no intention of giving it up to poverty-stricken foreigners from Ireland. In this, if in nothing else, they were joined by their convert compatriots.

The idea of the Catholic church as implacable monolith, in all places and at all times, is one of the most persistent myths surrounding it, propagated, it has to be admitted in part by itself, but an examination of the church in England in the nineteenth century shows an organisation undergoing rapid and fundamental change, at once expanding, optimistic, emerging from the shadows of repression, but at the same time threatened by the deep-seated distrust of the English people. It was also a church of three parts, often at odds with each other—an old English recusant aristocracy; a burgeoning group of mostly convert reformers, many of whom similarly blue-blooded; and an enormous Irish underclass, distributed throughout England's industrial cities and towns. This was the universe in which the Irish press in England lived and it was under these conditions, internal and external which it laboured.

The Irish (and English) politics of the 1860s were the politics of the Fenians and their opponents, chief amongst whom was the Catholic church. Fenianism was a quintessentially diasporic phenomenon, and established the transatlantic triangle between Ireland, Britain and the USA as the template for subsequent nationalist political endeavour. This was true too, of the press. The Irish press became in a

very real sense transatlantic—not only in terms of personnel—many of whose careers spanned both continents, (often with a sojourn in a third, in Australia), but in terms of its themes and preoccupations. Christopher Clinton Hoey, the last editor of the *Universal News* provides a good example. At the end of 1867, he published a sketch he had written of Anne Devlin. This was a typical piece for a nationalist paper, she was one of the unsung heroines of the United Irishmen's rising of 1798. What was also typical, and is interesting for those studying the politics and culture of the period, was the history of the sketch itself, which Hoey, very un-typically for the time included,

This little sketch originally appeared in *The Irishman* upwards of six years ago. It has since several times crossed the Atlantic and went the round of several American and Australian journals. Having been so long a fugitive, the writer may be pardoned for acknowledging its authorship and appending his name. ¹

Most recently it had appeared in the *Irish People* of New York. The Irish in Ireland and Britain could read of the exploits of the Irish regiments in the armies of the Union, during the American Civil War, or of the Fenians organising unhindered in the great republic of the West. Irish-Americans read of the sufferings and struggles of their countrymen at home. Each fed into the other.

Religious, national and ethnic identity came together in the international consciousness of the Irish Catholic emigrant, who was aware through his newspapers, parochial organisations and political parties what was happening in Ireland and throughout the Irish Diaspora, and was therefore part of an international community pervaded by the nationalist movements and the Roman Catholic Church. ²

The Fenian press in America, though condemned by the bishops, as it was in Britain and Ireland, was able to flourish as long as there were readers to be had. In Ireland, when clerical condemnation did not suffice, the colonial administration closed papers and imprisoned journalists. In Britain, the active censure of the clergy was enough. It is to the church in England and its responses to the Irish immigrants that we must now turn.

¹ Universal News 21/12/1867 p2

² Gilley, S (1999) 'Roman Catholicism and the Irish in England' in D MacRaild, (ed) *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. special issue *Immigrants and Minorities* vol 18 nos. 2&3, July/November 1999. p153

1.1 The Restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy

In November 1850, in the midst of the controversy which came to be known as the 'Papal Aggression', the newly-appointed Cardinal Archbishop Nicholas Wiseman, issued his famous '*Appeal to the reason and good feeling of the English people*', a small extract from which follows:-

Close under the Abbey of Westminster, there lie concealed labyrinths of lanes and courts, and alleys and slums, nests of ignorance, vice, depravity and crime, as well as of squalor, wretchedness and disease; whose atmosphere is typhus, whose ventilation is cholera; in which swarms a huge and almost countless population, in great measure, nominally at least, Catholic; haunts of filth, which no sewage committee can reach - dark corners, - which no lighting board can brighten.... This is the part of Westminster which alone I covet.³

The appeal was intended to refute the allegation that by assuming the title of Archbishop of Westminster, he had designs on the English kingdom. It is here, that our story begins, for in this famous open letter, in the events which led up to it, and in the controversy surrounding it, are contained as well as a vivid sketch of the most numerous portion of the Catholic congregation, (i.e. the above, unnamed Irish poor), an indication of, not only the thoughts of the newly restored English Catholic hierarchy, but the fraught relationships, within English Catholicism and with the wider English society, all of which were to have a bearing on the attitudes of the religious authorities to the Irish immigrants, their politics and their press.

The 29th of September 1850, when Pope Pius IXth restored the English Catholic hierarchy, was the defining moment of the modern Catholic church in England. It had now, in a phrase popular at the time, emerged from the catacombs, into the broad light of day. Most of the remaining anti-Catholic legislation had been removed with the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, and the Catholic church in England had been experiencing a period of rapid expansion. To the pockets of recusants in the North West, and those gathered around the great houses scattered throughout the kingdom, came the tens of thousands of Irish migrants. Prestige was added to numbers through a series of influential converts from the Established church. The omens all appeared propitious. Some weeks previously, Wiseman had

³ Norman, E (1985b) *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p155

been appointed Cardinal, which was well-received even in Protestant England, where any suspicion of the doings of the pontiff in Rome was tempered by a feeling that it was an example of an Englishman, as was only just after all, being accorded "his fair proportion of the honours"⁴.

When it became known that the Catholic hierarchy had also been restored and Wiseman created Archbishop of Westminster, the mood changed rapidly. His own exuberance at the momentous event is generally credited with making matters worse. He issued another address to English Catholics, 'out of the Flaminian gate'⁵, proclaiming the restoration of due order in Catholic affairs in England, in terms which sections of the English opinion, which did not welcome the attentions of Rome, most notably the Established church, the established press, in the shape of the *Times*, and including Prime Minister Russell, believed, or affected to believe, amounted to an unwarranted act of aggression on the English people and constitution. The Bishop of London referred to Catholic priests as "the emissaries of darkness", elsewhere it was said "Rome clings to her abominations", that the Pope wanted to return England to "foreign bondage", etc.⁶, priests were pelted in the streets and churches attacked⁷. Catholics feared a repeat of the Gordon Riots of the previous century.

The thirty two page *Appeal*, written as soon as Wiseman landed in England was intended to mollify English Protestant opinion. In that it was judged to have succeeded. The furore, which to some had threatened a return to the dark days of the Penal Laws, gradually died down as passions cooled and reason did indeed prevail. *Punch* continued to mock Wiseman as *Wiseboy* and Newman as *Newboy* for a time, but that too, passed. The only long-term result was the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill of the following year, designed to prevent Catholic bishops from using their titles, which was never enforced even when it was openly flouted⁸, and was eventually quietly removed from the statute book some twenty years later. The 'Papal Aggression' controversy was more than a storm in a teacup, however, and it pointed out to England's Catholics in no uncertain terms, that though they might now be tolerated, that toleration was only skin deep and beneath the surface, No Popery! flourished as it had for centuries.

⁴ Corish, PJ (1950) 'The Restoration of the English Catholic Hierarchy' in *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Vol LXXIV n 4, October 1950 pp289-307, p299

⁵ In the city of Rome. It was the custom for such addresses to be made on the return journey from Rome and not in the city itself, Wiseman in his exuberance, could not wait.

⁶ Corish, Op.cit p302

⁷ Albion, Rev G (1950) 'Papal Aggression on England' in *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Vol LXXIV n4 October 1950 pp 350-357, p355

⁸ Archbishop John McHale of Tuam, deliberately signed himself 'John of Tuam' in all public pronouncements.

1.2 Recusants and Converts

This was a lesson that the old English Catholics did not need, they were acutely aware that their position in English society was ambiguous and naturally shunned attention. They had urged the utmost caution in the matter of the restoration of the hierarchy, and it is indicative of how out of touch Wiseman was with their sentiments that he acted as he did.

Apart from some places in the North of England where there were concentrations of recusants, as they were known, Catholicism had survived the dark days of repression clustered around the homes of the aristocracy. It was *their* Church. The clergy were *their* clergy. In England, Catholicism had become a private religion and out of touch with new practices emanating from Rome and the continent. The new spirit of ultramontaniam, a centralising of power on Rome and the pontiff and the introduction of uniformity in worship, was not to their taste. Nor did they like the new trappings of worship—the new emphasis on ritual, display, gorgeous vestments. Not for them the “highly decorated churches, with coloured marble, paintings, stained glass and a Roman liturgy rich in image and symbol, exploring the senses through candles and flowers, coloured embroidered vestments and the entrancing odours of beeswax and incense.”⁹

Theirs was a church of necessity stripped bare of adornment, of furtive services in secret rooms, held with one ear open for the tramp of the pursuivant's footsteps, which would bring doom to all. Elaborate ritual and dress had been sacrificed to the exigencies of an outlawed religion. In English practice “there was never a hint of emotion or display: worship was austere, reserved, even cold.”¹⁰ Discretion was the watchword of the recusant church—Newman told of an occasion when, still an Anglican, he upbraided a parishioner for not attending services only to find he was in fact the local Catholic priest¹¹. Old English priests did not even wear dark suits in public, whereas the convert priests “gloried in sporting Roman collars and in parading in cassocks and birettas”, leading them to be abused in the streets, a fate which some of their cradle Catholic colleagues thought they deserved¹². In the first bloom of enthusiasm for their new faith, these neophytes, as they were disparagingly called, were perhaps more than willing to suffer the slings

⁹ Gilley, S 'Roman Catholicism and the Irish in England' in D MacRaid, (ed) Op.cit.. p152

¹⁰ Gray, R (1985) Cardinal Manning: A Biography. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. P144

¹¹ Galloway, P(1999) A Passionate Humility: Frederick Oakeley and the Oxford Movement. Leominster: Gracewing p11

¹² Gray p146

and arrows of outraged Protestantism, but it is still possible to feel the hurt in Newman's vivid account of everyday reactions to Catholic clergymen:

Our very persons, not merely our professions, are held in abhorrence; and we are spat at by the malevolent; we are passed by with a shudder of contemptuous pity by the better-natured; we are supposed to be defiled by some secret rites of blood by the ignorant... We are regarded as something unclean, which no one would touch, if they could help it: and our advances are met as would be those of some hideous baboon, or sloth, or rattlesnake, or toad, which strove to make itself agreeable.¹³

Any outward sign of Catholicism could provoke hostility, and this applied to the laity as well: the convert architect Pugin once made the mistake of crossing himself while on a train. "You are a Catholic Sir," the lady opposite began screaming, "I must get into another carriage"¹⁴. Convents and the confessional were objects of particular opprobrium, meriting a sub genre of Victorian pornography. It was an old theme and widespread, crossing the Atlantic—the Ursuline convent in Charlestown Massachusetts was burned to the ground in August 1834 after the inhabitants of the town had been regaled for months with lurid tales of what was supposed to have been occurring inside its walls¹⁵. "English Protestantism, Scots Calvinism and American Puritanism shared a loathing of all things Roman Catholic." In the forties, there were pitched battles in the streets of Philadelphia, which was dubbed the 'city of brotherly hate'¹⁶, and the 1850s saw the rise of the virulently anti-Catholic and anti-Irish Know-Nothing party. Back in the Old world, the sacrament of confession, more specifically the idea of a male priest listening to the sins of a female penitent particularly exercised some. One clergyman got himself into a particularly un-Christian lather, he wrote,

Transportation would not satisfy me, for that would merely transfer the evil from one part of the world to another. Capital punishment alone would satisfy me. Death alone would prevent the evil. That is my sober conviction.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid p100

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ O'Connor, TH (1995) *The Boston Irish: A Political History*. Boston: Back Bay Books pp 44-7

¹⁶ MacRaild, DM, (1999a) 'Crossing Migrant Frontiers: Comparative Reflections on Irish Migrants in Britain and the United States During the Nineteenth Century' in D MacRaild, (ed) *Op.cit* pp 51-2.

¹⁷ Gray *Op.cit.* p100

In the popular imagination, Catholics were phantoms. Frederick Oakeley, later to convert to Catholicism, wrote that in his youth he thought there were only eighty to one hundred Catholics in the whole kingdom, living in haunted houses, surrounded by tall trees and high walls, whose “vast dreary apartments” contained state bedrooms, “in which there were enormous beds with ebony bedsteads, surmounted by plumes” which only needed the addition of horses to transform them into “funeral cars”. In these ghastly surroundings the inhabitants lived in a preternatural silence “broken only by the flapping of bats and the screeching of owls.”¹⁸

England was no longer perhaps the “ruthless and unloving land,” it had become for Elizabethan Catholics, where their one-time countrymen, “lay in ambush for them, betrayed them, attacked them with violence and without warning... plundered them at night, confiscated their possessions, drove away their flocks, stole their cattle,”¹⁹ but the Old Catholic families lived with the bitter memories of this past persecution and it shaped their outlook. Now, they felt pushed aside, especially when they saw converts such as Manning gaining rapid advancement. Marginalised by society for centuries, they saw themselves being sidelined once again by newcomers whose Catholicism they hardly recognised. Intensely ‘English’ in outlook, “nine times English,” to use Manning’s phrase²⁰, as only those used to accusations of disloyalty could be, they found the new church quite as ‘foreign’ from within, as did many of their countrymen from without.

At the beginning of the century, Catholics in England had been “a tiny, proud, persecuted body”. Even after Catholic Emancipation in 1829, which removed most of the remaining anti-Catholic legislation from the statute books, the old Catholics, having worshipped and often lived carefully out of the public gaze, were unwilling to put their heads above the parapet. In 1838, when a leading convert to Catholicism, (it was *always* the converts) had enjoined Catholics to begin praying for the re-conversion of England, the leader of the clergy “ignored the campaign except to prohibit public prayer for it”. The restoration of the hierarchy was as unwelcome to some Catholics as it was to Protestants, the Duke of Norfolk, for one, promptly became an Anglican.²¹

¹⁸ Galloway, P Op.cit., p14

¹⁹ Fraser, A (1997) *The Gunpowder Plot: Terror and Faith in 1605*. London: Mandarin Paperbacks p 19. Quote from a catholic priest of the period, Fr Weston.

²⁰ Norman 1985b p161

²¹ Inglis KS (1963) *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul p17-18

The recusant dislike for the converts was mutual, who in their turn very often had little regard for the old English families, "all too frequently the Oxford converts failed to disguise their sense of intellectual superiority to those who had merely imbibed their faith with their mother's milk"²². When some critical remarks were made about the state of Catholic education in England in the *Rambler*, the newspaper of the converts in 1848, it was taken as an example of this superior attitude. Ullathorne, in Birmingham, whose family went back to Thomas Moore wrote furiously of those who, he said, had attacked "the children of the Martyrs, who kept the hallowed fire in secret at all perils."²³ The recusants in their turn failed to appreciate the very real sacrifices many of the converts had made in leaving the Established church. This led to constant dissent and bickering. Wiseman, often at the centre of disputes, found the internal struggles hard to bear - 'this pelting from all sides', as he put it.²⁴ His entire episcopacy of fourteen years was spent in trying to unify his mutually antagonistic flock.²⁵ For this, possibly because of it, he was not appreciated as much as he might have hoped - to Lesourd, a French commentator on English Catholicism,

*La personne de Wiseman n'était pas unanimement appréciée parmi les catholiques anglais: on lui reprochait d'être trop "Romain", trop favorable aux convertis, trop soumis aux vœux du gouvernement anglais.*²⁶

The third and most numerous section of this disunited congregation, were the Irish. Manning's sympathy for the Irish was well known, though this did not, as we shall see prevent him from becoming embroiled in disputes with Irish nationalists. Wiseman's position is not so clear. This is ironic because he came from an Irish family. Manning himself said of Wiseman in a letter to Gladstone, that although of an Irish family, he had no Irish sympathies. "He (Wiseman) came into the ring of the 'Old Catholic' families and never went beyond them."²⁷ Wiseman himself was, or felt himself to be English. Born in Spain, though of Irish parentage, when the family returned to Ireland after his father's death, he could speak no English. He only lived a few years in Ireland before he went to school in England and thence to Rome, to the English College. According to Norman, he was 'robustly English in sympathy.

²² Gray Op.cit p146

²³ Tablet 9/12/1848 quoted in Galloway, p227

²⁴ Norman 1985b p120

²⁵ Mc Clelland, VA (1962), Cardinal Manning-His Public Life and Influence 1865-92. p8

²⁶ Norman 1985b p120

²⁷ Ibid. p161

His love for English qualities forms a constant theme in his writings and sermons.' This in spite of the fact that he had little more personal experience of living in England than he had of Ireland - he did not live permanently in England until 1840, when he was in his late thirties. The English College in Rome was to him 'home', 'English ground, a part of the fatherland.' During a sermon in Salford in 1850, he said, 'There is no doubt, my brethren, that never in the history of nations, was any people advanced beyond ours, at the present time, in all that constitutes social and intellectual greatness.' ²⁸

His love of things English did not, of course, make him anti - Irish, though he was accused of neglect in that regard by Fr Gentili, one of the most famous missionary priests in England at the time,²⁹ and according to Newsome "Wiseman's policy had been largely to ignore Ireland and the Irish"³⁰ - perhaps it should be noted that the sentiments such as those expressed in the Salford sermon just as those from his *Appeal* above, would not have endeared him to the Irish portion of the congregation who, at a time when the working classes of England had largely abandoned organised religion, transformed forever the make up of the English Catholic church. It became, "a two class society: a prosperous upper-class and a massive urban labouring class"³¹, made up almost entirely of a dispossessed Irish peasantry, who flocked into the cities and towns of Britain, quite reversing the demographic trends experienced by the rest of organised religion.

²⁸Ibid. pp 112-14

²⁹Ibid. p219

³⁰Newsome, D (1993) *The Convert Cardinals: Newman and Manning*. London: John Murray p31

³¹ Ibid. p192

1.3 Sunday suits, religion and the working class

The census of 1851 asked questions about religion for the first time. It showed that there was a serious lack of interest in religion among the English working classes. London was top of the list of godlessness, and included were all the major industrial and manufacturing towns. Writers have often exaggerated the hold religion had on the workers, others have assumed that the workers had to follow the middle classes into the unbelief bred by advances in science, rather than lead the way themselves. Others have been influenced by their belief that the working classes, being ignorant, were prone to superstition, which meant they would not have stopped being religious until education was widespread, when the facts indicate the opposite³². It was indeed an age when the most dearly-held Christian beliefs were being questioned. However much the massacre of the Canaanites may have been a cause for doubt in the beneficence of God to some³³, the English working classes had their own reasons for what was to the churchmen a far more serious problem than doubt—indifference.

Not wracked with doubt as their betters were to be increasingly as the century progressed, they had already made up their minds, and simply ignored religion. This was for political rather than doctrinal reasons. The Church of England had many advantages, chief among them was state support. The move to the cities from the countryside which was part of the industrial revolution, meant that there were, potentially, not enough churches for this new urban population. The government was generous in grants³⁴ to rectify this danger, so the established church did not need to engage in the frenetic fundraising required of, say, their Catholic counterparts. Establishment was in other ways a disadvantage, though, as the working classes lumped church and state together and would have nothing to do with either. This concerned the Tractarian Pusey so much that he determined to seek out the inhabitants of the “alleys in London”, where the Gospel was “as unknown as in Thibet.” His efforts were hindered though, by the fact that in the alleys and courts “lived people against whom the power of the state-the Church’s partner-was often exercised most severely”. In the unrest which followed the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, clergymen, as magistrates were at the forefront of attempts to suppress radicalism, which did not pass unnoticed. “When the bish-

³² Inglis Op.cit. p2

³³ Joshua was ordered by God to slay all the Canaanites, men, women and children. Tom Mozley: *Reminiscences chiefly of Oriel College and the Oxford movement 1882* vol. II pp221-2, quoted by David Newsome (1997) *The Victorian World Picture*. London: John Murray. Pp198-9 One of many such issues.

³⁴ Inglis Op.cit.p4

ops—as members of the House of Lords—opposed the Reform Bill in 1831, it was they, not the Bishop of Rome, who blazed in effigy on many a bonfire on November 5th.”³⁵

Outside of the established church, the picture was similarly gloomy. Methodism, apart from its success in mining communities, was largely absent from the towns and cities and was the preserve of the middle classes.³⁶ In 1848, Algernon Wells, secretary of the Congregationalist Union wrote of the working classes, they “were not converted by Romish zeal, or any longer gathered by Wesleyan energy, or drawn by the more intellectual discourses of Independent and Baptist preachers”. His own church, “casts itself too much into an aristocratic mould to present a pleasing aspect to the working classes”.³⁷

The notion that church was not intended for them was not only engendered by political differences, simple shame at not having respectable clothing kept many people away. Conversely, being able to parade in the same encouraged the middle classes to go. It was a curious paradox, noted by the Church of England bishop in charge of the East End of London ‘how the very self-same motives which in the East keep people *from* Church, in the West bring them *to* Church”, the former, thought of religion “as belonging to a wholly different class from themselves”.³⁸ That the latter were to be seen at Sunday services, did not impress some clerics, one wrote,

It is one of their traditional proprieties to be associated with some place of worship. But there are not wanting indications that many come into all our churches who would not be found there, were they less influenced by the respectabilities ; that many are there rather from habit and regard for appearances, than for real respect for Christ’s ordinance of social worship and real desire for Christian edification.³⁹

The Roman Catholic church was not immune to this obsession with outward respectability. An Italian missionary found many Catholics were “ashamed to appear in Church with their ragged apparel”. One priest held mass very early on Sunday morning for the poor because they did not want to be seen outside later in the day. The Irish, it was said in 1856, “cannot do in England what they were used

³⁵ Ibid. p8

³⁶ Ibid pp 10-11

³⁷ Ibid p15

³⁸ Ibid p323 From Walsham How, in Church Congress Report (1880) p94-5

³⁹ Ibid p322 From AP Stanley et al, Sermons Preached to Working People (1867) p90

to do at home. The women cannot go to Mass with caps in place of bonnets, with broken shoes, or perhaps with no shoes at all. The odious goddess of "respectability" reigns supreme in this civilised land, over Catholic and Protestant, over rich and poor alike".⁴⁰

If the Catholic church, like the others, could only find recruits in England among the 'respectable' classes, the scale of Irish immigration was such that whether it wanted to or no, it was destined in future to be 'less respectable' than it had been, as *The Guardian* noted in 1850,⁴¹ "The strength of Romanism in this country, even as a political power, is no longer confined to noblemen's castles. It is something rougher, more aggressive, less English in its attachments and sympathies". So the Roman church of England, desperate to be accepted as English, was again seen by many as inherently foreign, and any gains in respectability which might have accrued to it as a result of the conversions was offset in the eyes of respectable society by the inherently disreputable and even dangerous nature of the Irish.

⁴⁰ Ibid p130

⁴¹ Guardian 11/12/1850

1.4 The Irish migrants

ERIN'S SONS IN ENGLAND

Air "Oh, the Shamrock."

On every shore, the wide world o'er,
 The newest and the oldest,
 The sons are found of Erin's ground,
 Among the best and boldest.
 But soul and will are turning still
 To Ireland o'er the ocean,
 And well I know where aye they glow
 With most intense devotion.

CHORUS:- Over here in England,
 Up and down through England,
 Fond and true and fearless too,
 Are Erin's sons in England.

Where toil is hard in mill and yard,
 Their hands are strong to bear it;
 Where genius bright would wing its flight,
 The mind is theirs to dare it;
 But high or low, in joy or woe,
 With any fate before them,
 The sweetest bliss they know, is this-
 To aid the land that bore them.

By many a sign from Thames to Tyne,
 From Holyhead to Dover,
 The eye may trace the deathless race
 Our gallant land sent over.
 Midst beech and oak, midst flame and smoke.
 Up springs the cross-tipped steeple
 That, far and wide, tells where abide
 The faithful Irish people.

And this I say-on any day
 That help of theirs is needed,
 Dear Ireland's call will never fall
 On their true hearts unheeded
 They'll plainly show to friend and foe.
 If e'er the need arises
 Her arm is long, and stout and strong,
 To work some strange surprises!

Fig 1. TD Sullivan's view of the Irish in Britain—Faith, Fatherland and hard work.⁴²

⁴² Taken from Denvir, J (1910) *The Life Story of an Old Rebel* (1972 reprint) Shannon: Irish University Press

Of all the migrations of nineteenth century Europe, from poor regions to rich, from countryside to city, that involving the Irish was the greatest. Between four and five million people left Ireland in the years 1852-1910.⁴³ In the decade of the Famine, from 1845 onwards, over two million people left the island. It has been estimated that by 1890, forty percent of those born in Ireland were living outside of it,⁴⁴ and between 1841 and 1901, when most European countries were experiencing population growth, that of Ireland almost halved. The exodus from Ireland of the nineteenth century was the first great migration of the industrial era, and the first into Britain since the Normans. Between 1841 and 1861, the Irish population of England more than doubled, from 289,404, to 601,634; 107,000 living in London alone.⁴⁵ These figures only include the Irish-born, not their children, and are certainly an underestimate.

Not all of the Irish population had come during the famine years, of course, though the scale of immigration in that period has sometimes tended to overshadow the fact that there was already a sizeable Irish population in England, and there had been an Irish presence for centuries. In the census of 1841, the first where they were included as a separate category, there were 415,725 people of Irish birth in Britain. Their presence was noted long before this—Bristol had its Irish merchants in the twelfth century.⁴⁶ Irish students studied at Oxford in the thirteenth, where, "there was from the earliest times, even a street called 'Irishman's Street'".⁴⁷ In London, the Irish were first recorded in St Giles in 1640. By 1767 there were 10,000. They were almost all poor, "principally of the lowest class of society", or else "most of them poor miserable people". In September 1808, when John O'Neil, the bard of the temperance movement, came to London seeking his errant father, he was advised that as he was looking for an Irishman, he should go to St Giles, for there, "they all hang together, like a swarm of bees."⁴⁸ The *favela*, or rookery as it was known, grew even larger until it was destroyed in 1878-9. Even then St Giles was characterised as having "the lowest conditions under which human life is

⁴³ According to the economic historian Cormac O'Grada, prior estimates of four million migrants were mistaken and the true number nearer to five, the missing million being previously uncounted migrants to Britain. Akenson, DH (1993) *The Irish Diaspora*. Ontario: PD Meany, The Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University Belfast. p186

⁴⁴ MacRaild, DM (1999b) *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain*. London: Macmillan Press, p9

⁴⁵ Official census years 1841, 1861.

⁴⁶ Jackson, JA (1963) *The Irish in Britain* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. p6

⁴⁷ Catholic Encyclopaedia 1910 online version, Section on The Irish in England and Wales The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume VIII Copyright (c) 1910 by Robert Appleton Company Online Ed. Copyright (c) 1999 by Kevin Knight <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08132b.htm>

⁴⁸ O'Neil, J *Fifty Years Experience as an Irish Shoemaker in London*. O'Neil (1777-1858) was a shoemaker, poor all his life. A self-taught poet, his memoir was published weekly in the shoemaker and leather-workers journal *St Crispin* between 8/5/1869 and 19/2/1870.

possible" as even pauper colonies have their degrees of wretchedness, so the worst sink of iniquity was the (St Giles) rookery." It was full of wretched children, haggard men with long uncombed hair, in rags, most of them smoking, many species of Irish".⁴⁹ Irish peasants had long resorted to harvesting in England and Scotland in order to pay the rent on their smallholdings in Ireland, and from these 'nomadic groups...like birds of passage' stragglers were left behind to become at least semi-permanent residents.⁵⁰ After the Act of Union, in 1801, the seat of government moved from Dublin to London and for part of the year at least, Irish MPs were in residence. Some undoubtedly, became based in England rather than in their constituencies. London and the industrial towns of the North were a magnet for labour of all sorts, from all over the then United Kingdom.

If the Irish in England for most of the twentieth century have been in many ways an invisible people,⁵¹ the opposite was certainly the case in the nineteenth. Parliamentary reports, commissions and enquiries, are full of material on the Irish immigrants. They featured prominently in Mayhew's sociological investigations of London life, as they did in Booth's. Political thinkers across the spectrum from Carlyle to Engels wrote extensively on them, and of course they were always in the newspapers, national and local. What characterises most of this vast output, from widely different sources is the degree to which it is unfavourable. It is not proposed here to rehearse at length the extent of anti-Irish prejudice in Victorian Britain, that has been explored elsewhere.⁵² It is important for this study to recognise it as one of the constraints under which the Irish and their press lived. Anti-Catholic and anti-Irish riots were a not infrequent feature of life in Britain of the period, and the press, both national, and regional is a rich mine of venom.⁵³ The Irish were favourite targets for comic papers such as *Punch*. The role of the press in the Papal Aggression controversy has been alluded to, and sections of the press were in no small measure responsible for stoking up the atmosphere of hostility and distrust which surrounded Irish Catholics in Victorian England, and provided a powerful defensive

⁴⁹ Murphy, M 1992 St Patrick's charity school an orphan asylum, Soho: a study of a London Catholic poor school during the 19th century. P1

⁵⁰ Heinrick, H (1872) A Survey of The Irish in Britain, 1990 edited by Alan O'Day. London: The Hambleton Press p35

⁵¹ For example until 1963 when J A Jackson published his Irish in Britain London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, the last work on the subject (which had the same title) had been in 1892, by John Denvir, Liverpool Irish journalist and political activist.

⁵² See, for example Curtis, L (1984) Nothing But The Same Old Story - The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism. London: Information On Ireland; Curtis, L P (1971) Apes and Angels. David & Charles.

⁵³ Lowe WJ (1975) The Irish in Lancashire 1846-71 PhD unpublished (1974) TCD pp 363-4 for local press accounts of St Patrick's Day parades in the 1840s, 50s, & 60s, in the North West of England is but one source of many.

impetus for Irish Catholic journalism. A contemporary commentator maintained that one of the greatest incitements to rebellion among the Irish was the adverse way they were portrayed in the press. Criticising the *Times*, *Spectator* and *Saturday Review* amongst others for the period of the 1840s, 50s and 60s, PH Bagenal quoted from the English press, such sentiments as "Ireland is boiling over, and the scum flows across the Atlantic"; and Ireland had "no snakes and vermin except among its peasantry and clergy," as examples of "expressions which have rankled deeper than Coercion Acts and sentences of transportation."⁵⁴

The Irish, possessed disadvantages that made them unique in British society.

Outcast from British capitalism as the poorest of the poor, from mainstream British politics as separatist nationalists and republicans, from the "Anglo-Saxon" race as "Celts", and as Catholics from the dominant forms of British Protestantism, the Irish were the outcasts of Victorian Britain on the basis of class, nationality, race and religion, with an unaccumulated body of disadvantages possessed by no other group of similar size until the East European, largely Jewish immigration of the late Victorian period.⁵⁵

Nor was this the full extent to which they were outsiders—having left Ireland, in a sense, they belonged nowhere, and had to re-find a place for themselves in the world. Those who leave, as they say, always leave something behind. Stephen Fielding, writing of a slightly later period says of the migrants,

They were neither simply Irish, Catholic or working class, but an amalgam of all three and, in combining them, they evolved their own ways of expressing this fact. Thus, the Catholic hierarchy disapproved of the Catholicism; Irish nationalists in Ireland considered them degenerate members of their nation; many putative leaders of the working class held them in contempt. Nevertheless the three component elements of the Irish Catholic working-class identity were inextricably linked and remained locked together.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Bagenal, PH (1882) *The American Irish and their Influence on Irish Politics*. London: Kegan Paul Trench & Co. pp 128-9

⁵⁵ Swift, R 'The Outcast Irish in the British City' *Irish Historical Studies* 25, 1986-7 p274

⁵⁶ Fielding, S (1993) *Class And Ethnicity: Irish Catholics In England, 1880-1939*. Buckingham: Open University Press p2



oubt not which is the preferable side in the Gorilla controversy. It is clearly that of the philosophers who maintain themselves to be the descendants of a Gorilla. This is the position which commends itself to right-minded men, because it tends to expand the sphere of their affections, inasmuch as it gives them a broader view of their species. Hitherto, however, there has been one argument against the Gorilla theory very difficult to get over, namely, that there is no known fact whatever which affords it the least foundation. This is a deficiency which we trust we are about to supply.

A gulf, certainly, does appear to yawn between the Gorilla and the Negro. The woods and wilds of Africa do not exhibit an example of any intermediate animal. But in this, as in many other cases, philosophers go searching abroad for that which they would readily find if they sought for it at home. A creature manifestly between the Gorilla and the Negro is to

Fig. 2 Punch's view of the Irish in England.

"The Missing Link" *Punch* 43 18/10/1862 p165

The trend in recent research has been towards local studies, using previously overlooked sources such as police and parochial archives, and has tried to nuance the view often given of the Irish in Britain, that they were overwhelmingly poor, despised and segregated, as Engels noted, and as Wiseman so eloquently described above. In the case of London, there were at least three kinds of migrant: a middle class, many of whom were Protestant, and who were able to assimilate easily; artisans, who came for the increased opportunities the capital offered, who could assimilate but with difficulty; and the largest group, small farmers and landless labourers, ill-equipped for urban life, lacking in education and the necessary skills, who lived precariously, on the edge of existence.⁵⁷ Somewhere in these categories were our journalists, some of them 'micks on the make' to use Roy Foster's term,⁵⁸ who having learned their trade in Ireland, left its narrow provincial vistas behind for the great metropolis. Justin McCarthy, author, journalist and nationalist MP, is probably the most famous exemplar-after arriving in Liverpool he helped set up the *Northern Daily Times*, most of whose staff was Irish, in 1853, but Liverpool was for

⁵⁷ Lees, *Op.cit.* pp 53-4

⁵⁸ Foster, R (1993) *Paddy and Mr Punch*. London: Penguin

him but 'a stepping stone on my way to London.'⁵⁹ Other writers have found, variously: that the Irish fared differently depending on location; that there was, for some at least, the chance of upward mobility; they were not, on the whole, as Catholic, in terms of practise, as had been previously thought etc.⁶⁰ In this last regard, one of the chief concerns of the clergy about Fenianism was that it encouraged irreligion.

A central feature of Irish migration to Britain was its wide dispersal. Often associated exclusively with the metropolitan cities, the Irish in fact settled almost everywhere, with the possible exception of East Anglia, to which absence, the lack of progress in the region of the Catholic church has been attributed.⁶¹ Though the Irish were to be found in the major industrial towns in great numbers, in percentage terms, and therefore in terms of the impact their presence would make, they were just as numerous in many smaller towns which are not normally associated with them. Towns with more than 4% Irish-born (the censuses did not take into account their children and subsequent generations) included Newport, Merthyr Tydfil and Swansea, Durham, Chester, Carlisle, York and Macclesfield, Winchester and Colchester: the same as for London, Leeds, Edinburgh & Birmingham. Bristol, Plymouth and Portsmouth also had sizeable Irish populations.⁶² In the 1850s and 60s, the three great areas of settlement were in order of size, the North West, London and Glasgow, later migration gravitated southwards away from Scotland. By 1871, in the case of England and Wales, although 16.1% were living in London, 40.5% were living in the next 62 largest cities and towns, which in turn meant that 43% were living outside the largest 63 towns and cities.⁶³ The Irish settled anywhere there was work, which meant they were an almost entirely urban population, but as the above figures suggest, urban did not only mean the great metropolitan centres, and the immigrants were spread very thinly. Even in places such as London, with a high Irish population, they were found in almost every district.

⁵⁹ McCarthy, J (1904) *The Story of an Irishman* p102. For a view of the Irish middle class in Liverpool, see John Belchem's essay in Swift, R & Gilley S (eds) (1999) *The Irish in Britain: The Local Dimension*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

⁶⁰ For an informative and concise discussion of the state of play in research on the diaspora Irish in general see O'Day, A (1996) 'Revising the Diaspora' pp 188-215, in DG Boyce & A O'Day (eds) *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*. London: Routledge. See also Swift R & Gilley S (eds) (1999) *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension*. Dublin: Four Courts Press; MacRaild, D (ed) *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* *Immigrants and Minorities* Vol. 18 nos. 2&3 July/November 1999 special edition. See also the *Irish Worldwide* series edited by Patrick O'Sullivan.

⁶¹ Gray, R (1985) *Cardinal Manning: A Biography*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. p147

⁶² Pooley, C (1989) 'Segregation or Integration: The Residential Experience of the Irish in Mid Victorian Britain', in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds) *The Irish in Britain 1815- 1939*. London: Pinter Publishers p3

⁶³ Akenson DH (1993) *The Irish Diaspora*. Toronto: Meany. P.199

This dispersal was to have consequences for both political action and the foundation of an Irish press in Britain. It could be argued that by spreading out as they did, they compounded any problems caused by lack of acceptance. Lynn Holland Lees, writing of the Irish in London has stated,

Although Irish migrants were not ostracised and locked in an urban ghetto, most were relegated to the side streets and back alleys of their neighbourhoods. They lived close to the English, but they remained apart. Ethnicity, operating within the constraints posed by London's economic and residential geography, shaped patterns of Irish settlement. The result was a chain of Irish buildings and enclaves located within English working-class territory. Although neighbourhoods were shared, neither geographic nor social assimilation took place. In the tiny world of the London street, the social distance between a court and a corner house was vast.⁶⁴

A ghetto is a mental as well as a physical phenomenon, and it is both a prison and a refuge, created from without and from within. In a ghetto, it is possible to live surrounded by hostility and feel it but little. Outside of the large scale areas of settlement of Little Ireland in Manchester and in Liverpool where the Irish elected TP O'Connor, to the Scotland division, the only nationalist MP on this side of the Irish Sea, the atmosphere was chilly. As they ventured out of, if not their ghettos, then their courts and 'Fenian barracks',⁶⁵ to their work, the working class Irish left behind the protection of friends and family and brought, if not the ghetto, then the stigma of something very much like it with them. They were dispersed and isolated and the only English institution which was open to them as a right, was the Catholic church, and it was to the Catholic church they turned. This gave the church a unique position in Irish migrant life—it was a source of, not only spiritual and physical succour, but a provider of education, an advocate on their behalf and a point of contact with the wider English society.

It was also an agency of social organisation and control. Particularly important in the context of the migrant press is the fact that the distribution of newspapers was a Catholic affair. Most of the potential readers of the Irish press were poor and were thus unlikely to be able to afford the extra money required to have a stamped copy sent directly to their homes through the mail. This meant that the majority of papers were sold through wholesalers or bookshops who dealt in

⁶⁴ Lees, LH (1979) *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London*. NY: Cornell University Press.

p 63

⁶⁵ As they came to be known in Scotland

Catholic publications, and finally through newsvendors who sold their wares from kiosks at the back of churches on Sundays. The Catholic hierarchy saw it as their duty to protect their flock from evil influences, and did not hesitate to condemn any journal which they felt came under this category. It is in the nature of research such as this, that there is often scant evidence upon which to draw conclusions, but there are suggestions that English newspaper sellers were unwilling to handle Irish journals.⁶⁶ English printers too, could be wary of Irish titles, especially at times of political upheaval, as the discussion of the *Irish News* will show. For the newspapers, this was to have, as we shall see unfortunate effects. Any blockage of supply due to clerical disapproval was in consequence difficult to overcome. In the fraught political atmosphere of the 1860s, this was to be a decisive factor.

On the Rampart-Limerick

This part is mine: to live divorced,
 Where foul November gathers,
 With other sons of thine dispersed,
 Brave city of my fathers.
 To gaze on rivers not mine own,
 And nurse a wasting longing,
 Where Babylon, with trumpets blown,
 South, north, east, west comes thronging.
 To hear distinctly, if afar,
 The voices of thy people-
 To hear through crepitating jar
 The sweet bells of thy steeple,
 To love the town, the hill, the wood,
 The Shannon's stormful flashes,
 Where freedom's seed was sown in blood
 To blossom into ashes!

Fig. 3 Last stanza from JF O'Donnell's *On the Rampart—Limerick*. A contrast with TD Sullivan's view of the Irish in Britain. Written in London and full of "the fond yearning of the exile for the city of his fathers."⁶⁷

What has emerged from studies to date of the Irish in Britain is a picture of a community of long standing, but which experienced explosive growth in the Famine period: in majority Catholic and poor, but not exclusively so; a community which established certain areas of the great metropolitan cities as its own, but which

⁶⁶ *Irish Liberator* 9/1/1864 p212 Letter from Charles O'Conna, Hon Sec of the Harp and Shamrock branch (Nottingham) of the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, on the difficulties of obtaining agents for Irish papers.

⁶⁷ McDonagh, M (1888) *Irish Graves in England: Evening Telegraph Reprints* Dublin p95

individually was exceedingly mobile,⁶⁸ following employment, wherever and whenever it occurred; which had been rural but was now almost exclusively urban; which in the greater part found itself shut out from the wider society which viewed the Irish as suspect on grounds of nation, class and religion. The most permanent feature of its social organisation was the adherence of its members to the Catholic church, and it is to the place of the Irish within the English church that we must now turn.

⁶⁸ John O'Neil's account of his life in London as a shoemaker is striking by the constant moving from one lodging to another, sometimes in order to be near work, at others in response to improving or deteriorating prospects. O'Neil J 'Fifty Years Experience in as an Irish Shoemaker in London, serialised in *St Crispin* 8/5/1869-19/2/1870.

1.5 Recusants, converts and the Irish migrants

Within Irish life, though the Roman Catholic church did not occupy a position of unchallenged dominance, and indeed the elision of Irish with Catholic is something that has been questioned, certainly as far as practice is concerned,⁶⁹ it was pre-eminent. Its influence extended far beyond the religious, encompassing education, of both adults and children, health, housing, financial affairs, leisure activities and political organisation. Irish numbers transformed the church in England, but they were a needy population. What had distinguished the immigration of the Famine years, was its desperation. Those who had made the crossing to England before were poor—the vast majority of the Irish population was poor—but whereas those who arrived before the Famine, at least some of them, had been running towards something, those who came in the years of hunger were running away—from death by disease or starvation. For many, the choice was stark, emigrate or perish. Those areas of Ireland with low emigration rates, had correspondingly high rates of mortality. The heavily populated and desperately poor areas of the West: Mayo, Galway, Clare and west Cork had comparatively few migrants and many deaths.⁷⁰ There, people did not, or could not leave, and so died. Previously, there had been some kind of planning involved in the decision to go, as often as not with the fare paid by a relative who had gone before, and especially for those who went to the USA, some kind of provision made. In the Famine years, they spilled onto the docks at Liverpool, from an assortment of vessels, many of them totally unsuitable, hungry, sick, soaked with sea water and their own vomit after being packed as steerage on the open decks of ships which sometimes provided crates as shelter for animals but not for humans, the holds packed with Irish agricultural produce.⁷¹ Often they shared what accommodation there was with the animals, and according to Mayhew, were glad to do so, for the warmth the animals provided on journeys from Cork and places further west which could last for days.⁷²

The needs of the Famine Irish were to almost overwhelm the meagre resources of the English Catholic church. Everything was in short supply, priests, churches and some sort of refuge. All these requirements were to strain the

⁶⁹ Gerard Connolly in his 'Irish and Catholic: Myth or Reality?' pp 225-254 in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds) (1985) *The Irish in the Victorian City*. London Croom Helm. Lynn Hollen Lees (1979) *Exiles of Erin*. NY: Cornell University Press, see chapter 7, 'The Reforging of an Irish Catholic Culture'

⁷⁰ MacRaild, D (1999b) p 34

⁷¹ See Scally, RJ (1995) *The End of Hidden Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp176-183

⁷² Mayhew, H (1851) *London Labour and the London Poor*. (1967 edition) London: Frank Cass & Co. p111

already straightened manpower and finances of the Roman Church to breaking point. Some responded nobly to the challenge. The toll on priests was heavy, ten Roman Catholic and one Protestant clergymen, were among those who lost their lives of typhus in Liverpool in 1847, ministering to the poor. As late as 1858, Edinburgh had four priests to serve a mostly Irish congregation of 30,000, and the priest in charge Gillis wrote that he had lost seventeen priests and four students in the previous six years to illness.⁷³ Requests for trainees stressed the need for them to be strong and healthy.

What was also lacking in some quarters, was goodwill. At times, the only thing which seemed to unite English Catholics was their disdain for the Irish. "It seemed to the respectable Catholic population that somehow the tone of their community was being debased."⁷⁴ There is a famous story left by Mrs Charlton in her *Recollections of a Northumberland Lady* of a dinner party where conversation turned to the number of Irish Catholic prisoners at the local assizes. In order to avoid embarrassment, one of those present informed the company that Mrs Charlton was Catholic. Mrs Charlton was proud of how she dealt with the situation, "Yes", I said at this, "but an English Catholic, not an Irish one, which is all the difference in the world. English Catholics are responsible beings who are taught right from wrong, whereas Irish Catholics, belonging to a yet savage nation, know no better and are perhaps excusable on that account."⁷⁵ Not all were as unchristian in their views as a prominent convert Phillips de Lisle whose opinion of the Famine was 'God has visited that wretched and untameable race with those chastisements which are inseparably the lot of all Catholick Nations that disgrace the Name of the Church'⁷⁶. The converts from Anglicanism, who had limited experience of the lower orders, English or Irish were generally the most dismissive of their co-religionists. 'The Irish are swamping us,' complained another aristocratic convert Fr Faber of the Oratory Chapel in London in 1849 'they are rude and unruly and after many complaints the Catholic tradesmen are leaving us.'⁷⁷ Newman, who like Manning was destined to become a cardinal, wrote to fellow-convert Mary Holmes, on the prospects of her going to Italy, of whose inhabitants he had no good opinion, disliking their cruelty to animals, dishonesty, their doctors, their language and their dirty habits, which they shared with the Irish, "If you don't like the Irish ", he said, " much less will you like the Italians. You like cleanliness and Gothic. The Italian

⁷³ Calendar of the Overseas Missionary Correspondence of All Hallows College, Dublin, 1842-77, by Patrick F Murray BA Section 2 (Edinburgh) EDS 11 24/9/1858

⁷⁴ Newsome, D (1993) OP.cit . p191

⁷⁵ Gray Op.cit p146

⁷⁶ Norman (1985b) p218

⁷⁷ Ibid p217

Church have neither one nor the other." ⁷⁸

The history of the first Irish church in Soho, St Patricks, bears witness to the reluctance of native Catholics to involve themselves with their co-religionists. This. It had been opened in 1791, in a refurbished dancing hall of evil repute known as the "Temple of Folly". It was founded due to the efforts of some Irish Catholic merchants, in the face of opposition from the English clergy, (including the head of the church in London, Bishop Poynter), who had neglected to do so themselves.⁷⁹ In the early years of the nineteenth century an orphanage was added, financed by charity. As well as the usual disputes with proselytising Protestants, there were also problems with English Catholics. By 1813, it was proposed to merge the body funding St Patrick's with the Associated Catholic Charities of the Metropolis. The St Patrick's people eventually withdrew from the union and reason appears to have been their perception that they were not being treated fairly. Mr Kelly, the St Patrick's treasurer said there had been "proceedings which they considered had been intended to offend them personally and others which showed an indifference to that branch of the charity," A letter to the *Orthodox Journal* of WE Andrews gives a picture of the underlying reasons for the dissolution of the union, 'An Old Correspondent' writing on the Catholic charity school's evidence to the Select Committee of 1816, said that the cause of the rivalry and jealousy between the St Patrick's and the ACC was the refusal of the latter to acknowledge the Irish in the catholic body. The ACC while constantly reminding everyone that the object of their work was the Irish poor, did not appeal directly to potential Irish contributors, who nevertheless donated to the charity. In their annual dinner, there was no mention of Ireland and the Irish. At St Patrick's on the other hand, the festivity had "a purely Irish aspect", their dinner was held in a green bedecked hall festooned with harps and shamrocks.⁸⁰ Differences between the English and Irish emerged again in 1837, MP Richard Lalor Shiel condemned the rumour that English Catholics should separate themselves. The Right Honourable Edward Petre in 1842, presumably in answer to assertions to the contrary said that anyone who knew the English aristocracy would know they were not indifferent to their Irish brethren, instead "we are their undeviating friends—friends whom they will always find ready to aid and assist them". ⁸¹

⁷⁸Newsome, (1993) Op.cit. p197

⁷⁹ Murphy, M (1992) St Patrick's Charity School and Orphan Asylum, Soho: a study of a London Catholic poor school during the 19th century. p2

⁸⁰ Ibid p21-2

⁸¹ Ibid. p36 quoted from London and Dublin Orthodox Journal v4 n 102 10/6/1837 pp 362-4;v15 n 366 2/7/1842 p9.

1.6 Priests, Politics and Paupers

In O'Connell's campaign for Catholic Emancipation there had been a convergence of interests between Catholics, English and Irish. That having been attained, and O'Connell and the Irish turned their attention to the question of Repeal, this dissipated. In the straightened circumstances of the 1840s, some clerics were to see this as competition for the pockets as well as the souls of the Irish. In the archives of All Hallows College, Drumcondra, Dublin, dedicated to providing priests for the overseas missions,⁸² are letters from Bishops and priests in Scotland and in England, which provide insights into the relations between native and Irish Catholics, both clergy and laity. Conditions in England and Scotland were not identical but were sufficiently similar to make comparisons. In 1842, Bishop Scott, Vicar Apostolic of the Western District Scotland, wrote to Father Hands at All Hallows on the difficulties presented by the poverty of his flock,⁸³

Our congregations here are almost wholly composed of operatives and labourers, one half of whom is always reduced to beggary whenever a depression of trade takes place....But our poor people even in places where a thousand of catholic souls are collected could not pay for a hall to supply temporarily for a chapel and give a priest £30 a year to live upon.

This was the main obstacle to progress. Another, was the political involvement of the young Irish priests the college had sent him. The following April he again wrote to Fr Hands,⁸⁴

I trust you and the other professors will impress upon their mind the necessity of acting in every respect as Clergymen in this country, and of not allowing even the finest feelings of love of their native land to induce them to take when here any public part in (unclear) political movements whatever may be their private opinions on the subject. Every Clergyman in this country of the Established church or of any churches who takes any public part in mere political questions is looked down upon and despised.

He stressed he was talking about any kind of politics not just Irish, but the

⁸² A diocese in England, or Scotland, would, after an interview, sponsor a candidate the college thought suitable. During his training, he would be expected to come over to the diocese and work as directed. On being ordained, he would similarly be at the diocesan bishop's disposal.

⁸³ (Western District) WDS 123/12/1842 Scott to Hand

⁸⁴ WDS 2 31/4/1843 Scott to Hand

reluctance of the hierarchy in Britain to employ Irish priests was noted at the time, and after pressure of numbers meant that this policy had to be abandoned, Irish priests were still suspect. A cleric historian, Denys Gwynn has written that the Church in England became largely Irish, both congregation and priesthood, but there was a lack of Irish bishops, which caused some resentment among the laity, but not the clergy themselves. "Many of them had political sympathies which were scarcely compatible with promotion to the episcopacy in England," and they also brought with them from Ireland the close relationship between priest and flock, which they valued more than promotion.⁸⁵

However selfless Irish priests may have been when it came to personal ambition, Bishop Scott in Edinburgh and his colleagues south of the border scrutinised them for any signs of political unorthodoxy and complained loudly whenever they found it. Scott wrote again of the student priests, "They are too great politicians for their country to be able to do much good as Clergymen." He said he would remove them if their conduct did not improve. Some seemed openly defiant, even denying, as the Fenians were to later on, the right of the hierarchy to pronounce on political matters. One, Hugh Quigley, of St Mary's Celton Glasgow had written a 'violent' letter to the *Nation* berating the Presbyterians of the country, and when upbraided by Scott's coadjutor Rev. Murdock, said he had taken a pledge in Ireland "to agitate the repeal question," while in Scotland, because he believed once repeal was achieved all the immigrants could go home to live in peace. He further said that in questions of politics he would not be directed by the bishops in Scotland. This presented all sorts of dangers to Scott, as it would to his southern counterparts, Scott said that if local Protestants saw letters such as this, written by priests living in the bishop's house, they would naturally assume they did so with his consent, which could not be allowed.⁸⁶ He wrote again saying that in future he would require a signed letter from students that they would not engage in politics.⁸⁷

The issue of Repeal was divisive on national grounds—some of the congregation backing the Irish priests, some backing the 'Scotch'. The Irish priests instead of exerting themselves in the efforts to build new chapels, were spending their time in political agitation, and precious funds were being diverted from church to Repeal.⁸⁸ The following year he wrote again that he was now against any involve-

⁸⁵ Gwynn, D., (1950) 'The Irish Immigration' in G.A. Beck The English Catholics 1850 - 1950. London: Burns Oates, p29

⁸⁶ AHC: WDS 3 Scott to Rev James Clarke 21/4/1843

⁸⁷ AHC: WDS 9 Scott to Hand 18/7/1843

⁸⁸ AHC: WDS 13 Scott to Hand 15/9/1843

ment by priests in politics of any kind either public or private. The involvement of the Irish priests with Repeal was such that he could not make any progress in expanding the mission. The Irish priests instead of doing what they could to relieve the mission's debts "are constantly going about among the people moving them to pay for repeal of the union, in place of contributing for the support of religion...Few indeed among the labourers can afford to pay for repeal and for the propagation of religion too, in this Heretical country..."⁸⁹ By the following year, 1845, he resolved to increase the number of Scottish seminarists and thus avoid further controversy,⁹⁰ though in that endeavour events of the succeeding years probably overtook him.

Certainly, a decade later, similar complaints were being relayed to All Hallows. From the Salford diocese, Bishop William Turner wrote that he was unable to accept one student priest, even on a short term basis, "for six months or any period". In refusing him, he said, "I am sorry that Mr Tracey is so ultra-Irish but I hope that the advice and caution you will deem it necessary to give him would have its due effect."⁹¹ Ten years further on, this time from Shrewsbury, Repeal had given way to Fenianism, but the complaints remained the same. Bishop Brown wrote a series of letters on one student, a Mr Brosnan, who, he said, had some peculiar beliefs, and had indicated he wished to join a religious order rather than lead the life of a mission priest. His connection with him, had "been brought to a very early close," and gave the reasons:-

During his stay at Birkenhead, he had frequently expressed himself, both in the presbytery, and among the people, in the strongest anti-English terms, and he spoke of the Fenians with praise and with admiration-among the class of people who form the bulk of the Catholics in that town.⁹²

He went on that such opinions appeared to be common amongst the young men and it would require serious attention in order to equip men for the English mission. Cardinal Cullen, too, was less than enthusiastic about the young men of the seminary, and of nationalist priests in general, of course. In a letter to Fr Moran at the Irish College Rome, criticising the historical writing of another priest of nationalist sensibilities, a Fr. Cogan of Drogheda, he claimed Cogan followed on from Dr Cantwell, who had wanted priests to be engaged in 'wholesome agitation'. Just the kind of thing Cullen had himself banned in the 1850s. For this, "Of course",

⁸⁹ AHC: WDS 24 Scott to Hand 24/8/1844

⁹⁰ AHC: WDS 31 Scott to Hand 7/2/1845

⁹¹ AHC: SAL (Salford) 15 Bishop William Turner to Rev Dr Woodlock 14/12/1857

⁹² AHC Shrewsbury: 59 8/10/1866; 61 25/12/1866; 62 28/1/1867 Brown to Fortune

Cullen remembered, Cantwell was, "cheered by the priests of All Hallows. Their spiritual duties should more than occupy the time of the priests. Curious that many of our great patriot priests were not distinguished for religious zeal."⁹³

It is not possible to gauge the true extent of Fenian influence among the Irish clergy, but it would appear that at a parish level, and, as one might expect, among the younger clergy, there was a degree of support. English agents in Italy, tried to persuade the authorities that there were Fenian priests even in Rome.⁹⁴ Even among the hierarchy, in Ireland at least, opinion was not unanimous. The church expected obedience, however, and a wise novice or curate kept his opinions to himself.

In Britain, it was not until late in the nineteenth and probably early in the twentieth century that the church became Irish, clergy as well as congregation—in Lancashire, the clergy were almost all English-born and had scant sympathy with Irish political causes, viewing such organisations as the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick as competition,⁹⁵ in much the same way as Bishop Scott had twenty years before. He had expressed what was to be a consistent clerical view of Irish political endeavour in Britain—that the poor were too untutored to have independent views and that in the expression of those opinions they did have, they and their (Irish) clerical supporters were reckless and left themselves and the church open to attack. They were the prey of the unscrupulous, especially when it came to the press-

Scarcely any among them have yet been able to raise themselves above the ordinary sphere of the working classes. Still without education they pretend to be great politicians and though unguarded in their expressions both relative to the Catholic religion as well as to the Civil laws, their poverty and insignificance prevent them being taken notice of by the civic authorities, or by any local newspaper, with the exception of one written by an Infidel Radical, who for the sake of money takes notice of them in his paper and is their avowed leader and adviser. You may naturally suppose that when clergymen are seen to hear and to countenance such people it will not have a tendency to do away with the strong anti-religious and anti-national prejudices of the Scotch Presbyterians against the Irish.⁹⁶

⁹³ Archivium Hibernicum XXX II Kirby Papers Irish College Rome.. PJ Corish (ed) 1974 Cullen to Moran 5/4/1861

⁹⁴ PRO FO 43 102 from Joseph Severn British Consul in Italy, despatch to Lord Stanley 22/1/68

⁹⁵ Moran, G (1999) 'Nationalists in Exile: The National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick in Lancashire, 1861-5' in R Swift & S Gilley (eds) The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension. Dublin: Four Courts Press. p225

⁹⁶ AHC: WDS 32 7/2/1845 Scott to Clarke

It was then with mixed feelings that the church in England looked upon its Irish acquisitions. If Irish clergymen were perceived as a problem, their lay countrymen were often presented as a kind of contagion or virus in the body social and politic. Somehow or other they had to be made more acceptable, 'civilised', more like the English. Irish religious practises were modified—away from their origins in the seasons and rhythms of agricultural life—and towards the new forms of practise favoured by the ultramontanes.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ It is fair to say here that an analogous process was taking place under the equally ultramontane Cardinal Cullen.

1.7 A Catholic Community

Who, in the winter night,
Soggarth Aroon, when the cold blast did bite,
Soggarth Aroon, came to my cabin door,
And, on my earthen floor,
Knelt by me, sick and poor?

Soggarth Aroon."

Fig. 4 The closeness of the Irish clergy and the poor. *Universal News* 2/1/1869 p14 from the 'Priests and People' column

Of the closeness of the Irish to their own priests, a French observer wrote, 'No clergy is more justly popular than the Irish Catholic clergy. It has fought for the faith, for liberty and for the poor'.⁹⁸ The apparent devotion, along with their chastity, of the poor migrants was also the cause of much comment. Mayhew, though he did find there was some 'leakage' into complete indifference, similar to that found among their English counterparts, gives anecdotal evidence that even amongst those who seldom attended worship, attachment to the faith was strong.⁹⁹ The difficulties between the migrants and their native priests was to become a recurrent theme in the 1860s in the nationalist press, where contrasts were drawn between the understanding which existed between the Irish and their 'Soggarth Aroon', and the mutual miscomprehension and suspicion which often characterised the nature of relations between Irish flock and English pastor. For a picture of the relationship working at its best, we can turn to Mayhew, who, in characteristically vivid prose, described the visit of a priest to a poor area of the East end thus,

Everywhere the people ran out to meet him. He had just returned to them I found, and the news spread round, and women crowded to their door-steps, and came creeping up through the trap-doors, merely to curtsy to him. One old crone as he passed cried, "You're a good father, Heaven comfort you," and all the boys playing about stood still to watch him. A lad, in a man's tail coat and a shirt-collar that nearly covered in his head—like the paper round a bouquet—was fortunate enough to be noticed, and his eyes sparkled, as he touched his hair at each word he spoke in

⁹⁸ French observer quoted in Norman ER (1965) *The Catholic Church & Ireland in the Age of Rebellion* note p90

⁹⁹ Mayhew, p107 see also 'Of an Irish woman, as a street seller' pp 521-3.

answer. At a conversation that took place between the priest and a women who kept a dry-fish stall, the dame excused herself for not having been up to take tea “with his rivirince's mother lately, for thrade has been so bisy, and night was the fullest time” Even as the priest walked along the street, boys running at full speed would pull up to touch their hair, and the stall women would rise from their baskets; while all noise—even a quarrel—ceased until he had passed by. Still there was no look of fear in the people. He called them all by their names, and asked after their families, and once or twice the “father” was taken aside and held by the button while some point that required his advice was whispered in his ear.¹⁰⁰

Mayhew, sensitive to the prejudices of his readers, felt obliged to almost apologise for this picture of faithfulness in the face of such unpromising surroundings. “Of course,” he wrote, “I detail these matters as mere facts, without desiring to offer any opinion here, as to the benefit or otherwise of the creed in question.” He had earlier written of the apostasy of the English street folk, and it was therefore his ‘duty’ to give as accurate a picture as he could. “The result,” he finished, “is given above, in all the simplicity and impartiality of history.”¹⁰¹ What his sketch does is to give an idea of the close, informal, almost familial nature of the faith of the migrants. Religion informed their everyday lives, this world and the other world co-existing without contradiction. Whether they attended to the formalities or not, the priest was the object of respect and affection, which he returned. This set them apart from the English fellow-poor, with whom they shared desperate living conditions, and, which was of great import to their pastors, the attendant moral dangers. That they were naturally devout was not questioned but in their new surroundings they were in peril,

They...have clung to the faith once delivered to the saints: they come with the virtues of a Catholic peasantry and with the feelings of an impetuous, generous warm-hearted race. Poverty has driven them from their native soil. In our large towns and cities they hope to find a livelihood. And they do find it. But the atmosphere in which it is to be gained is surcharged with moral poison. Drunkenness, dishonesty, impurity surround them on every side in the lanes and alleys in which they are huddled together. Their lot is cast among those who jeer at their religion, who scoff at their virtues, who make a mock at sin.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Mayhew, p108

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² *Tablet* 10/2/1883 p201 q KS Inglis p126

Through the parish priests, parochial organisations and charities, the church sought to ameliorate the conditions endured by the migrants, to save them from disbelief or proselytisation, and to encourage them to live in a way of which it approved. Throughout the country, parishioners were encouraged to support not only their local churches, but also Catholic charitable organisations. This was the pattern throughout the Catholic districts of Britain. Remarkable was the fact that these bodies, set up to aid and reform the poor were paid for out of the meagre pockets of the poor themselves. The Catholic poor donated to such organisations as the Society of St Vincent De Paul, at the behest of their priests out of Christian charity, to be sure, but also as a form of insurance “in the anticipation that the charity might offer them tangible benefits”, thus ensuring that the gulf between benefactor and beneficiary in Catholic charities, was much narrower than in most charitable exercises.¹⁰³

In Soho, the Society of St Patrick was founded by Father Kyne in 1849. It offered help with reading and assistance when sick or unemployed and some job training. The members also acted as ‘special constables’, encouraging their fellows to attend mass, but also tried to impose some social order in the district, attempting, for example, to close the gin-palaces.¹⁰⁴ By the end of the century the Catholic church had instituted what has been called in German, *vereinskatholizismus*—a multiplicity of organisations, based on the parish, which were “designed to meet every need, spiritual, economic and recreational, from the cradle to the grave.”¹⁰⁵ “Catholic London supported a colourful variety of social clubs, lectures, benefit dinners and bazaars.” These were in direct competition with secular counterparts. “In place of pubs, penny gaffs and trade union meetings, Catholics were expected to join in the confraternities, clubs and temperance groups of the local church”. Urban Catholicism created new forms of entertainment. “Priests organised festivals, musical evenings, church suppers and steamboat excursions ‘for the entertainment of the faithful’, while those who wanted more active pastimes could join one of the Catholic choral societies, bands or drill teams.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Kanya-Forster, M (1999) ‘Defining Womanhood: Irish Women and the Catholic Church in Victorian Liverpool’ in D MacRaild, (ed) *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Special Issue *Immigrants and Minorities* vol 18 nos. 2&3, July/November 1999. Pp 168-188, p174

¹⁰⁴ Lees, pp 192-3

¹⁰⁵ Belchem, J (1999) ‘Class, Creed and Country: The Irish Middle Class in Victorian Liverpool’ in R Swift & S Gilley (eds) *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension*. Dublin: Four Courts Press. pp 190-211, p 207 Not exactly translatable into English, it implies in addition to the notion of ‘club’ as in sports or social club, the ‘improving’ objectives of such organisations aimed at the working classes.

¹⁰⁶ Lees, Op.cit. p191

Whatever else the church did, in terms of helping the migrants better their position in English society, “the larger impact of Roman Catholic culture was ideological”. Raphael Samuel, “saw Catholicism as validating and sustaining the human dignity of the immigrants.”¹⁰⁷ Overall, not surprisingly, the impact was to heighten Catholicism at the expense of Irishness. To Lees, the “religious symbols of the Roman Catholic church in England sanctified the ideals of work, poverty, virginity, and a moderate Irish nationalism.”¹⁰⁸ Much of the folk element of Irish Catholicism was slowly but surely abandoned once in London. St Bridget for example, whose feast day was February the first, had been a symbol of the beginning of the pastoral year and was said to protect a house and livestock from evil spirits, and had powers to heal the sick and control the weather. By 1880, she had lost all connection with agriculture and had become instead, a symbol of female virtue and chastity. She was not commemorated by fixing straw crosses to the door of houses as in Ireland, but by a women’s confraternity with medals and membership cards.¹⁰⁹ Though modifying the symbols of a distinctly Irish Catholicism, they were nonetheless maintained. In this way, an Irishness, though subordinated to Catholicism was permitted to survive, a task which was made easier by the increasing numbers of Irish priests in the last quarter of the century.

Mary Hickman on the other hand, has argued the church played a much more aggressive role. It operated strategies of ‘incorporation’ of the children of the working class Irish into the British state, through the network of Catholic organisations outlined above, but principally through the medium of denominational education. A process, the success of which ensured the ‘invisibility’ of the Irish for much of this century.¹¹⁰ As a project, it began even before they left Ireland, as the National system of education, set up in 1831, was, she posits, intended to replace Irish alternatives, such as the ‘hedge schools’ which were seen as centres of subversion, and replace them with something as Protestant and English as the population could be persuaded to countenance.¹¹¹ Subsequent policies were, she says, an attempt at the denationalisation of the Irish whose politics and class presented the English church with a dilemma—too close an identification with Irish aspirations would divide the Church, too much distance between clergy and congregation risked a divide which could not be bridged.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Gilley, (1999) Op.cit. p150

¹⁰⁸ Lees, Op.cit. p193

¹⁰⁹ Lees, p185

¹¹⁰ Hickman, M (1995) Religion Class and Identity: The State, the Catholic Church and the Education of the Irish in Britain. Aldershot: Avebury.

¹¹¹ Ibid pp127-134

¹¹² Ibid. p111

The question of whether or not the English Catholic church followed a policy of denationalisation in regard to its Irish congregation and how successful this was, is complicated. In a sense, denationalisation was *the* ultramontane policy. This was certainly the opinion of Odo Russell, the British government's man in Rome, who wrote, in 1867, to the Foreign Office,

It is evident that the Pope's future policy will be to denationalise the Clergy, detach them as much as possible from the governments and countries they belong to and to centralise the entire administration of the Church of Rome.¹¹³

It was precisely this perception which in Germany led to Bismark's Kulturkampf of the 1870s. In the case of the English church, there were two nations—Ireland and England, and the ultramontane policies of Wiseman and his successor Manning had twin effects. To the recusants, the English church became less recognisably English, while at the same time, it was never allowed to become as Irish as the majority of its adherents would have wished. In Ireland, Cardinal Cullen's essentially similar policies can be seen in a number of ways—as a conservative identification with order and hence the administration in the Castle or, as a refusal to give ground to the forces of secularism, who were, in the Ireland of the 1860s, the advanced nationalists. Cullen, implacable enemy of the Fenians, as he was, does not seem to have harboured much love for the English, whose policies on Italian rebellion, for example, he execrated. “Che razza di vipere!” he wrote to a colleague in Rome in 1867, “They are hanging Fenians who are galantuomini when compared with the Garibaldians whom they praise and encourage.”¹¹⁴ In this, Cullen perhaps was more consistent than most.

The Irish migrants were encouraged to identify themselves by their religion rather than their nationality, this seems clear. What is unclear, is the extent to which they actually did, and if they did, what this meant. As the century wore on, this is further muddled by the increasingly common elision of the terms Irish and Catholic. If either term implied the other, then in identifying oneself as Catholic, one essentially meant Irish, and *vice-versa*. In a society which was both anti-Catholic and anti-Irish, but in which the former, with time, attracted less opprobrium than the latter, to identify oneself as Catholic rather than Irish, at least publicly, would have been an attractive strategy for the migrants themselves to adopt, rather than to have it

¹¹³ PRO Kew FO 43 99b despatch 17/7/67 from Odo Russell.

¹¹⁴ Archivium Hibernicum Cullen to Kirby 22/11/1867 no. 423 quoted in Corish Patrick J (1987) Cardinal Cullen and the National Association of Ireland in Reactions to Irish Nationalism 1865-1914, with an Intro by Alan O'Day London: Hambledon Press p153

imposed on them from above. In English terms, the religion of the Irish became less controversial, their politics did not. Nor have they yet. Wearing their religion on their sleeve is perhaps a question of the Irish migrants 'hiding in the light.'¹¹⁵ The disappearance of the even more invisible Irish Protestants is a further factor to be considered. The extent to which Irish Protestant migrants are visible by their absence is an increasingly common theme in the by now voluminous literature on the Irish in Britain. It has been generally assumed that they assimilated more quickly than their Catholic countrymen. Certainly, they shared common religious beliefs—Protestantism in its various guises—with the host population, which would have facilitated an easy transition from one island to the next. A shared unionist political outlook would have had the same effect. Irish Catholics on the other hand, by their religion and their politics remained outsiders. As the sting went out of anti-catholicism, it was more possible to accentuate the Catholic rather than the Irish.

Newspapers were very much part of this Irish/Catholic conundrum, and the story to be told here of the history of the press of the Irish migrants, is in large measure the attempt to balance their aspirations with those of the church within whose fold they now found themselves. The *Universal News*, for example, declared in its prospectus in December 1860 that it was "not merely a record of Catholic church intelligence, which would be interesting to none save Catholics, and, even amongst them, only a select few" but "...a thoroughly useful general newspaper". It was to be, however, "conducted in a moral and truly Catholic spirit." Catholics would not need to look outside of the fold for news of the world, for,

By the careful compilation of its news columns it will render superfluous the seeking out of other sources of weekly intelligence; thus the seeds of infidelity, which are too often sown broadcast by the writers of weekly journals, will be prevented from falling upon ground where they might act as tare amidst the wheat.¹¹⁶

Like the clubs, fraternities, sororities, leagues, guilds etc., the papers had twin objectives, both secular and religious. They were to answer a need, in this case for 'intelligence' about the world, the doings of the diaspora and news from Ireland. They were also, by the dissemination of Catholic opinion, and the organisation of the Catholic body for the purposes of fundraising for schools and churches, to prevent the loss of the Irish, as Catholics, to the church. This was an agreed

¹¹⁵ To borrow a phrase from Dick Hebdige (1988) *Hiding in the Light*. London: Routledge

¹¹⁶ *Universal News* 29/12/1860 p8

position. The problem for both the church and the newspapers was how this was to be worked out in practise. To what extent were the readers to be addressed as Irish or Catholic? It will be seen that the papers adopted different strategies at different times but all were shaped by the fact that they served a community which was as much a confessional as a national or political one. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to imagine, in the intensely secular age we inhabit, the equally intense religious beliefs and motivations of those concerned with this study—journalists, clerics and readers, and the seriousness with which they viewed the relationship between faith and fatherland. As a politics of a secular separatism, which was espoused by the Fenians loomed ever larger in the life of the Irish in England, this relationship became ever more fraught. And it was this relationship, more than the poverty, or lack of education, or transitoriness of the migrant population, which determined the fate of their press in the 1860s.

Part Two. Accommodation and its Failure: The Universal News 1860-69



Fig. 5 Hibernia on her Atlantic throne—the *Universal News* masthead

2.0 Writing for the "Poorer Brethren"

The *Universal News* was published for nine years between December 1860 and December 1869, spanned almost the whole of a turbulent decade and mirrored in its own history both the internal and external struggles of the Irish nationalist community in England. It is possible to trace through the fortunes of those who either controlled or sought to control it, the ebbs and flows of influence of the contending forces within the Irish community; the tensions in the English Catholic church arising from the Irish immigration and the rise to prominence and (apparent) defeat of the Fenian movement.

In common with other such papers, very little has been written of the *Universal News*. Writers on the English press have ignored the papers of the Irish migrants. Writers on Catholicism have included the Catholic press, but have concentrated on those papers which survived into the twentieth century, and where they have written of those papers not extant, they have not included the *Universal News*.¹

¹ Anstruther, GE 1929 *A Hundred Years of Catholic Progress*. London Burnes Oates pp 84-5 for example mentioned various papers—the *Universe* the *Northern Press*, the *Catholic Times*, the *Tablet*, the *Weekly Register*, but not the *Universal News*.

The first issue appeared in London on December the 29th 1860, in the midst of what was a period of considerable activity in Catholic publishing. One of the needs identified by the clergy as arising out of the Irish immigration was for a literature aimed at the working classes. This was in order to maintain contact with and organise this new congregation and to counteract the activities of Protestant pamphleteers. The Society of St Anselm was formed at this time specifically to print cheap Catholic literature for this purpose. No less than five newspapers were started in 1859 and 1860, all aimed at a working class readership. Two were in Liverpool, in 1859, the *Lancashire Free Press* and the *Catholic Times*. The following June, also in Liverpool came the *Northern Press*. In London, December saw the launch of both the *Universe* and the *Universal News*. There were considerations other than leakage and proselytism however, behind this enterprise, and the politics of the day, national and international provided an important impetus. Like the *Universe*, which pre-dated it by some two weeks, the *Universal News*, according to one writer ² was founded not so much out of the positive desire for a Catholic newspaper, but rather that with the support given to the Italian opponents of Pope Pius IX in the British press, the currently available journals had become distasteful to Catholics. It was Italian, rather than English or Irish religion and politics which dictated that these papers should exist then. Undoubtedly, events around the *Risorgimento*, the process leading to eventual Italian unification, one of whose by-products was the loss of the Papal States, was a major preoccupation of the time. Newspapers, both Catholic and non-Catholic were full of such matters. The ultramontane hierarchies of Britain and Ireland were strongly supportive of the Papal states. This was relatively uncontroversial among Catholics in Ireland, but was divisive beyond any other issue in England, where the broad weight of opinion, both Catholic and non-Catholic, was, for various reasons, behind the Italian nationalists.

The desire to communicate the hierarchy's position on Italy would have been a powerful incentive for supporting the foundation of newspapers which could be relied upon to counter the prevailing opinions in the press. It is true that both the *Universe* and the *Universal News* had the goodwill of the hierarchy in England. The

² Edwards OD & Storey P (1985) 'The Irish Press in Victorian Britain' in R Swift & S Gilley, (eds) *The Irish In the Victorian City*. London: Croom Helm. P161

Universe (along with the *Catholic Times* of the previous year) was founded, 'with the full support, almost at the request of the hierarchy'.³ However, as we shall see, though foreign politics was undoubtedly a consideration, it would be a mistake to ignore the very real domestic concerns of the church. What is abundantly clear, is the centrality of the Catholic church in the world inhabited by the *Universal News*.

The hierarchy not only needed a vehicle for its views, it also needed to communicate to the faithful the pressing need for funds for priests, schools etc. Ireland at the time "was becoming clothed with new churches, convents and schools". The Irish bishops said in 1859, "we see churches rising up that rival in beauty and design and elegance of execution, the proudest monuments of the zeal, the piety and the taste of our forefathers"⁴. The Catholics of Britain too, could trumpet their achievements-the period was one of immense activity-churches, poor schools, reading rooms and libraries were being built across the length and breadth of Britain. The aristocratic members of the indigenous church in England had previously worshipped in private chapels or in those of foreign embassies: their Irish co-religionists, had very often to hear mass said in public houses. All this was now changing and the need for funds was inexhaustible. All the papers of the time were replete with announcements of the opening of a church here, or a poor school there, and of requests for funds for the same. The congregations of a particular parish were expected to provide financial support for their own church and school but through the press they could be approached for funds from outside their own area. The papers were also a way of maintaining contact with those who did not regularly attend mass- to keep the not so faithful within the fold. There was a very real fear that the Irish immigrants living in the cities of industrial England now far away from their rural parishes and familiar priests, would be lost forever to Catholicity if nothing were done to keep them in contact with the church.

Edwards ⁵ has stated that prior to the establishment of these papers, Irish tastes had been satisfied by papers from Ireland and by the *Tablet* and *Dublin*

³ Woodruff, D Catholic Press, World Survey, The New Catholic Encyclopaedia, (1967) San Francisco: McGraw Hill Vol.3 p295

⁴ Norman, ER (1965) The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion 1859-1873. London: Longmans, p1

⁵ Edwards & Storey Op.cit. p161

Review, both published in London. These latter two, however, were not addressed to a mass readership, but to an educated elite, nor were they, by this time, particularly sympathetic to the concerns of ordinary Irish Catholics. With the massive immigration from Ireland of the 1840s and 50s, the Catholic body had grown immensely. There was now, perhaps for the first time, a readership for a popular Catholic press, one that could deal with wider issues than the sometimes arcane philosophical and religious questions addressed in the existing Catholic publications.

The Irish press of the 1860s built upon changes which had taken place mainly in the previous decade. Foremost was the vast increase in numbers making a popular Catholic press feasible. Though the Irish population as individuals were to remain transient, going wherever there was work, the areas they settled in remained the same and as a network of schools, churches, reading rooms and public houses became established, the social stability necessary to support papers became possible. Changes in the law, the removal of the 'taxes on knowledge,' the growth of limited liability companies made it easier for groups of like-minded people to establish journals. The earliest example of an Irish paper published in England had been in 1810, with the launch of the *Harp*, which argued for Catholic rights. The 1820s saw several papers, usually associated with Daniel O'Connell's campaigns for Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Act of Union.⁶

In the 1850s there were several short-lived attempts at establishing Catholic papers in Liverpool.⁷ In the publishing boom that followed the removal of the remaining newspaper taxes, and which even led in 1861 to a shortage of type,⁸ we have seen Irish Catholics were actively engaged in founding journals.

⁶ The first of these, the *Truth Teller* (1824) was edited by an Englishman, William Eusabius Andrews, or Pope Eusabius as he was known to some. The paper was printed in London and some of the finance had come from the Catholic Rent, the fighting fund established by Daniel O'Connell to aid his campaign for Catholic Emancipation. Aspinall, A. (1949) *Aspinall, A (1949) Politics and the Press, c 1780 -1850*. London: Morrison and Gibb . pp 317 - 325.

⁷ Lowe WJ (1975) 'The Irish in Lancashire 1846-71' PhD unpublished (1974) TCD. (p366) *The Catholic Citizen* (1852) *Liverpool Catholic Guardian* (1856). *The Times* (17/3/1856) said "The first number of a new weekly newspaper, called the *Liverpool Catholic Guardian* was published on Saturday (15 March), making it the third organ which that body have started in that town within a little more than two months."

⁸ Altick, RD (1957) *The English Common Reader*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. P 357

The first of these, the *Lancashire Free Press* was launched in October 1859 to defend Liverpool's 150,000 Catholics from 'calumny'. It failed the following April, being replaced by the *Northern Press and Liverpool General Advertiser* which commenced on the first of June. The name change came to avoid financial liabilities incurred by Stephen Joseph Meany the editor. That was not the only area of controversy, "the *Free Press*, under Meany's editorship, developed what was to the local Catholic clergy an even greater problem. Anti-clerical references were making the odd appearance in the *Free Press*, but the removal of Meany solved that difficulty".⁹ Whether Meany, (who, in a later career as a Fenian, was one of the most reviled figures of his day, and was arrested in London in controversial circumstances), lost his paper because of clerical pressure, or because of money problems, the available evidence does not provide an answer. However, the career of the successor to the *Lancashire Free Press*, *The Northern Press*, attest to an ever closer identity of interests between clergy and press. In truth, it was one and the same thing, the *Northern Press* came to be edited and then owned by SB Harper, a convert, who had been an Anglican cleric, and then by one of the leading Catholic figures in the Liverpool of his day, Father James Nugent, who had edited the paper for at least some of the time since 1861.¹⁰ Of the *Lancashire Free Press* and *Northern Press* it has been said "Both papers were effectively the organs of the Irish Catholic community of Lancashire, but the *Free Press* was more Irish than Catholic, while the *Northern Press* was more Catholic than Irish".¹¹ The *Northern Press* in addition, had the advantage that it had "the support of the local clergy, which the *Free Press* did not".¹² In 1869, it had become the *Northern Press and Catholic Times*, and in 1870 it was emblazoned with the papal arms.¹³

⁹ Lowe, Op.cit. p368 Having examined the *Lancashire Free Press*, I could find no such references. It is possible that Lowe was confusing the paper with the *Liverpool Daily Post*, which although owned by an Irish Catholic, Michael James Whitty and professing views sympathetic to Catholicism, was not in favour of retaining the Papal States, which caused it disagree violently with other Catholic papers notably the *Northern Press*. Meany had worked as a sub-editor on the *Daily Post* before he launched the *Free Press*, and he returned there afterwards. Canon Bennet (1949) *Father Nugent of Liverpool. St Helen's: The Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society*.p70, credits him with anti-clerical references in that paper.

¹⁰ Canon Bennet Op.cit.pp70-71

¹¹ Lowe p371

¹² Lowe p370

¹³ Lowe. p372

WJ Lowe, on the *Lancashire Free Press*,¹⁴ has suggested that the organisation of a Catholic press in Lancashire was a sign of growing self-confidence and prosperity, and an indicator of social organisation. The same could reasonably be taken to apply to London. Though the vast majority of the Irish in Britain were, and were to remain poor, ten years had passed since the desperate mass immigration of the Famine years and there had long been a middle class Irish presence, especially in journalism. So there were both writers and a potential pool of investors and readers. Lowe has argued that collective pride demanded a journal even if one were not strictly needed, and religious pride insisting that a journal representing the church would have to be of a high standard. He, somewhat curiously, in the present writer's opinion, suggests that the whole concept of an Irish Catholic press was in a sense redundant, as there were good general papers available anyway.¹⁵ In the case of Liverpool, the Catholic needs of the Irish could have been met by a broad-sheet. As examples of those general papers suitable for the Irish immigrants, he cites the *Guardian*, the *Liverpool Mercury*, *Preston Chronicle* and the *Preston Guardian*. The *Liverpool Courier* and *Manchester Courier* would also have sufficed, after they had toned down their earlier 'partisanship'. It is to be doubted if many of the working class Irish of the time would have agreed. Lowe had in the preceding pages given as examples of this 'partisanship,' coverage of St Patrick's Day parades in the north west,¹⁶ which, in their pitiless descriptions of the poverty of the participants, illustrate beyond the shadow of a doubt that whatever the Irish in Britain did, they did it under the cold gaze of hatred from many quarters, particularly the press.

Throughout the century, one of the central concerns of newspapers, both Catholic and Irish was to counteract the prejudice which they met, especially at the hands of the press, so the suggestion that Catholic handbills and broad-sheets for specifically Catholic content, supplemented by the very English papers that openly despised them, would have provided the Irish in Britain with all the reading matter they needed, is not sustainable. Like Edwards above, who credited Italian politics as the driving force behind the Catholic publishing of the period, Lowe seems to be

¹⁴ Lowe, WJ (1975) *The Irish in Lancashire 1846-71* PhD unpublished (1974) TCD p366

¹⁵ Lowe, p161

¹⁶ *Liverpool Courier* 18/3/1846, 22/3/1848, 21/3/1849, 20/3/1850; *Liverpool Mercury* 19/3/1847' supplement 18/3/1851, Quoted p356-8 *Manchester Courier* 18/3/1846 quoted p363

ignoring the duality at the heart of both the migrants and their papers-they were Catholic and Irish. Irish Catholics would have shared the purely Catholic concerns about the risorgimento, but, as Mrs Charlton noted, English and Irish Catholics were very different beings and in their Irishness, they had concerns which were their own. They wanted newspapers which addressed this facet of their existence.

So in order to reach the mass of Catholics, news of Ireland and Irish politics would have to feature in any general newspaper. This might not be to the taste of English readers or investors, so a balancing act was required between the wants and needs of English and Irish Catholics. If a paper only attracted Irish readers it still had to negotiate a course with the hierarchy. Here lies the tension at the heart of not only the Irish press in England but of the whole Catholic mission. The press became, in the 1860s, the vehicle for an ideological battle between the different strands of Irish nationalism, which we might put, crudely, as constitutional and fenian, though as it has been noted the worth of such distinctions is difficult to assess, and owe more to hindsight than to the contemporary experience. Almost all shades of Irish opinion aimed at some form of separation from Britain, and the question of how separate and by what means varied not only from person to person, but within the lifetime of individuals. In his study of a nationalist historian, Father Cogan of Drogheda, AP Smyth noted an increasing sense of despair in his writings at political solutions through the 1860s, coloured by his daily contact with the poor-a perspective unavailable to, or ignored, by many in the Anglo-Irish and Catholic middle classes.¹⁷

The press not only provided the vehicle for ideological contests, it was itself fought over. The career of the papers under study here, in particular the *Universal News* illustrate the struggle for self assertion in a migrant community which was defined, overtly at least, as much by its confessional as by its national character. For the religion the migrants brought with them did not belong to them alone and they became part of the English Church. It was a church which was old, proud

¹⁷ Smyth, AP (1992) *Faith Famine and Fatherland in the Irish Midlands: Perceptions of a Priest and Historian, Anthony Cogan 1826-1872*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.p82

and aristocratic, (even in its new converts), and though English and Irish Catholics shared a history of persecution, the antagonisms of nation and politics meant that co-operation would prove difficult. *The Universal News* was one such attempt.

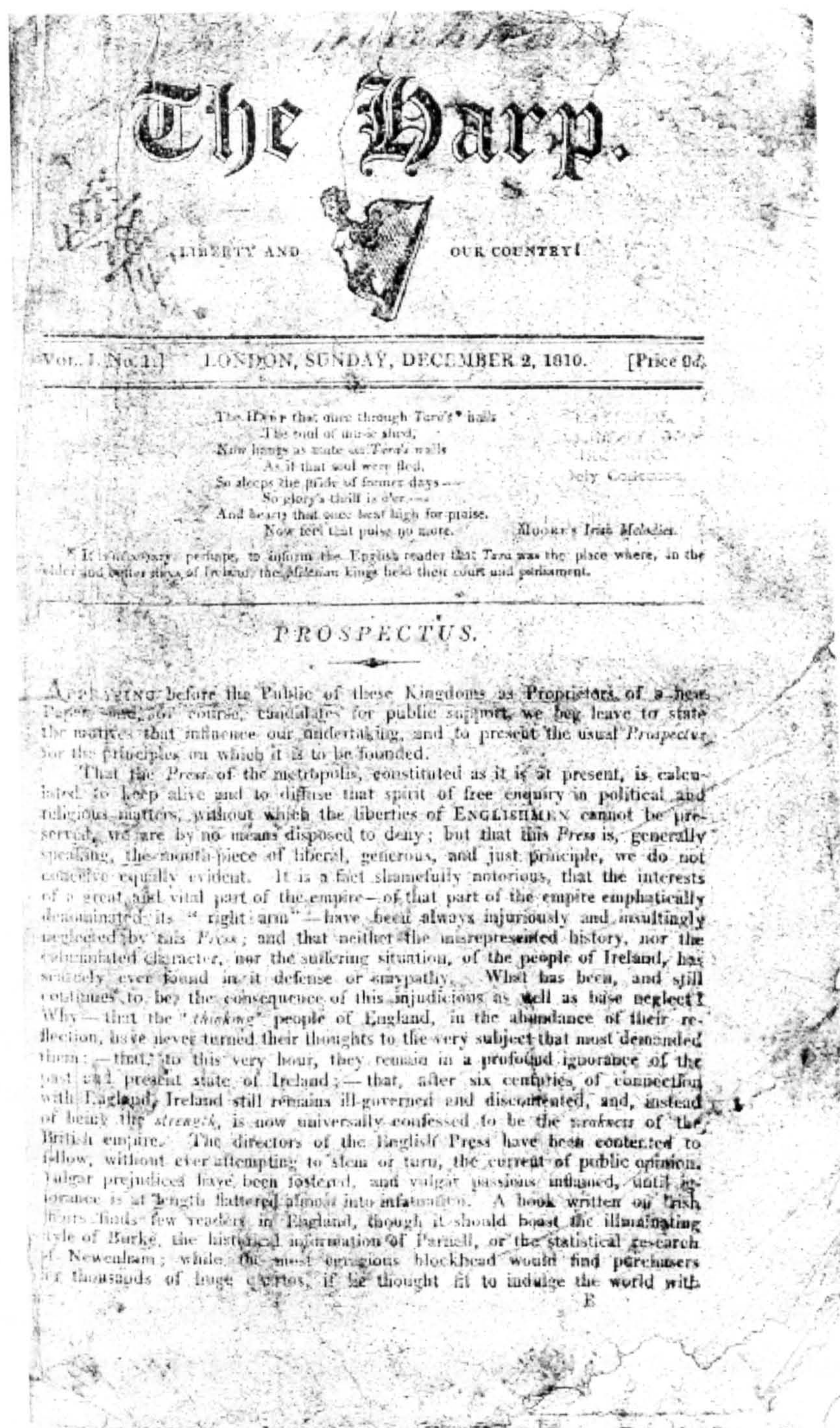


Fig. 6 *The Harp*—the first Irish paper published in England. London 2/12/1810

2.1 Forging a Brotherhood in the Faith?

"A century back" wrote the *Universal News* in October 1861, "the adherents to the ancient faith in England were estimated at about 17,000 within the boundaries of the kingdom". In the present year, there were as many in the Rev Kelly's parish in the east end of London. The causes were twofold,

The wealthy members of the congregations are chiefly converts from Protestantism. The great body of the faithful are chiefly Irish immigrants. To the Irish is mainly due, under providence, the preservation of the faith in the towns and manufacturing centres of England, its resuscitation and present expansion. To the action of polemical discussion and the spirit of God descending on the sincerely pious and well-intentioned seekers after truth, in the great centres of learning, at the universities, is attributable the vast and important accessions which the church has made amongst the enlightened and highly-placed. Thus in England there has been established a brotherhood in the faith between English and Irish.¹

What is missing from this picture of fraternal co-operation is as instructive as what it includes and goes a long way towards explaining the difficulties with which, as we shall see, the paper was already plagued. That the bonds of 'brotherhood in faith' were not as robust nor as intimate as the writer wished us to believe is indicated by the absence of the recusant English from the happy union. If they were not involved in this enterprise, what were they doing? Neither preserving, resuscitating nor expanding, like the Irish, nor seeking after truth like the converts. According to Manning, they were, as was their wont, doing nothing. Himself a convert, and set to become Wiseman's successor, he wrote in 1861 in the middle of the controversy over the fate of the Papal territories, that they were still unwilling to take, as he saw it, their fair share of the work, wishing instead to return to "the old state of the Church when it hardly ventured out."² The job of providing schools for the Irish children, churches for the faithful, and more importantly for the not-so-faithful fell on the hierarchy, upon Wiseman and more especially in this regard, his successor Manning. Some Catholics, recusant and convert "responded nobly to the challenge",

¹ *Universal News* 5/10/1861 p 8-9

² Purcell, E S (1895) *life of Cardinal Manning Archbishop of Westminster*. London: Macmillan and Co. p163

but, as many of the clergy and laity did not recognise the existence of a problem, the impetus had to come from the top.³ The ultramontane clergy were the most energetic, and it was one of these, the Canon of Westminster, Frederick Oakeley, who we find on December 18th 1860, presiding over a meeting in the Islington Poor School at Duncan Terrace, of which he was rector, for the purpose of promoting the *Universal News*.

An account of the meeting was printed in the first issue of the *Universal News* on December 29th, and through the reported speeches, the letters of various lay and clerical supporters of the project and the prospectus and editorial content of the paper the concerns of those involved are amply expressed, and though affairs in Italy are prominent, those of Catholic and Irish rights and wrongs in England and Ireland are to the fore.

Oakeley made the opening speech "to promote the establishment of a cheap Catholic newspaper, under the auspices of The News Newspaper Company (Limited)". His prominence at this stage in the affairs of the *Universal News* has led him to be credited with being the founder⁴, which is not the case-any Catholic venture such as this would have been conducted with the patronage of the clergy and Oakeley was both influential in church circles and sympathetic to the needs of Irish Catholics, as his speech made clear. He set out the principles guiding the paper, saying that "no temporal want was more felt by the Catholics than a good, cheap newspaper, which would be the organ of their rights and their grievances..."⁵ It should be "the organ of their rights and their grievances", independent of any party, liberal without being 'latitudinarian', Catholic but not sectarian. "He felt also", it was reported, "that in such a paper there should be a decided advocacy of Irish interests." He went on,

Ireland was always bound to the faith. Her people were essentially identified with the interests of Catholicism; and he could not conceive of a good Catholic paper which would not prominently and earnestly devote itself to the advocacy of Irish interests.
(Cheers)

³ Newsome, D (1993) *The Convert Cardinals: Newman and Manning*. London: John Murray p192

⁴ Edwards & Storey credit him with being the founder. This is erroneous-he merely gave the paper his blessing.

⁵ *Universal News* 29/12/1860 p14

Wiseman had appointed Canon Frederick Oakeley (1802-1880) to the mission church of St John's, in the (then) distinctly unfashionable district of Islington, on January 26th 1850, "to save from Protestant guile the Irish flock and their children".⁶ He spent the next thirty three years in charge of the church and accompanying Poor School. His congregation was overwhelmingly poor and Irish, and Oakeley displayed a great deal of sympathy for and understanding of his parishioners' needs. Indeed, according to himself, their faithfulness had some bearing on his own decision to leave the Established church. On a trip to Ireland before his conversion, the 'practical representation' of his own (then) religion, contrasted badly in his mind, with the "the love borne by the people for the Old Religion". This convinced him both of the tenacity of Catholicism and the faithfulness of the Irish people.⁷ He kept in touch with the feelings of his congregation—his attitude to Fenianism for example, was not one of outraged condemnation, but, though in no way condoning the actions of the Fenians, he, like Manning displayed an awareness of the underlying causes of rebellion. It was he said, the result of "centuries of the most oppressive legislation, embittered by differences of race and religion."⁸ His parishioners in their turn called him "our Father O'Kelly" after the incumbent of the huge parish in the Commercial Road in the East End.⁹ Oakeley had at one time been thought of as a possible future Archbishop of Canterbury, and some of those he left behind in the Established church thought his subsequent life a waste, . "Poor Oakeley", wrote RW Church, Dean of St Pauls, in terms which spoke more eloquently about him than the object of his pity,

I have always thought of him as one of the converts of 44 or 45 who had sacrificed much that the natural man cares for. He was a man whose quality and whose craving was refinement, not strength or exactness of ascertained truth or originality of any kind, but the grace and beauty of finish. He was just the man to pass a happy and useful life writing elegant and interesting lectures and sermons, and enjoying music and art and good talk without luxury or selfishness, as a distinguished Anglican clergyman. The Romans made nothing of him, but sent him up to Islington to live poorly in a poor house with two Irish

⁶ Gilley, S (1971) 'Protestant London, No Popery And The Irish Poor' In *Recusant History* Vol. II No.1. London: The Catholic Record Society. p29

⁷ Balliol Oxford, MS 408 p19 Ms of Oakeley autobiography.

⁸ Quoted in Rafferty, OP (1996) 'The Church, the State and the Fenian Threat, 1861-75' D Phil. Christ Church Oxford note 200 p213

⁹ Galloway, P (1999) *A Passionate Humility: Frederick Oakeley and the Oxford movement*. Leominster: Gracewing pp250-1

colleagues with just a print or two of the Oxford wreck, which was the overthrow of his old idea of life. And he was to the last, as far as I saw him, interested in nothing so much as in gossip of the old days; and he was always kind and gentle, not without touches of amusement when talking to people who did not think with him. It was like a genuine bit of the old Balliol common room, set in the frame of this dingy Islington parlour.¹⁰

For his part, Oakeley thought his life as a Catholic, even if it was spent, in the words of a similarly jaundiced ex-colleague, "limping about the streets of London-for he was very lame-a misshapen fabric of bare bones, upon which hung some very shabby canonicals,¹¹" as a 'deliverance'.¹² In his ministry, according to Sheridan Gilley, he "mingled appeals to Irish religious nationalism with a heavy handed Hibernian authoritarianism". He had a long-running and ferocious dispute with the head of a local Protestant Institute which specifically targeted Irish Catholics, and in a pamphlet warning against such proselytising entitled *The Wolves in Sheep's Clothing*, he made an emotional and, to modern ears, somewhat manipulative appeal to his congregation,

Beware of these false prophets. Do not forsake your dear Redeemer who has called you into his Church. Do not wound his adorable heart, and the heart of your dear mother Mary. Do not wound the heart of St Patrick, the great apostle of your country. Do not, for the love of God and St Patrick, have anything to do with teachers who blaspheme God and his Blessed Mother.

... Do not prepare for yourselves a miserable deathbed, and a yet more miserable eternity... Drive away these false teachers by making the sign of the Cross, which they hate, and which the devil always fears...

The head of the institute was a man by the name of Maguire and he in turn alleged in a pamphlet of his own, which according to Gilley bears the stamp of authenticity, that Oakeley damned anyone who sent their children to Protestant schools, "at death, the Extreme Unction shall be denied to them, and their bodies... refused burial in any cemetery belonging to the Church. The curse of God shall rest upon them, body and soul, living or dead!"¹³

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Rev Mozley, editor of the *British Critic*, writing two years after Oakeley's death, quoted Galloway p250

¹² quoted Galloway p251

¹³ Gilley S (1971))' Protestant London, No Popery And The Irish Poor' In *Recusant History* V.ii No.i. London: The Catholic Record Society. pp29-30

He presided, with his co-adjutor Fr William Ignatius Dolan over the Islington Popular Catholic Club. It was one of the host of improving societies which abounded in the period, and had a reading room, which supplied the members, (all male) with newspapers, religious and other material, novels, etc. He had definite views on the proprieties involved in the running of such organisations. In the inaugural lecture, 'The Nature and Objects of a Popular Club', he said that he had discounted the possibility of running the club by committee, as he had no faith in that method. "It seemed to me then," he went on, "from the outset, that our Club, to be successful, must be under absolute rule; and, if so, that, looking to its nature and objects, the Clergy should be at the head, and in command of it." This applied to every similar society,

In all such societies the Clergy must be supreme if they have any place in them at all. Otherwise, I apprehend that one of two results will follow;- either the institution will be a thorn in their side, or a mere nullity. Every instrument of social power in a Catholic parish ought either to be in the wielding of the Church, or it ought not to be at all. What the Church cannot sanction, she cannot afford to tolerate. It is altogether beneath her dignity and beside her place, to dabble with institutions which she cannot, and yet ought to, control.¹⁴

The implications for the conductors of the *Universal News* would seem clear-a newspaper would be regarded as just such an 'instrument of social power', and a potent one at that-and in seeking clerical support, they had compromised their own independence. The extent to which they had undermined their freedom of action, or, rather, it was undermined, because they really had no choice, would not become apparent for many months. There were other difficulties, however.

Oakeley introduced the editor, AW Harnet to the meeting, "who was received with loud and sustained applause". Harnet was a well-known provincial journalist of Young Ireland vintage, who relinquished the editorship of the Tipperary Advocate in order to take up the reigns of the *Universal News*. He began humbly enough-

¹⁴ Oakeley, F (1855) *The Nature and Objects of a Popular Club. An Introductory Lecture Addressed to the Islington Catholic popular Club. Printed for the club by Henry Teulon London* p11

everything had been so well explained already, he said, there was little for him to say but "ditto to Canon Oakley." He was a man who was not unaware of his own worth,¹⁵ however, and he did outline what he saw as his own position as editor. This was because he felt he was "expected to say deliberately upon what conditions he consented to conduct a paper which had been entrusted solely to his charge." Oakeley had finished his remarks by saying that, "He hoped the paper would represent the principles which he had endeavoured to embody...so far as it did it should have his support." Harnett finished by proceeding to "point to the influence which Ireland had exercised, and was yet destined to exercise, in the conversion of England to the ancient faith. He hoped that the fire which was yet to rekindle the altars of England was preserved in the turf ashes of Ireland.(Loud cheers)".

The next speaker was a Mr Walford, who had attended the same college in Oxford as the Canon "where he had taken highly distinguished university honours". Walford, more conscious of his superior status to most of the present company, than of the debt he was supposed to feel he owed to the Irish peasantry, said that he "was contented to accept a comparatively small position on the *Universal News*, believing it to be his duty ...and he should discharge his duty with perfect confidence in and obedience to the Editor; for where there was no unity there was no success", for which sacrifice he was loudly cheered. Positions were being drawn, and neither Walford nor Mr Wigley, the next speaker, made any mention of the Irish nature of the venture but concentrated instead on its Catholicity. Indeed, by the time the report appeared in the first issue, on December 29th, Wigley, one of the directors, had already resigned. The reason would become clear at an extraordinary general meeting of the shareholders in July. For the moment, on the surface at least, all appeared well. In the meantime, the paper basked in the good wishes of Catholics, clergy and laity.

¹⁵ In his speech he alluded to a controversy he had been involved in Ireland over a public thank you he had received from the Emperor Napoleon, for the stance he took supportive of the Pope. In the course of the controversy, Harnett said "the perversions of historical fact he, as a public journalist taking a leading part in Irish national and Catholic politics, could not overlook or tacitly acquiesce in. He corrected some of the gross historical errors. He exposed some of the scandalous inventions that were indulged in...He held steadily to this course, and the storm soon lulled in Ireland".

A letter of support from a priest in Bacup ¹⁶ is in typical,

I am happy to hear of your effort to sell a cheap Catholic newspaper in London. There is nothing more necessary to us Catholics in this country than such a journal-one which will be conducted on sound Catholic principles, and at the same time within the reach of the poorest Catholic family. This is a want long sought by our poorer brethren in the faith, and I trust it may be sufficiently supplied by the establishment of the Universal News. I think it the solemn duty of sincere Catholics in this country to aid in establishing a cheap Catholic press amongst them. I recommended the matter to my congregation this morning, and appointed an agent for your paper here, who will send you an order in due time. I beg to enclose 5/- in stamps as my deposit for 2 shares and hope that every priest in England will do likewise.

The prospectus, editorial content and also letters of support make it clear that the paper was intended to have mass appeal, both through its content and its price:

Prospectus

The all-pervading spirit of the universal church cannot be confined within the narrow boundaries of some petty faction within a single state. Catholicity becomes degraded when its grandeur is used as a cloak for some miserable human disguise, as an artifice under which short-sighted mortals endeavour to attain their doubtful ends. Religion itself suffers when its advocacy is undertaken by mere factious journalists; and the violations of truth which are perpetrated in the reckless pursuit of party objects, are made use of by the enemies of the church as examples of her teaching, and of proofs of her want of divine authority. The promoters of the Universal News repudiate all factions in a state; and they have confided the editorial management to the hands of a gentleman well known in the literary world, one who has never yet identified himself with any paltry political faction, whilst he has ever boldly maintained the principles of right and justice against each party in turn, and has been the incessant advocate of Catholicity against heresy and schism, and of the just rights of his fellow countrymen, against oppression and injustice.

The Universal News by its cheapness, is fitted to supercede the low-priced, dangerous and profligate publications which at present circulate so extensive among the working classes. In this respect it will be calculated to combat, by taking the place of evil and demoralising productions. By the careful compilation of its news columns it will render superfluous the seeking out of other sources of weekly intelligence; thus the seeds of

¹⁶ *Universal News* 29/12/1860 p14 from HJ Mulhany St Mary's Bacup, dated 16/12/1860

infidelity, which are too often sown broadcast by the writers of weekly journals, will be prevented from falling upon ground where they might act as tare amidst the wheat.

The promoters offer to the public, not merely a record of Catholic church intelligence, which would be interesting to none save Catholics, and, even amongst them, only a select few; they offer a thoroughly useful general newspaper, conducted in a moral and truly Catholic spirit-a paper which may be placed, without fear of offence, in the hands of any Protestant- a journal which shall endeavour to overcome prejudice by good example rather than by polemical disputation, and which shall ever be distinguished by a rigid and uncompromising adherence to truth, regardless of what faction may suffer, or what party in the state may be hurt by its promulgation.

The subscription is very small, and the shares are so extremely low priced, and the interests and stakes are so vast, that the promoters confidently ask the Catholics of England, and Ireland, and Scotland to come forward and aid the purposes of a good work. A newspaper is nowadays a necessity, and the poorest labourer can afford tuppence per week for such a legitimate object. There are but few persons who cannot afford to give more important aid by becoming shareholders. Ten shillings is but a trifling sum; and if the speculation be only moderately successful in a mercantile point of view, the investment will be very possible. Were Catholics to show anything like the zeal which Protestants exhibit in the propagation of their religious views their position in the state would be far more powerful and independent than it is, and their position as professors of the Ancient Faith would be less provokingly kept over on the defensive. The Irish Catholics in England and Scotland are especially called upon to give an earnest support to the first attempt to establish a newspaper in which their nation, their rights, no less than their religion will be advocated in the metropolis of the British empire. Agents wanted in the principal towns of the United Kingdom.¹⁷

A central concern was the necessity of steering Catholics clear of the Protestant press. The paper took a very 'catholic' interpretation of the term-under the heading 'Protestant' press, the projectors would have included any paper which was not specifically an adherent to the Roman church. The leader column of the first issue declared that in a Protestant country such as England, even the most impartial and honest of papers could not help but be tinged with Protestantism. Protestantism was, ultimately anti-Catholic, so no currently available journal was considered safe. Prior to the launch of the *Universal News*, Catholic newspapers had been too nar-

¹⁷ *Universal News* 29/12/1860 p8

row in scope to appeal to most laymen,

The few Catholic journals which, from time to time have been established in London, have been brought out in the form of strictly religious papers devoted almost exclusively to the publication of Church intelligence, making no attempt to supply general information, and consequently offering no inducement to the general reading community, especially to the poorer classes, to support the Catholic rather than the Protestant newspaper. It is to fill the gap which has hitherto been left unclosed that the Universal News has been projected. It is to be a newspaper conducted in a Catholic spirit, having Catholic objects always in view, but not confined to what, for perspicuity, we may call mere "sectarian" objects. We propose that it shall be fitted to take the place at the fireside which is either vacant, or else filled by some wrongly-inspired organ of public intelligence.¹⁸

Harnett made essentially the same point in his speech at the December 18th meeting, "In this country, " he said,

where the press was rather freely tolerated, the great majority of the newspapers were bound up with the interests of Protestantism, and the difficulty which Catholics laboured under was to find a paper in which the news of the day would be conscientiously recorded, and whose articles, at the same time would be sufficiently tinged with Catholicity.¹⁹

It was through this combination of cheapness and relevance to their everyday lives that the Universal News was projected as the means by which the mass of (Irish) Catholics could be reached. The prospectus stated:-

By the careful compilation of its news columns it will render superfluous the seeking out of other sources of weekly intelligence; thus the seeds of infidelity, which are too often sown broadcast by the writers of weekly journals, will be prevented from falling upon ground where they might act as tare amidst the wheat.²⁰

To some of its projectors then, the objects of the paper were fundamentally re-

¹⁸ *Universal News* 29/12/1860 Leader column p8

¹⁹ *Universal News* 29/12/1860 p3

²⁰ *Universal News* 29/12/1860 p8

ligious—that is, by providing a general newspaper, but one conducted along Catholic lines, it was hoped to keep the readership in close contact with the church's teaching. The general and political content acted as an inducement. However, this does not mean that those among the lay community saw the function of the paper as being essentially religious. If for the clergy, politics was a means to an end, to others it was an end in itself. The question then was how compatible were the political aspirations of Irish and English Catholics, and could the paper address the interests of both? In the objectives of the paper which were carried every week Catholic and Irish aims were equally balanced—the Irish aims being moderate ones, with which most would have agreed but which almost all would have felt inadequate.

Our Objects:

- 1 To organise the Catholics of the empire
- 2 To demand the recognition of all their just claims
- 3 To advocate the cause of Catholics in workhouses prisons and barracks
- 4 To assist in the appropriation of the temporalities of the established church in Ireland to national purposes
- 5 To obtain for Catholics in Ireland a full participation in all public grants for educational purposes, in accordance with the bishops pastoral
- 6 To secure for the peasantry of Ireland an effective tenant right bill

In March 1861, the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick (of which more anon), was organised in Ireland and England and the Universal News began to publish accounts of its meetings up and down the country. The was an openly nationalist organisation, whose objectives went beyond those outlined above and demanded separation from England, and some English Catholics may not have relished the prospect of reading of its affairs. Nor would they have appreciated the coverage of news stories, which, though Harnett had said were to be "tinged with Catholicity", were now increasingly green. This extended beyond coverage of Irish affairs but incorporated a view on events which had an unmistakably Irish viewpoint, as in criticism of British policy in India. Britain was held to account for the way it dealt with, among other things, the Mutiny of 1857-8. In the spring of 1861, parts of India were suffering from famine, to which, the paper said, the government was being slow to

respond. In a criticism obviously resonating with recent Irish experience, and clear to all its readers, of whichever nationality, the paper pointed the finger not only at the government but at the British population as a whole. "The British government is accountable" said the paper in March,

for the people it has undertaken to govern against their will and whose native land and natural kings and rulers it has slain or exiled. Every individual who applauded the acts which were done by or under the government is morally responsible for the results. This country has voluntarily taken upon itself a fearful responsibility. We await with deep interest the steps which will be taken to meet the exigency of the case. The meeting at the London Mansion House last Thursday was simply a private, voluntary movement. The greatest of such efforts would be incapable of meeting a hundredth part of the need.²¹

Not many Englishmen could have read such criticism without discomfort. From the first issue, which contained an article copied from a French paper, *Le Constitutionnel*, on press prosecutions²², English failings in Ireland were exposed with alacrity. By April, as this reply to a Mr. WB Cheshire in the correspondents²³ column makes clear, there were rumblings of discontent from some of the English readership,

we do our best to cater for all our readers, English as well as Irish, and hitherto our English friends have had the lion's share. The greatest subject of complaint up to the establishment of the *Universal News* was that Irishmen, Irish feelings, and Irish interests were altogether unrepresented in the English Protestant press and grossly misrepresented in the Catholic press. Half of our mission would be unfulfilled if we neglected to enlighten our English readers upon the true state of Ireland and of Irish feelings

That the writer is equally unhappy with the Catholic as well as the Protestant press in England is indicative that since the death of Frederick Lucas²⁴ in 1855, Irish Catholics felt they no longer had a journal from which they could expect as fair a

²¹ *Universal News* 30/3/1861 p9

²² Written by an H Marie Martin, it was in reply to other French papers which had criticised English policy on the press as being too liberal. It reminded readers of the prosecutions against journalists and newspapers in 1848, and also of trials such as of Daniel O'Connell and his allies in 1848 before packed juries. *Universal News* 29/12/1860 p4

²³ *Universal News* 20/4/1861 page 8

²⁴ Frederick Lucas, 1812-1850, a Quaker who converted to Catholicism and founded the *Tablet* in 1840. He transferred the paper from London to Dublin in 1850, (though it subsequently returned) and became MP for Meath in 1852. His death in 1855 was popularly believed to have been caused by disappointment at the failure of the Tenant Right movement of which he was a leader, after Cardinal Cullen instructed the clergy to withdraw from it.

hearing, as they had from the *Tablet* when he was at the helm.

The tensions which had been always been present came to a head at the extraordinary shareholders meeting, held on 2/7/1861, and reported in the issue of 6/7/1861, which also furnished details of the financial organisation and circulation (if it can be believed) of the paper. The meeting was called because the paper was in financial difficulties. The sum of £500 was needed urgently, to be raised from the existing shareholders, or if not by finding new ones. They could not get credit as they were a limited liability company and therefore needed cash to trade. The problems were not editorial (not yet), the meeting passed votes of confidence in the editor and sub-editor. Nor, apparently, were sales a problem,

The circulation which had been steadily increasing week after week exceeded 6,000 copies, being more than three-times the largest circulation ever before obtained by a Catholic newspaper. At the rate at which it was steadily progressing, it would soon reach the sale of 10,000 copies, and at that circulation it would be safe, and would commence to be profitable to the proprietors in a Mercantile point of view.²⁵

The paper was undercapitalised. Of the originally proposed capital of £10,000 in 20,000 shares only about one fourth had been applied for. The paper was printed under the auspices of a joint stock company, the News Newspaper Company, the directors and shareholders being a mixed group of English and Irish Catholics, with a strong element of tee-totalism. It had a projected capital of £10,000 in 20,000 shares of ten shillings each. Only 2/6d was payable on allotment of requested shares, however, and the remainder was to be called up as necessary. This was to prove no easy task. A glance at the Memorandum of Association ²⁶ shows that the News Newspaper Co. was registered in London on 20/10/1859, so it took over a year for the project to get off the ground. The meeting was told that people had been unwilling to speculate on such a venture. The directors had been forced to put their

²⁵ *Universal News* 6/7/1861 p8

²⁶ PRO Kew BT31427 1653

hands in their own pockets and in order to assuage the fears of the doubters had brought over from Ireland a well-known newspaper editor, namely A.W. Harnet.

...other difficulties at once represented themselves. Their meetings were disturbed by disappointed persons; the rivalries of trade and politics were brought to bear against them; many people seemed to think that since the paper had been brought out nothing more remained to be done and it would be a remunerative concern from the start. There was a consequent apathy exhibited about taking up shares. But the greatest cause of complaint which they had was this - that persons who had applied for shares and to whom the shares had been allotted, did not take them up when called on. There were just 1500 shares allotted to persons who refused to pay upon them when applied to.

The reasons for this were various.

Some of these parties were deterred by the disturbances at the early meetings - some were influenced by the jealous whisperings of rivalry - some of by one cause - some by another, but the end was that the directors were not sufficiently supported by shareholders.²⁷

The paper was solvent, in a far better position than could have been expected in so short a time and with so little outlay, only £1,100 to date, which meant that they had been unable to pay reporters and subscribers as they would have wished and had been unable to afford to advertise. The paper, though doing well, was not yet "in a paying condition". If it managed to reach the figure of 10,000 sales weekly, the management considered it would command, not only a wider range of advertisements, but higher prices, thus making it profitable. One of the warring tee-totallers Mr Carrigan, moved a resolution to do as the directors wished.

At this point, Mr Wigley, the director who had resigned just after the first number, suggested the *Universal News* should instead be offered for sale, "as there might be gentlemen who wished to purchase it and carry it on according to their own views". The proposal, according to the report, was greeted with derisive laughter. He added "he himself and two or three of his friends were very much annoyed at the

²⁷ *Universal News* 6/7/1861 p8

political tone of the paper, and they dissented most strongly from the opinions of the editor." At this the chairman had to remind the many people who wished to intervene that they must keep to the agenda, but this was not to be. Wigley was openly mocked. In an aside that showed the gulf between those who held views like Wigley and majority of the paper's supporters, "a perfect storm of mirth was occasioned to by a gentleman who sarcastically proposed that the paper should be sold to Mr Spurgeon and gravely asked Mr Wigley to second that practical amendment."²⁸ Charles Spurgeon was the most famous preacher of his day, a Baptist, who regularly drew crowds of ten thousand to his meetings. It is significant that Wigley, should be lumped together with evangelical Protestants, as if those Irish Catholics present could not recognise his Catholicity. Religion and nation were so closely bound together that to many they were indistinguishable. For his Irish protagonists, Wigley was too English to be a true Catholic. To many English Catholics, especially in the succeeding years, their co-religionists were too Irish.

Despite the chairman's wishes, Harnett too, was determined to have a tilt at Wigley,

a man would not be fit for the responsible position of a public instructor as the chief editor of a newspaper of vast circulation and great influence, if he was so silly as to suppose, like the old man with the ass in the fable, that he could please everyone. He was sorry that Mr Wigley and his two or three friends differed from him, but he could not modify his opinions on that account. He had made politics the study of his life, and he believed himself capable of imparting sound views upon them to his readers. He could not and would not trim his sails to catch the favourable popular breeze; but the proof that he fairly and truly interpreted the general feelings of his readers, his fellow countrymen and co-religionists was to be found in the fact that the readers of the Universal News were steadily and regularly increasing in number, week after week, and that no Catholic journalist ever before, had so many readers in England as he had. Much as he regretted the dissent of Mr Wigley and his friends he could not think of trying to win their approval by the abandonment of that which he believed to be sound, true and just, and by the denial of his belief and opinions which were shared, conscientiously and firmly by thousands of thousands of Irish and English Catholics.²⁹

The resolution on fund-raising was passed with one dissenting vote, that of Mr Wig-

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

ley, who after leaving the *Universal News* had joined the direction of the *Universe*,³⁰ and one hundred and eleven shares were subscribed to on the spot.

For the present, that the paper was now firmly in the hands of Irish Catholics was affirmed by other speakers. A Mr Masset, who was later to become a director, "who spoke with great effect frequently during the evening, dwelt with much force upon the want of such an organ as the *Universal News*, which had been felt longly and deeply by the Irish Catholic community in England, and particularly in London." Failure would be a disaster and a disgrace. "They must not be beaten. They had brought out a paper of which they had every reason to feel proud, and they must now support it."³¹

To the voices of its Irish supporters, as expressed at the meeting, the paper added its own, "This paper belongs to the Catholic community, but chiefly to the Irish Catholics resident in England", the question of fatherland appeared settled. The controversy did not go away however. In July in an article entitled "Catholic Journalism,"³² the arguments between Tory and Irish Catholics were again rehearsed. A correspondent had complained that the paper was forever holding Catholic writers and prominent men up to public odium "whilst there were so many more suitable objects of attack to be found in those enemies of the Catholic Church who surrounded her on all sides, and were labouring ever against her." In answer to this the paper warned against enemies from within, who were a much more dangerous variety. Singled out for particular 'odium' were the aristocratic English Tory Catholics and their organ the *Tablet*. It, said the paper, supported "Austrian invasion and despotism in Italy" and argued that Catholicity was "essentially Tory". It further supported the divine right of kings, whilst the common people

have no rights whatsoever, except that such as kings may in the plenitude of their power to grant them; under the reservation nevertheless, that monarchs may rescind these favours at their good pleasure and govern their subjects by bayonet and dungeon and torture if it should appear agreeable to them so to rule!³³

³⁰ Dwyer, JJ in Beck p 506

³¹ *Universal News* 6/7/1861 p8

³² *Universal News* 13/7/1861 p8-9

³³ Ibid.

They argued that the English people were a Protestant people, who were brought up to hate and fear Catholics,

we are living amongst a stern hard-headed Protestant people, who have been reared and educated amidst prejudices of the most wild, ... people filled with ancient stories about bloody Mary and the massacre of St Bartholomew, and saturated with modern romantic inventions of the high pressure, spasmodic school of horrors and demonology about Jesuits and Jesuitry.

Tory Catholics, the paper said, in a mirror image of the argument to be used by clerics against the Fenians, gave Protestants ammunition against Catholics. It went on,

If we, who represent the entire body of Irish Catholics (always the most faithful) and the large majority we hope of English Catholic freemen were to remain silent and suffer ourselves to be misrepresented by those who merely ask for our silence while they talk, what would be the consequence? Just this, that Protestants would say, and be justified in saying, "These Papists are all that they are said to be by their most vehement opponents. See they are openly proclaiming their vile principles of divine right. They are leagued with our bitterest enemies against liberty and England."³⁴

Harnett published correspondence agreeing with the paper's stance, including one from a shareholder (nom de plume Scrutator) congratulating them for laying "it hot and heavy on the back of the Tory *Tablet*". It was the case, the writer went on that there was "unhappily a distinction between the Irish and certain English Catholics, a line that cannot be effaced". The solution was to give the Irish people, as a distinct race and nation, a distinct legislature.³⁵

By the following spring, the growing demands for national separation in the *Universal News* led to criticism from sections of the Catholic press in England. The *Weekly Register*, edited by Henry Wilberforce was one such, and in reply Harnett, as usual, was unrepentant "For many months past" he wrote "we have been assailed by all sides with the cry that the *Universal News* is "too Irish". The paper had

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

been calling for repeal of the Act of Union, because it had meant ruin for Ireland and was also bad for the Empire. They had, he said,

been offered, any amount of funds, and patronage, and support, and if only we would cast our way into the scale of English Toryism. Great efforts have been made to coax and guide us into that line of politics. Support of or opposition to the *Universal News* has, in some remarkable instances been made contingent on our support of the Union, and giving up Ireland as a nation.

Then in a passage which must have made some of the clerical supporters of the paper nervous, he referred to the hostility that was sometimes manifest between Irish nationalists and their English clergy. A priest had written cancelling his subscription,

because he cared nothing about the Irish, none of whom were in his mission; and, as (it) was chiefly devoted to matters connected with the Irish, it had no manner of interest for him.

The paper's response was not regretful, but dismissive.

We have been deprived of that Reverend gentleman's tuppence a-week... and the only consolation left to us has been that the knowledge of the fact which reached us for the first time, and that there was a mission in England in which there were no Irish.³⁶

By August 1862, the subtitle under the original masthead changed from 'Published by the News Newspaper Co. Ltd.' to 'The Only Organ of Irish Catholic Opinion in England', thus making the paper's stance manifest, while having a sideswipe at its rivals in the cheap Catholic press, the *Universe* and the *Northern Press*. The attempt at producing a general paper which all Catholics could read had foundered on the thorny issue of Anglo-Irish relations. It is possible that the paper's financial problems could be attributed to the same cause. There is no hard data available upon which to assert this with absolute confidence, but it seems reasonable to assume so. In appealing to an Irish, rather than an English readership, even if the latter were more likely to buy newspapers, there were, potentially at least, a far greater

³⁶ *Universal News* 8/2/1862 p8

number of Irish readers, so no loss is likely there. Where the paper could have suffered is through the loss of English investors. The Irish may have been enthusiastic, but most of them were poor, and for many of them "tuppence a week" was the extent to which they could afford in any venture. Patriotic Englishmen were unwilling to read, much less invest in a journal which criticised their government and the historical treatment by their nation of the Irish, and which exposed its wrongdoings elsewhere in the world. There never was a possibility of a 'brotherhood in the faith' between Irish and English Catholics, especially, it appears, the recusants, their worlds were too far apart, their motivations too different. However, the paper continued with the support and was itself supportive of the Catholic clergy, but it will be seen that this relationship too, was at times fraught and subject to constant renegotiation with the changing political situation.

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2.2 Teetotal Wars, Newspaper Wars and Their Casualties,

With a headline reading "Our Late Editor," the leader column of 26th April, 1862, announced the inglorious departure of A.W. Harnett. His passing, the details of which follow, is illustrative of the sometimes fraught relationship between editor and proprietor. The choice of editor, one of the two perennial difficulties of running a newspaper-the other being, of course, the lack of funds, had long been acknowledged as such. "There must be", wrote a commentator on the demise of the United Irishman's paper the *National Journal*,

an acting-editor of abilities to conduct the business, and no man of spirit will ever submit to the caprice, the control, and the censures of the number of persons who will deem that they will have a right to interfere in a matter which their money goes to support.¹

The *National Journal* had been owned by a committee of twenty equal shareholders. The *Universal News* was directed by a board of nine, but the problem was the same-editors wanted independence, and directors were unwilling to grant total licence to any journalist, even the editor, and even if, as was the case with Harnett, he had been induced to invest his own money in the venture. Harnett was, in fact, the largest shareholder, with 200 shares at 10/- each,² and this explains perhaps why he felt that he had 'consented to conduct' the paper. His sacking must have been all the more galling for it. The circumstances were a mixture of politics, personality and a change of proprietor. Harnett was, as previously stated, a well-known provincial journalist and editor. He was not the first, or rather original choice, however. The company secretary, John Eugene O'Cavanagh was, according to himself, the original choice, "unanimously elected its editor by the board of directors."³ This was before the paper appeared. "Owing to subsequent differences with the board", Harnett was persuaded to take the reins of the *Universal News* instead, bringing with him from Tipperary, the youthful J.F. O'Donnell as his sub-editor. O'Cavanagh was, as we shall see, to have a history of "differences" with the board, indeed, such seem to have been the stock in trade of the profession at the time.

¹ Inglis B (1954) *The Freedom of the Press in Ireland 1784-1841*, Vol V Studies in Irish History. London: Faber and Faber, p99 quoting William Paulet Carey.

² File in the P.R.O. Kew BT 31 427 1653

³ JE O'Cavanagh, in a contribution to *Notes and Queries*, 3rd Series XI. Feb 23rd 1867 pp154-5

The paper drew its support mainly from Irish Catholics, the majority from London, but there were other interests. One of these was a group more normally associated with Protestantism—Temperance. This was, however, very much a live issue at the time, and while many Catholics were suspicious of temperance movements which they suspected of proselytism, they did have their own organisations and leaders, the most famous of whom was Father Matthew. Early in its career, the paper announced a column devoted to the interests of the Catholic Teetotal Society. The moral degradation and especially the violence occasioned by the demon drink was the driving force behind temperance, but sobriety does not appear to have brought with it peace and harmony and added to the troubles of the editor who tired of acting as referee in their no doubt earnest but bad-tempered disputes, at one stage threatening to discontinue their column unless they ceased to use it as a platform to abuse each other and the world at large. He admonished them to observe,

temperance in language and calmness in debate"... "truth and virtue can never suffer from open and fair debate but men sadly err who fancy that, because they practise a single virtue and carry it to even full perfection, are therefore so far lifted above their fellows as to be justified in dealing out opprobrium lavishly upon all who do not agree in the most minute particulars with themselves.⁴

As an interest group with a cause, they supplied the paper with some of its most active supporters. They were also represented among its correspondents. Like many papers of the period the *Universal News* depended for some of its news and opinion on its correspondents. They could be paid or unpaid as the paper could afford and allowed a wider newsgathering capability than the small staff could provide. The paper received cheap or free information and the correspondent had the gratification of seeing his or her words in print. Some of the smaller papers were virtually one man shows and this kind of co-operative effort was vital. This system had its own disadvantages as the correspondents were not always easy to please, and the teetotallers in particular were a source of constant irritation to the editor, who was forced to write an article on the difficulties of managing them. The paper complained that their status as correspondents lead some of them to expect to see their names in print as a right, even if they were, as in the case of the teetotallers engaged in in-

⁴ *Universal News* 25/5/1861 p8

terne cine arguments that no one outside of their organisation had any interest in.⁵ One prominent disputant, who combined the roles of teetotaller, agent and correspondent, on opening his packet of papers, and not finding his latest missive printed, simply sent them all back, denying everyone in his town of Manorhamilton, Leitrim their paper that week, and the paper the income. Distribution was always problematical, more often due to the vagaries of the postal system than to injured pride, though on this occasion the agent relented and wrote the following week to acknowledge the editor's right to decide what did or did not go into the paper.⁶

The teetotallers, however fractious, were a significant force in the *Universal News*, and a letter ⁷ from one of them, (a Nicholas Brennan, of the Hibernia Dairy, who was also a shareholder) suggests that they could have had a controlling interest. The paper was still in financial difficulties, and it had been proposed to sell it. Brennan was prepared to double his holding in order to ensure it did not fall into the hands of people who were not teetotallers. "I as an Irish Catholic and a teetotaller object to its contemplated sale believing as I do that there is sufficient patriotism among the teetotal Catholic party in England to rescue the *Universal News*....," and said he would do whatever else he could to aid the paper. Another letter in the same vein from another teetotaller Garryowen urged those who conducted the paper to enlist the support of the teetotal party, the Catholic Amalgamated Teetotal Association, voicing the commonly held fear of the deleterious effects of the mainstream press, "Is it not a crying evil to have our people reading such newspapers as Lloyd's News, Weekly Times, Reynold's Newspaper, Penny Newsman and others which delight in slandering the character of our priests and people". He continued in terms which echoed WJ Lowe's contention that possession of a newspaper was considered a mark of the community's good standing -a matter of civic pride, "Our poor people must have a cheap newspaper, why not then have a Catholic one, one that is as well brought out as the highest priced weekly newspaper in the kingdom"⁸ In the event the paper was not sold, but on 8/3/1862, was leased to one of the directors, Francis Scannell, who remained the proprietor until the summer of 1865.

⁵ *Universal News* 13/7/1861 p9

⁶ *Universal News* 20/7/1861 p11

⁷ *Universal News* 1/2/1862 p9

⁸ Ibid.

Harnett, exasperated though he was by warring correspondents was not averse to a degree of literary argy-bargy himself and his leaving was surrounded by controversy. As indeed, had been his coming. At the inaugural meeting held in Islington in the dying days of 1860, half of Harnett's speech was taken up with a row he had become involved in previously, and which had become something of a cause celebre. He had written in 1859 that Catholics should cease to criticise Napoleon III, whose policy entailed support of the papal states, in case that caused him to change his mind, or to give him an excuse for doing so if that was his intention. For this, he had received a letter of thanks from Napoleon, which caused an uproar in some quarters, and he was accused of being no Catholic. This all blew over, but the controversy resurfaced when he came to take on the *Universal News*. Harnett alleged that a "wealthy party" had employed someone to travel the country telling the agents and newsvendors that the *Universal News* was "a subsidised organ of the Emperor Napoleon". Writing in November of 1861,⁹ he said that similar 'malignant slanders' were being aired again. As we shall see, this was not to be the last time an editor of the paper was to be the victim of subterfuge.

This issue that was to prove Harnett's undoing, however, was closer to home, having its origins in the fraught relations between English and Irish Catholics, and also possibly, a degree of trade rivalry. Harnett had taken a dislike to SB Harper, an English clerical convert who had previously taken over a (Scottish) Irish paper the *Glasgow Free Press* and had recently acquired another, the *Northern Press* of Liverpool. What had provoked his ire was what he considered the duplicitous attitude of the owner to his Irish readers. Briefly, both the *Northern Press* and the *Glasgow Free Press* had given away copies of a lithograph of the Young Ireland hero, Terence Bellew MacManus.¹⁰ Then, taking a totally different tack (according to Harnett) the *Northern Press* had carried a long article urging the Irish to concentrate on religion rather than nationality, "Long have we laboured" it said, "to convince the Irish people that their cause is a Catholic cause and not a national one," and coun-

⁹ *Universal News* 2/11/1861 p9

¹⁰ He died and was buried in America and his body was exhumed and transported back to Ireland by US Fenians and re-interred. The surrounding publicity is widely seen as being of seminal importance in the rise of Fenianism in Ireland and Britain, control of the proceedings being fought over by 'constitutional' and 'militant' nationalists. The latter group supported by the sister of the deceased won, to the chagrin of the constitutionalists and their clerical allies.

selling the Irish to forget "all this Celtic nonsense." Venality was added to the charge sheet, when Harnett revealed that on seeing the popularity of the (free) lithograph, the Glasgow paper had offered them for sale the following week at 3d each. Harnett accused Harper of trying to ingratiate himself with his Irish readers with the free lithograph, and then of trying to profit from their patriotism with the subsequent sale of the same, all the time showing his true colours in the editorial content of his papers which was hostile to that same nationality ¹¹

This was the background to the fatal row, which, when it occurred, in the spring of 1862 again involved SB Harper, but also AM Sullivan of the *Dublin Nation* and *Morning News*, the conductors of the *Dundalk Democrat* and finally most of the provincial press in Ireland. The catalyst was a letter from a correspondent (sober or otherwise we are not informed), who shared Harnett's views on Italy, having served in the Papal Brigades. He enclosed a report from the *Northern Press* of one of the many St Patrick's Day banquets, attended by the revered Liverpool cleric Father Nugent, (who edited, and was eventually to become that paper's owner) in the chair. SB Harper and AM Sullivan were speakers. In essence, the correspondent and Harnett accused Harper of playing the same game as before, in his speech. Harper, mindful of the predilections of his audience, especially on the date in question, had addressed them, not as the Englishman which he was but, for this occasion at least as an Irishman.

But I speak as an Irishman and I say do not lose the glorious crown of confessorship, do not pluck from your brows the glorious chaplet of martyrdom and hand it over to the infidel and nationalist and say that we have been fighting for a dream, do not let your religion be trampled down by the revolution, but by good example and patience, make your way against your enemies and if God wills, when the time comes, by drawing your swords (Loud Cheers) ¹²

Against whom the swords were to be drawn, he does not say, but we can be sure that to the audience it was the ancient enemy, England. The speech is rather confused, determined by Harper's conflicting objectives. The talk of swords and of

¹¹ *Universal News* 7/12/1861 pp. 9-10

¹² *Universal News* 29/3/1862 pp. 9-10

being an Irishman was obviously playing to the gallery. Allusions to Ireland's place at the top of the premier league of suffering for the faith would too have been popular, but in echoing the Church's current teaching on the nature of organisations like the National Brotherhood of St Patrick, (who would have been the representatives of revolution), and in equating nationalists with infidels, he was treading on less certain ground. His audience does not seem to have objected. Harnett, for his part, did not have any quarrel with Harper's politics as expressed at the celebration, which were reprinted in the *Glasgow Free Press* as well as in the *Northern Press*. On the contrary,

As English Catholic journals there can be no objection raised as to their consistency. The constant denunciations of Irish nationality which they contain are proof of their English consistency and thorough English loyalty and to those qualities in an Englishman, whether he be Protestant or Catholic, no man has a right to object.¹³

Harper was merely the occasion for sin-on the part of Sullivan. Sullivan, it will be remembered was the bete noir of militant nationalists, reviled as the Ghoul,¹⁴ and it was his part in the proceedings which outraged Harnett. Following on from Harper's professed Irishness, Sullivan had promised to see to it that Harper was indeed enrolled as an honorary Irishman and offered to be his godfather for the purpose. Harnett was outraged.

But when, at a crowded public meeting not of Catholics merely but of Irish assembled to celebrate the festival of the patron saint and apostle of Ireland, the English editor of two English papers deliberately warns Irishmen against entertaining ideas of freedom from the overmastery and thralldom of England, and places "infidels" and "nationalists" in the same category, when he speaks thus in the presence of the editor of an eminent Irish paper bearing the distinctive title of the Nation, and when the Irish editor of the Nation not only makes no objection to such language but publicly declares the man who used it worthy of being an Irishman and states he is determined to enrol his name on the list of Irish worthies, offering himself as sponsor at the new national baptism, we think the occurrence altogether so strange that it is fair to all parties that questions should be put simply and without heat in order that fair and candid explanations be given.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ghoul was the nickname of a man who informed on the members of O'Donovan Rossa's Phoenix Society. The whole affair was widely believed to have been precipitated by an article in Sullivan's paper on secret societies in Cork. Wherever Sullivan appeared subsequently, Fenians and their supporters greeted him with cries of "The Ghoulah! The Ghoulah!"

¹⁵ *Universal News* 29/3/1862 p9-10



Fig. 7 Letter from Fr. Nugent to the Inland Revenue when he eventually bought the *Northern Press* in December 1868. He had edited it off and on from 1861. It was "more Catholic than Irish." Nugent was a major figure in Liverpool. The notepaper is from his boy's refuge which provided trainees for the printworks. This letter was sent from the Borough Gaol, where he was chaplain, one of his multitude of roles. PRO IR83/163

Harnett was clearly not the man to take his own advice about the temperature at which debates should take place. The *Dundalk Democrat* had the temerity to criticise his criticism of Sullivan, which he duly savaged, which led Sullivan's Morning News to defend its defender, which led to even more heat,

The *Dublin Morning News* volunteers to champion the cause of the rowdies, of those ignorant, uneducated, vulgar, abusive persons who, by here and there getting possession of a provincial newspaper bring contempt and odium upon the provincial press of Ireland.¹⁶

With the headline, "Our Late Editor"¹⁷ the leader column of the issue of the 24th of May announced the chief casualty in this newspaper war. Harnett had ceased to be the editor the previous Saturday. He had previously been on the defensive, purposely excluding from his condemnation, the press of the great cities of Dublin, Belfast and Cork, and those papers in the provinces "conducted by gentlemen and men of learning, namely by way of an example, such as Dr O'Brennan of the *Connaught Patriot*." It is surely no coincidence that the paper had recently acquired a new proprietor, who would not have relished such a wide-ranging controversy. The new brooms, in the person of John Eugene O'Cavanagh, whom Harnett had replaced and who now returned the compliment were full of praise for Harnett's abilities but damning of his character. He was a man of

intellectual organisation, statesmanlike comprehension of international relations and high order of genius" which qualified him for the "lofty mission" he had undertaken. This had been "First, the joint advocacy of Catholicity and downtrodden Ireland, a union of purposes justified by the fact that Ireland owes her martyr sufferings, her bitter persecutions, her degradation to her unbroken fidelity to the faith of the Saints. Its secondary mission was to supersede in the Catholic households of Gt Britain publications Protestant, immoral, irreligious, seductive and to foster a taste for a pure, a high toned and an elevating literature."¹⁸

¹⁶ *Universal News* 26/4/1862 p9

¹⁷ *Universal News* 24/5/1862 p8

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

However,

in the exercise of these powers he provoked the suspicions of men confided in, who had been faithful to creed and country. He alienated the men who had placed him in the enviable position of head of the Catholic and Irish organ in England, he alarmed the shareholders, he aroused such hostility by an all but general impeachment of the Irish press and to such an extent that his removal from the editorial chair became a necessity and thus has closed his late official career and with it, it is hoped, the ascerbities provoked by those idiosyncratic manifestations which gave pain to many earnest Catholics and estranged not a few of our friends.¹⁹

So Harnett, who had already alienated sections of the paper's English supporters, now lost the confidence of the management, and his two hundred shares notwithstanding, he had to go. The new editor continued with an outline of future policy,

The present conductors of the *Universal News* have at heart as their primary object 'the organisation of the Catholics of the empire'. The energies of the editorial staff shall be consistently and personally directed to this end. The great political parties are now so nicely balanced the influence of the Catholics can turn the scale... The many admirable confraternities and societies within the pale of the church, or sanctioned by her shall have our best support and command our columns.²⁰

This last could be read as implicit criticism of Harnett's allowing the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick access, but the Brotherhood continued to feature in the paper for some time yet and would indeed, in the shape of Christopher Clinton Hoey and JP McDonnell come to take the paper over in 1867. For the present, the *Universal News* embarked, under the cautious proprietorship of Francis Scannell on what was to be its most prosperous and tranquil period, which lasted until he severed his connections with the paper in 1865. Harnett's departure had its origins in the increasingly fraught political atmosphere, of the 1860s, as vague hints of secret organisations gave way to accusations of sedition, pulpit condemnations, arrests and finally an abortive rebellion, and the relationship between the mass of the Irish people and their pastors was tested as never before.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

2.3 Brotherhoods-Open secrets and hidden agendas

Ireland in the nineteenth century, at some times more acquiescent than at others was nevertheless a country full of the bitterest resentment, always threatening and sometimes producing open rebellion. The Queen's peace, if that is the correct term for it, was only maintained with difficulty, a permanent garrison, paramilitary police force and with frequent resort to repressive legislation. Constitutional politics, especially in the 1860s, was held in low esteem. The Irish parliament, unrepresentative as it had been, had been destroyed by the Act of Union. The great achievement of the Catholics, emancipation, meant that though they could then stand for parliament, very few of them could vote, for in the wake of this triumph, the sectarian imbalance of power was restored by increasing the property qualification from 40/- to £10, thus disenfranchising the vast majority of Catholic voters, the county electorate shrinking from 216,000 to 37,000 in the process. The franchise was significantly widened in 1850, but even then, and even amongst those who attempted parliamentary reform, no great hopes for progress were entertained. Frederick Lucas, English Quaker convert to Catholicism and proprietor of the *Tablet* (London 1840), became a champion of Irish causes. He moved his paper to Dublin in 1850 and was elected for an Irish constituency in 1852, after which he confided in a friend his feelings for the Irish peasantry and the parliamentary task ahead of him.¹

The wrongs they continue to endure fill me with a passionate indignation, which I hardly know how to express or repress; and I would give every hope I have in the world to alleviate them but a little.. I fancy that a man who enters the House of Commons with these feelings is little better than a fool.. What right has he to dream of an Irish people, possessing an Irish character, requiring an Irish social and political organisation, unfitted for the narrow pedantry of English systems, and whom an English House of Commons may torture, but cannot govern... I fancy that to attempt wisdom for Ireland in an English House of Commons is not exactly a contradiction in terms, but a practical contradiction just about as gross.

The greater hopes of Lucas and others in parliamentary agitation were dashed in the damaging dispute with Cardinal Cullen over his decision to disallow

¹ Piggott, R (1882) *Recollections Of An Irish National Journalist*. Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co. London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co. p4

further clerical involvement in politics and the betrayal of Sadleir and Keogh.² Lucas' own early death in 1855 was attributed to despair at his thwarted efforts. Subsequently, many abandoned constitutional politics altogether and concentrated their efforts at attempting to overthrow the government by force.

The avowed aim of the *Universal News* was to take an independent line in politics, free, in the broad sense of the word as used at the time of 'party' affiliation, so it gave space to various of the attempts at reconstituting a 'national' movement to replace the Independent Irish party of the 1850s. Amongst those were organisations whose aims were not always apparent on first, or even second sight. The clandestine nature of much of the political activity of the 1860s makes for interesting reading but difficult writing. This was the period which saw the rise of the Fenians as they are popularly known, (though this is the original name of the US arm of the movement, in Ireland and Britain they were called the Irish Revolutionary, later Republican Brotherhood). It has been said that to research this area one needs the patience of Job, the cunning of Machiavelli and the inscrutability of the Sphinx³. When writing about Fenian journalism, (or perhaps more properly those journals and journalists accused of being Fenians), the problems of secrecy, false identities, deception etc are compounded by the normal journalistic practice of the day of not signing articles. Contributors of poetry and fiction used pseudonyms, as did those who filled the correspondents (and correspondence) columns. To ascertain who was the editor of a paper is by no means a straightforward task. Exactly what motivated the (anonymous) writers is often obscure and the significance of their writings is hard to gauge and open to differing interpretations. It is in this light that it is wise to view the following article on the launch of a new Catholic Association, which appeared in March 1861:

² Members of Independent Irish opposition, who took government positions despite previous pledges not to do so. Keogh in particular, as a judge who presided over the trials of many Fenians was the object of much hatred, especially as disillusion at his 'place-hunting' behaviour led many (it was argued) to the movement in the first place. Sadleir, later a bankrupt and fraudster, killed himself.

³ Marcus Bourke quoted by Quinlivan, PJ (1994) 'Hunting the Fenians: problems in the historiography of a secret organisation' O'Sullivan P (ed) *The Creative Migrant, Vol 3 The Irish Worldwide: History, Heritage, Identity*. Leicester: Leicester University Press. P 14

The objects for the attainment of which the *Universal News* was established and placed under the present management are known to all our readers. It is too soon to expect that positive results should be exhibited; but it is not too soon, after three months of existence to inquire what progress has been made towards the attainment of a practical result. We count subscribers by thousands. We count readers by ten thousands. Our course of policy is unreservedly approved of. Our journal offers an nucleus for the formation of an extensive and powerful Society of Catholics. We hereby invite our brother Catholics to join us and make a commencement.⁴

The National Brotherhood of St. Patrick was conceived in March 1861 in Dublin at the house of Young Irelander Samuel MacEvatt, once a wealthy boot and shoe manufacturer, who had at one point supplied the British army but lost his contracts and eventually his business through his political activism.⁵ His daughter Mary later married JP McDonnell, who was the movement's secretary and sub editor of the *Universal News* in 1868 and proprietor of *New Ireland*, another London paper in 1870. The NBSP had branches which established newsrooms and libraries, throughout Ireland and England, but had support throughout the diaspora. This was maintained by the Irish journals, who exchanged copies of each other's papers, and copied stories from one to another, thus forming a kind of network of common interest in the English-speaking world. MA O'Brennan, for example, the editor of the *Connaught Patriot*, sent a copy of the *Universal News* to Thomas Mooney proprietor of *Mooney's Express* in California. He in turn sent a copy of his paper to Harnett in London, hoping to begin a regular exchange, asking that his journal should be placed before the London branch of the NBSP, "that they may learn through its columns of the existence and active sympathy of their fellow labourers in California."⁶

This kind of exchange was not confined to newspaper professionals, David Fitzpatrick, in his fascinating and moving account of emigration to Australia, told through the letters of migrants and their families in the Old Country, found that the sending of papers through the mail was very common. Through receiving papers

⁴ *Universal News* 16/3/1861, p9

⁵ Samuel MacEvatt born Dublin 1817 died in America 1901. He was involved in both the 1848 rising and the events of the 1860s. He was forced to sell his business in 1843 and moved to London, from whence he sent arms to the Young Ireland rebels. He returned to Dublin in 1854 and was arrested along with his future son in law in 1865. From a biography of JP McDonnell dictated by his widow Mary in 1908 and held in the JP McDonnell archive State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁶ *Universal News* 28/12/1861 front-page

with their mail, a migrant could to keep in touch with his or her previous life and by sending them give family and friends back home some idea of their new conditions. Newspapers were the most popular form of additional correspondence,⁷ and were eagerly awaited, not only by the recipients, but especially for those far away from home, fellow migrants in the surrounding area. From the letters of the Normile family we learn that the son Michael sent home to Clare copies of the local Catholic paper, the Sydney Freeman's Journal, of the papers he received, he wrote, variously,

The last time I had to lend it to upwards of 60 people. It gives us great Consolation to hear from home and especially a good catholic paper. Another letter said,

You could not credit what pleasure I get in reading home papers. I had to conceal that Paper from many people until I read it over. I lend it to upwards of twenty persons and then they were not done.

or another,

My Dear Father,Belive me dear Father I feel meself at home when I am reading your valuable letters and newspapers, I read them over & over-but to my grief I expect I will never see Ireland anny more or the land that gave me birth.⁸

Newspapers then were a powerful cohesive force, not only on the political but also the personal level, maintaining bonds of family and friendship. At a St Patrick's day banquet in 1862, shortly before he assumed the editorship of the *Universal News*, JE O'Cavanagh outlined, as he saw it, the political possibilities offered by a newspaper.

There was no part of the world in which the press had not testified to its power and its services. It was not merely a public instructor, it was the organ of popular progress, the advocate of civilisation and the right of nationalists, it was the champion of the enthralled and the terror of tyrants. (Cheers) Within the last four centuries amid the great discoveries with which that period was distinguished there was none that conferred on the hu-

⁷ Fitzpatrick, D (1994) *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia*. Cork: CUP p 485

⁸ Ibid. Letters of the Normile family numbers-No10c; No 11g p88; No 12a p89c

man race such benefits as the press...

They had been told and truly that the millions of their countrymen had been thinned by the starvation and famine superinduced by English misrule but the traditional memories, the elastic spirit of the Gael was not starved out, the valour, the love of fatherland, the aspiration to be independent, virtues transmitted through their illustrious sires, were still left to them. And these they would bequeath to their posterity. (Cheers) Comparatively valueless would be these inheritances if it were not for the press. Great were the materials which Ireland had at her command in her sons abroad and at home; but however sure or so devoted they be, without bonds of union, organs of intercommunication, their isolated patriotism could render no aid to promote the independence of that land which gave them birth and cradled them into manhood. The press, and it alone was the platform on which the Irish, however remotely scattered, could meet each other; that was the only rallying point of union. It was therefore an imperative duty to create a press for themselves that would be the honest, able, faithful exponent of their aspirations; convey to the world their aims and sworn determination to be independent. (Hear) Influenced by such considerations as these and calculating on their generous impulses and on their patriotism he had proposed and had been instrumental in establishing the Universal News to expose their grievances, to denounce their wrongs and to demand the restitution of their rights. Of that paper the people were the sole proprietors. It was emphatically their organ (Hear Hear) and need he say it was the representative of great and admirable principles. (Cheers)⁹

O'Cavanagh's hyberbole aside, the point he makes about the function of the press in the diaspora is interesting. Very many nationalists claimed, rhetorically at least, that continued emigration following on from what was widely seen as the holocaust of the Famine, would eventually result in the destruction of the Irish people-it was a form of extermination. It was the inspiration of the political movements of the period to realise that the signifier of Ireland's weakness-the diaspora, could become the source of future strength. Emigration, 'without bonds of union, organs of intercommunication,' would leave patriotism 'isolated' and impotent, but if only the Irish world-wide could organise, and they could only do this with the press as a 'rallying point of union', they could turn the tables on their oppressors and make flight appear as encirclement. A great many people especially amongst the rulers of Ireland and England of the time saw emigration as the answer to all the evils from

⁹ *Universal News*, 22/3/1862 p4

which the country suffered. The so-called excess population, once removed, would be able to lead useful and contented lives elsewhere. Their departure would also enable those who remained behind to benefit from the wonders political economy would bring to the country. It was also hoped that the political turmoil, agrarian violence and general unhappiness would be reduced accordingly. This, of course did not happen, as O'Cavanagh points out, as those who went to the United States for instance, during the Famine years remembered only too well what had brought them there, and they told their children, who also remembered. Even the Times, which did not normally allow facts to get in the way of prejudice when it came to Ireland, was able to see that emigration had not saved England from the consequences of its past actions:

By 1860 even the staid London *Times* became uneasy at the thought that the relentless immigration was spreading a vengeful multitude of Irish across the American continent and intoned the anxious warning that 'we must gird our loins to encounter the nemesis of seven centuries misgovernment'. Across the Irish sea there was no such dignity of prose, only the blunt prediction that,

They'll be coming back in ships,
With vengeance on their lips.¹⁰

Later on in the century, the Land League was to be funded largely externally, principally from America, channelled through the *Irish World* newspaper of Patrick Ford in New York. The NBSP and the Fenian movement generally was an early example of the internationalisation of Irish nationalism, and were extensively supported on the 'sister isle' as well as in Ireland, those migrants who came to Britain, no less than the USA or elsewhere, surrounded as they were by a suspicious and often hostile native population, remained focused on the politics of the homeland to a remarkable degree.

The National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick had its beginnings in the National Petition¹¹ organisation of 1860-61, and ceased to function in 1864-5. It was founded, along with MacEvatt, by Thomas Neilson Underwood, a Presbyterian law-

¹⁰ Schrier, Arnold (1958) *Ireland and the American Immigration 1850-1900*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. P127

¹¹ Addressed to Queen Victoria, calling for the re-establishment of a parliament in Ireland and dismissed out of hand. It is likely that many of those involved in it had little hope for a favourable outcome but viewed it as an opportunity, after the disappointments of the 1850s to keep the 'spirit of nationality' alive until the next great national organisation came into being.

yer from Strabane; Dennis Holland, proprietor of the nationalist paper the *Irishman*, later editor of the *Irish Liberator* in London and correspondent to the Fenian *Irish People*; Christopher Clinton Hoey, later to become the last editor of the *Universal News*; and Thomas Ryan. Its exact object was at the time, and remains, a matter of some dispute, so is its relationship to the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood. What puzzled observers, official and otherwise at the time continues to be problematical. The National Brotherhood was an open organisation, but of an 'openness' which is opaque in the extreme. "What the objects of the 'Brotherhood of Saint Patrick' were,' one writer has put it, "would have puzzled the Sphinx to tell. The members themselves did not know, or at least they pretended not to know."¹² Some were certainly pretending, but some were clearly confused. In March 1864, the McManus branch in Cork demanded to know of the secretary of the organisation, JP McDonnell, what exactly were the policies of the Brotherhood. Their problem was that the leading American Fenian, John O'Mahony, a man who had their "unbounded confidence," had publicly written that "The National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick confines itself to legal and constitutional agitation within the pale of British law." This was in answer to criticism of the Brotherhood from the hierarchy in America, along the lines that, far from being the innocent, transparent organisation, it claimed to be, it was in fact engaged in secret conspiracies. Whereas the bishops would have feared O'Mahony's protestations of innocence to be false, the Cork brethren feared the exact opposite,

This statement dr sir, has taken us by surprise for until now we had very different ideas on the matter. We did not think it was to be an agitation movement in any sense else we never would have joined it.

They threatened to leave if they did not get a satisfactory answer. McDonnell, who had secretly been a leading Fenian for some time, evidently shared the same ideas as they did, and he was able to persuade them to stay. The difficulties of being absolutely certain on the subject are illustrated by the fact that though McDonnell assured the Cork brethren the NBSP was not a constitutional organisation, his wife wrote in her memoir of his life that it was, "This was not a revolutionary organi-

¹² Donovan Dick (1904) *The Crime of the Century*, p82

sation, but more for the peaceful discussion of Ireland's problems and condition, with, of course, a looking forward to her freedom." Perhaps it all depends how one defines 'looking forward to.' However, the NBSP, it is generally accepted, was, or became '...a feeder for the Fenian Society.'¹³ To many contemporaries, the Liverpool Irish journalist, publisher, political campaigner (and self-confessed I.R.B. man) John Denvir being one, it was a front organisation for the Fenians, or IRB ¹⁴, from which they recruited.¹⁵ Writing some years later on, he said, 'The chief recruiting ground of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, the membership of which was secret, was an organisation having its movements so open that the accounts of the meetings of its branches were published week after week in the newspapers.'

To some writers since, this dual organisation is 'myth foisted by Fenian historiography.'¹⁶ To another writer, it " tried to raise a constitutional movement out of the ashes of the Independent Irish Party of the 1850s but it was merely a loose collection of men with a vague attachment to nationality. It was closely identified with the Fenians as many of its members expressed advanced nationalist sentiments and others held strongly anti-clerical views. Ultimately it became the political wing of the Fenian movement.¹⁷ The hierarchy in Ireland were in no way bewildered by the nebulous nature of the Brotherhood, and were alerted ¹⁸ to the 'subversive' potential of the Brotherhood well before the government, believing the dangers it represented to be very real. Cardinal Cullen wrote privately late in 1861 "It is certain that the Brothers of St Patrick are swearing in men"¹⁹ Reverend O'Brien, President of the Catholic Young Men's Society, a senior Irish cleric and scourge of Fenians and their supporters condemned the Brotherhood and said that anyone who held membership of both societies would have to choose between them. He was reported in the Dublin Nation in 1862, showing his irritation not only with the 'conspirators' but also their allies in the press -

¹³ Pigott, R (Recollections, p114)

¹⁴ Founded March 17 (naturally) 1858 in Peter Langan's woodyard in Dublin

¹⁵ Denvir (1892) p.179

¹⁶ Dudley Edwards & Storey, Op.cit. p.173

¹⁷ Moran, G Father Lavelle

¹⁸ It has been argued that the government were well aware of both the IRB and the NBSP but in the early days, having seen the hostility of the Irish clergy (the hierarchy thereof at least) towards both organisations, were content to allow the bishops and the rebels to slog it out

¹⁹ Cullen to Gilooly 16/12/1861 quoted in Moloney J The National Brotherhood of St Patrick and the Rise of Dublin Fenianism 1858-1865. Unpublished MA thesis UCG 1976 p6

Now in Ireland and in England, what I have said is almost universally believed. The conspirators, acting under a lawful name, and by lawful rules, choose their men at leisure and initiate them when they have them sufficiently proved. If 'secret societies' be then subjects of public apprehension or ecclesiastical condemnation, they will hand their programme to a printer and cry out against the injustices of which they are victims²⁰.

Further fog surrounds the question as to whether or not the National Brotherhood was organised from its inception as a front, or was infiltrated by the IRB and later on destroyed from within.²¹ That it was infiltrated is the view given by the *Universal News*' own Dublin correspondent in 1866, where he says the NBSP

... at its origination was a most innocent organisation, and was established solely for the purpose of holding an annual dinner on St.Patrick's day...It was a happy idea if it had been kept by alone, but there was an unwise attempt made to form it into a permanent political movement, and the Fenians got a controlling power over it, which, with some other unfortunate causes, were the source of its failure.

He recalled the first such dinner at the Round Room in the Rotundo, which he attended with the cream of Catholic society, which presumably was in direct contrast to the desperadoes who later on made up its membership.²²

There is evidence for both points of view. The following from the 16th March 1861 *Universal News* article, could be taken as evidence that not only was the NBSP a front for the IRB from the beginning, but also that the *Universal News* was intimately involved in the organisation of both the open and secret body in England. After describing some of the difficulties faced by Catholics in England, the article continues that the proposed Catholic Association is :

... the first step in a practical direction. We invite Catholics to send their names to this office in order that a commencement may be made by the formation of a Committee. We propose a formation by tens. Let each of the first 10 or 20 members who form the committee procure nine more; let each of these procure other nine and so on.

²⁰ *Nation* 15/3/1862

²¹ The latter view is taken by RV Comerford in his *Contending Brotherhoods in A New History of Ireland* who attributed it to the supposed megalomania of James Stephens the head of the IRB who came to see the NBSP as a rival, which he would never countenance

²² *Universal News*, 24/3/1866, p13 from a letter dated 15.3.1866

What is interesting here, and the initiated would have recognised it at once, is that the form of organisation suggested is the same as the circle structure of the IRB. The IRB was made up of circles. The outer circles were units of 9 foot soldiers, known as Ds, whose centre was a sergeant, or C. He was in turn part of a circle of 9 Cs, led by a B, who was in turn part of an inner circle of 9 Bs lead by a Head Centre or A. Each member was only supposed to know those in his own circle and its centre, in practice, the organisation was unwieldy and easily penetrated by spies and informers, of which the Castle had a plentiful supply.

That there was disagreement at the time, over the nature of the NBSP and its relationship to the IRB demonstrates as in the case of the Corkmen, that those involved did not always know exactly what they were involved in. It is quite possible that the import of the "formation by tens" was not apparent to all or any on the paper's staff apart from the writer. NBSP organisation was based on the newspaper and the formation of meeting and reading rooms in the different localities. It is easy to see that a secret, mirror organisation could be tagged onto the open organisation, each reading room being the centre of a circle. The government were certainly of this opinion, several of those connected with the Irish Liberator, including one of its founders, 'Honest' Thomas Hayes, as he was known and who was not a literary man by any means but a wheelwright of limited education to judge by the letters which survive him ²³, was sentenced to ten years imprisonment in 1866 on the evidence of an informer, for being one of the London head centres.

A curious paragraph appeared in an article at the end of March 1861,

The recent numerous celebrations of St Patrick's Day took everyone by surprise. They were suddenly thought of. Scarcely any preparation was made and yet the crowded rooms and strange similarity of the language uttered in all bore ample testimony to the unanimity of the spirit which actuated the people of whom the dinner parties were but the chance chosen Representatives. ²⁴

²³ The National Library of Ireland holds them- part of a box seized by the police in Dublin in 1866
 Fenian Briefs n6

²⁴ *Universal News* 30/3/1861 p 9-10

Is the writer being disingenuous or is he really confused? suggesting co-ordination or coincidence? The same issue carried a report of the first meeting of the provisional committee of the National Brotherhood in London, in which the chairman, an LP O'Reilly after giving the aim of the organisation as the attainment of Irish independence, said that he had "regretted the want of an Irish organ in London up to recent date; but now that they had got one he hoped it would be maintained, and not allowed to pass into the hands of Whigs." A recurring theme in the history of the Brotherhood was the importance of gaining access to or control of newspapers, to further its organisation which could

only exist by means of local and parochial tributaries, all flowing harmoniously together and meeting together at a common source" (the Central Committee). "And now we come to the main question as to how or through what sources the accumulated body of information, instruction and thought is to be sent forth to the Brotherhood at large, in all the diversified parts of its organic combination. The answer to this is as clear as common sense or experience could make it. It can only be done by means of a public organ or journal properly conducted, vigorously written, scrupulously truthful, and enjoying the confidence of the entire Brotherhood. Without the existence of such a journal, let each brother remember, there exists not a particle of a chance of success²⁵.

For its part, the Brotherhood offered a readership,²⁶ and wanted coverage of its activities in return. Hereafter the paper carried reports of the various branches of the Brotherhood, which by July of the same year had seven in London alone. It now carried reports of the teetotallers on one page and nationalists on another. The Brotherhood was not to have an easy time of it with the press and clerical condemnations were to make the less than one hundred per cent committed increasingly reluctant to take their reports. The previously mentioned Archdeacon O'Brien, president general of the Young Men's Society wrote to the *Universal News* on the subject of the NBSP which he condemned as 'unsafe' outlining at the same time those qualities

²⁵ *Irish Liberator* 14/11/1863 p105

²⁶ *Universal News* 1/2/1862 p 9-10 'Garryowen' a teetotal correspondent, writing on the financial difficulties of the paper was less than convinced of the benefits of the relationship to the paper, "Those who boast of their National Brotherhood have a fair opportunity of showing their patriotism and their honesty by supporting a paper whose only fault is that it speaks truthfully and exposes hypocrisy which is practised in every class of society. The taking into a reading room of a few copies of a newspaper devoted to the interests of the cause which Irishmen profess to have at heart is not a fair support"

which a safe movement ought to possess; -

1. In a safe movement I would expect the Catholic clergy.
2. In a safe movement I would expect men of known position and commanding talents, whose past career would be a security for their future integrity and success. And a security that the people are not simply sold to a bidder.
3. In a safe movement and I would expect a general opinion ...That such a movement is safe; and not one of these conditions have I found supplied by or regarding the National Brotherhood of St Patrick.²⁷

He does not state whether all three conditions need apply, nor which if any are absolutely obligatory, but we can take it that the 'general opinion' in condition three is the amalgam of the opinions of the first two, thus disbarring the vast bulk of the membership of the National Brotherhood, that is artisans, small traders, shopkeepers etc. from any leading involvement in any movement whatever. The working classes were to be led. Cardinal Cullen may have told the clergy in Ireland to keep out of politics, but they never did, and neither did he nor his English counterparts. The boundary between the political and the religious was constantly fought over. Indeed, religion played a part in the political life of the nation that seems inconceivable today. It was not only clerics like O'Brien who employed what might be termed a very 'Catholic' definition of the term religion, in keeping with Cardinal Manning's view that "all human conflict is ultimately theological".²⁸ Politicians too, were similarly motivated. Gladstone, Manning's friend from his Anglican days, was a case in point-

"It is, of course, true that Gladstone saw any situation in religious terms, and that, like JH Newman and HE Manning and other Tractarians and High Churchmen of Evangelical origin, he continually found the religious experiences of his youth a source of strength in later years when, theologically, he had moved beyond them."²⁹

The controversy over the NBSP continued and in a leader column shortly afterwards³⁰ Harnett referred to the closeness of identification between pastor and flock. "There is no people in the world" he wrote,

²⁷ *Universal News* 15/3/1862 p10

²⁸ McClelland (1962) p2

²⁹ Matthew, HCG (1997) Gladstone 1809-1898. Oxford: Clarendon Press.p286

³⁰ *Universal News* 29/3/1862 leader column p9

less likely than the Irish to resist the mild religious teaching of their appointed pastors and guides. No people were ever so docile to their clergy; but much of their trusting docility has arisen from the fact that their clergy were full sharers in the political persecutions under which the people suffered, and that the pure flame of nationality and devoted patriotism burned as brightly in the soul of the priest and of the bishop as in that of the layman. May no separation of their interests ever be effected.

He urged the priesthood not to divide the people politically along religious lines in answer to part of O'Brien's objection to such movements, which was that they were influenced by Protestants. Cullen too, had recently criticised the NBSP on this account, in the press and privately. He wrote to a fellow cleric Fr Bruno in January 1862, that the head of the Brotherhood was a "Mr Underwood, a Presbyterian or Calvinist...several other Protestants appear to be the principal managers of it...in Cork the head is a Mr Varian, a Unitarian."³¹

The historical unity between people and church was perhaps indeed breaking down in Ireland where it was no longer true, as it had been a century before, to use the words of Lord Chancellor Clare that, 'the law does not recognise the existence of a Roman Catholic... they breathe the air on sufferance'.³² The church, at least the hierarchy, if not the bulk of the people, was in a much happier condition, consulted by and negotiating with the government, very often at odds but recognised for what it was - the most powerful social organisation in Irish life. Radicals in Ireland would accuse the church, especially Cardinal Cullen with being in sympathy with the government: in England, in answer to the same clerical condemnation, as we shall see from the future history of the *Universal News*, they would couch the argument in national terms, as a division between an Irish congregation and an English hierarchy and English priests. Irish priests resident in England were not often included in this criticism, whether they were politically closer to their flock in England than in Ireland is difficult to say, and as we saw earlier, Irish priests working in the English and Scottish missions were monitored for political activity. The amount of clerical support in Ireland for movements such as the Fenians, apart from one or two prominent

³¹ See *Tablet* 29/3/1862, quoted from Corish PJ (1967) *A History of Irish Catholicism*, vol V . Dublin p62

³² *Tablet* 21/11/1868

cases is similarly hard to gauge. In both countries a wise cleric would have been discreet.

One priest who was certainly unafraid of controversy was Father Patrick Lavelle of Partry in Mayo, who was, until he was forced by his bishop abandon the post, vice president of the Brotherhood. He often spoke in Britain, and was a great correspondent, regularly sending enormously long letters to all the nationalist papers, the *Universal News* included. His parish was one of the poorest in Ireland and he waged constant warfare against local landlords, some of them Church of Ireland ministers on his parishioners behalf. This, of course brought him great popularity. Opinion of Lavelle amongst large sections of the lay community was enthusiastic, as the following from an address he received from the people of Paisley attests. "You fed the hungry, you clad the naked and you found homes for the homeless, thus proving to the world that in your person is combined the faithful minister of God and the true priest of the people."³³ At one meeting in March 1862 he was asked by a worried member of an audience in Liverpool whether the Brotherhood was a 'secret society' because the questioner had read in the *Northern Press* that it was, and intended to have nothing to do with it if it that was the case. Lavelle (to the certain exasperation of the hierarchy in England and Ireland) assured him it was perfectly safe.³⁴ The arguments went back and forth, those who wanted clerical approval of certain political action could find it privately from like-minded priests who kept their views secret from their superiors, or from 'political' priests like Lavelle, and if they chose to balance his words against the combined hierarchies of both countries it was to the authorities' frustration. Radical priests like Lavelle, though, helped to maintain the very close relationship between the ordinary people and the church, which was to the advantage of the hierarchy, though they may not have liked what some of those priests did. In the case of Lavelle, of course, they hated him, but he was protected from the anger of Cullen in Dublin by his bishop John MacHale. Even after he was forced to sever his links with the NBSP, Lavelle he continued to defend it .

³³ Moran G, (1994) *A Radical Priest in Mayo: Fr Patrick Lavelle. The rise and fall of an Irish nationalist, 1825-1886*. Dublin. (fn 147 p121)

³⁴ *Universal News* 8/3/1862 p4-5

The controversy created a dilemma for the paper. Whatever its opinion of the Brotherhood, if it was popular with the readers, then it was in the paper's interests to supply them with the reports of meeting the various branches sent in. However, it did not want to court controversy with the church. For whatever reason by the spring of 1862, the *Universal News* and the National Brotherhood seemed to be moving apart. The celebration of the national saint's day on March 17th was a significant political event in its own right and had been one of the purported reasons for the existence of the National Brotherhood, and which feast one went to was an indicator of one's political leanings. The *Universal News* of 8/3/1862 had announced the formation of 'an influential committee' of nearly forty people to arrange proceedings, which were held in the Freemason's Tavern, with addresses by Harnett and the secretary John Eugene O'Cavanagh, (who was later to edit the Brotherhood's London organ the *Irish Liberator*, after they had lost control of it). Harnett said there were no less than five Brotherhoods of Saint Patrick that year, and he regretted they had not been all able to celebrate together. In reply to an assurance from a member of the Brotherhood who was present that they intended no disunity, he said he greatly respected them, but urged them to follow the lead of the 'older nationalists' for the time being. Although, Harnett may have personally sympathetic to the Brotherhood, others, closer to the bishops perhaps may not have been. The point of difference between 'constitutional' and other nationalists was in any case principally over solutions and methods rather than objectives. English and landlord culpability for Irish problems was a given. In May, after Harnett's departure, the paper warned that whatever the truth of the allegations about the National Brotherhood, the people should shun secret societies completely ³⁵.

³⁵ *Universal News* 3/5/1862 p9

2.4 The Approbation of the Clergy

The authorities could not be bested forever, and matters came to a head in the autumn of the following year, when the Irish hierarchy formally declared the National Brotherhood of St Patrick a secret society, it been a cuckoo in the Catholic nest and now it was to be expelled. This presented the Catholic community with a clear choice, they could either follow or reject the bishop's directions. The Catholic press was told in no uncertain terms, to distance itself from the Brotherhood, the declaration went "so far as to prohibit with implied penalties the publication of any defence of that body." . The *Universal News* made its choice. "It is not for us to question the wisdom of that resolution".¹ The following week they declined to publish a defence of the organisation from a CG Doran and CC Hoey of the Central Council, because it had first appeared in a 'disreputable quarter', which precluded it 'from insertion in a journal which has some claims to conscience and respectability'. The bishops had in any case, the paper reiterated, prohibited

under any pretext the publication of any paper pretending to defend the St Patrick's Brotherhood. We are slavish enough to obey that prohibition not having, like our correspondents sufficient courage to defy the venerable and long-recognised authority from whom it proceed(ed).

So, a paper published in England bowed to pressure from Irish bishops and the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick would have to look elsewhere for coverage. Their answer was to establish a paper of their own, which they did in Dublin, on 27/5/1863 called the *United Irishman and Galway American*, whose motto "Faith, Fortitude, Fatherland" was strikingly similar to that of the *Universal News*. By August they announced the formation of a limited liability company to publish another paper, this time in London, to be called the *Irish Liberator*.²

Meanwhile, under Scannell's proprietorship, the paper entered a period of prosperity and relative calm. He sought the support of the clergy and meetings were held in various parts of London to that end. One was held in the schoolrooms next to the

¹ *Universal News* of 26/9/1863 p8

² *United Irishman and Galway American* 15/8/1863 p7

church in Bunhill Row, Clerkenwell, chaired by the Very Reverend William Johnstone; at another in the Holy Trinity Bermondsey, another priest, JL Goddard, outlined what the clergy expected of the paper in return. First, he reiterated the paper's longstanding ultramontane support of the papal states, then he outlined his own views on the relationship between (English) priest and (Irish) congregation, clergy and press.

I see no more encouraging prospect for the Universal News than that it has taken the line of looking for the approbation of the clergy. You will pardon me for saying this, but we have been put over you to teach you the way in which you should go; and I hope, and always will hope, that a paper without the approbation of the clergy will never succeed among you. This paper then, has the approbation of the clergy- it has the approbation of our worthy Rector, who has spent the best portion of his life among you, who is to you, as a father over his children, and I am sure that no words I can say will add anything to that recommendation. I have endeavored to show you the necessity of supporting a press on which we can depend, and I think it your duty therefore to support the Universal News to the best of your power. You know that there has been and as far as I know is now an ardent desire in Ireland at least, to separate the clergy from the people. Of this I am certain, that if Irishmen cease to love and respect their clergy religion, in the two countries will not only be at a standstill, but will go back. The priest and the people must be united, and you must therefore follow us and our advice, at the same time you must be a man, that nothing is further from our thoughts than to guide and decide for you in such a way as to leave you no will and private judgment of your own. No! You must think as men, you must act as men, but it is surely no degradation to submit your opinion to those who have had greater experience than yourselves.³

The 'approbation' of the church was very welcome, a necessity in fact, but the price for such support was obedience. How willing or otherwise such submission was, it is not possible at this juncture to do more than speculate. The proprietors and editorial staff had an obvious self-interest in supporting those who supported them, and in the case of the National Brotherhood we have seen the paper under this management was to follow the instructions of the hierarchy. Goddard was addressing more than the proprietors and editorial staff of the paper though. His audience would have been drawn from the Irish people of the district, who may not have appreciated all of his sentiments. Certainly, the speech was reported without the bracketed indications of public enthusiasm which we saw in Canon Oakley's espousal of Irish causes

³ *Universal News* 21/6/1862 p3

at the paper's inaugural meeting. There were no "Cheers!" and "Sustained applause!" here, and perhaps it is the absence of any sense of this quid pro quo of English clerical support for Irish political causes in return for Irish obedience, which imbues the speech with an underlying tension. Goddard's somewhat contradictory words betray the delicate nature of the negotiation between clergy and congregation in this matter. So Goddard begs his audience's pardon, but asserts his dominance "we have been put over you..."; he reminds them of the filial duty they owe their Rector, (Canon Oakeley) who had 'spent the best portion of his life' among them, but urges them to think and act "as men"; he denies wishing to relieve them of their free will, but asks for their submission. Later in the decade, after changes in management and in the heightened political atmosphere following the arrests of 1865, the abortive Fenian rising, escapes, explosions and executions of 1867, the arguments around the ultimate demise of the *Universal News* were characterised, by the paper at least, as the impossibility of an English clergy ministering to an Irish congregation.

2.5 Defending the "Jews of the West"

We, Jews of the West, in this Ghetto
 Are hated, derided and banned;
 And toil as we may, there's against us
 The ravenous, blood-spilling hand.
 We, the Jews of the West, in this Ghetto
 Are Irish in conscience and core;
 And swear by the coffin of Martin,
 We'll bear it no more."

Fig. 8 J.F. O'Donnell's view of the Irish in London ¹

If at this stage in its career, with JE O'Cavanagh as editor and Francis Scannell as proprietor, the paper toned down its nationalist politics it continued its advocacy of the Irish community in England, which it saw as one of its prime objectives. If they did not like his manner of saying it, the conductors of the paper evidently did not disagree with Harnett that its northern rival the *Northern Press*, was now an English paper, as in August 1862 they boasted that the *Universal News* was "The Only Organ of Irish Catholic Opinion in England." ² The paper became involved in the defence of those Irishmen charged as a result of the 'Garibaldi' riots in Hyde Park in the autumn of 1862, when Irishmen clashed violently with English supporters of the Italian revolutionary. It was an illustration of the distance which the particular brand of Catholicism espoused by the majority of the Irish could place between themselves and those from whom it might be assumed they should have found their natural allies, both in Britain and on the continent. In England Garibaldi was to

¹ Written in 1867 on the death of a one-time printer for the Dublin Irish People, Edward Martin. He was knocked down by a cab in Drury Lane. Semi-conscious, he muttered the name Kelly, so convincing the police that he was the Head Centre Captain Kelly who had escaped from the van in Manchester. They dragged him off to gaol, precipitating, it was believed, his death with their rough treatment. The Irish in London organised a public burial, which was attended by thousands. They partly intended the police to believe it really was the fugitive who was being buried. Here it is of interest for its comments on the regard in which the Irish migrants felt they were held.

² From 16/8/1862, they changed the sub-heading under the masthead accompanying the leader column on page eight, from 'Published by the News Newspaper Co. Ltd.,' to the above.

many, especially among the labouring classes, a man of the people, fighting old and corrupt regimes, a hero. To those Irish who identified more with their religion than any notions of class, he was an apostate who would usurp their Pope, and English support for him confirmed the anti-catholicism that ran through British society from top to bottom. Of course, some Irish supported Garibaldi as a nationalist. Even then, a shared admiration did not necessarily lead to closer ties with their English fellows. An example of this is provided in a letter, seized by the authorities in Dublin, from an English-based nationalist to JP McDonnell of the National Brotherhood of St Patrick. While professing a personal liking for Garibaldi, the correspondent wrote that he took pleasure in pointing out to the 'Saxons' with whom he came into daily contact, that the welcome they afforded him, (he was then on a visit) was in stark contrast to the treatment Irish nationalists could expect, being either prison or banishment.³

The reaction of Irish nationalists to their Italian counterparts was, as the above quotation suggests, not only governed by their religious beliefs, it was in part influenced by the attitudes of some of the Italian leaders towards themselves. Ireland was the object of the close attention of several of the key players in the risorgimento. O'Connell's movement for Catholic emancipation was the first modern political mass movement and Ireland was subsequently of great interest to political observers of all shades of opinion, each drawing their own lessons from his campaigns. Pius IX, for example, had a two day oration delivered on O'Connell after his death in 1847,⁴

Liberty was synonymous with rebellion, liberalism with regicide...(Ireland) had adopted true liberty which is the daughter of religion...oh glory! Oh triumph to O'Connell in having thus first reconciled liberty with order, independence with order!

Cavour and Mazzini, who disagreed on the propriety of conspiracy and the violent overthrow of governments, both downplayed the nationalist aspects of O'Connell's movement, though, in favour of its reformism and neither had any desire to

³ National Library of Ireland: Fenian papers found at 15 Stafford Street, 1866, Carton 6, Envelope 22, No 62- Letter to JP McDonnell 13/4/1864

⁴ Nowlan KB 'The Risorgimento and Ireland 1820-48' in Edwards RD (ed) 1960 'Ireland and the Italian Risorgimento'. Dublin : Italian Institute of Dublin p21

see Ireland independent, both valuing English goodwill as more important to their own interests. In 1847, when Mazzini tried to establish a new Europe-wide revolutionary organisation, the People's International League, no Irish representatives were allowed. He wrote to a friend in March of that year "We have no Irish on the council, because that would bring up the question of repeal, which would be fatal to us." ⁵ This would not endear them to Irish revolutionaries. The attitude of *Pio Nono* towards Irish rebellion was undoubtedly similarly influenced by the prestige and power of England, but also by his own experiences of 1848 when his Prime Minister was assassinated by Italian nationalists and he had to flee to Gaeta. Closer to home and much more significant for Irish rebels was the fact that the future Cardinal of Ireland Paul Cullen, was also in Rome at the time and saved the College of Propaganda by flying the American flag over it. Henceforth, and for the remaining years of this longest of pontificates, the Pope and Archbishop Cullen stood together opposed to liberalism and revolution, whether in Italy or in Ireland. ⁶

The Hyde Park Riots, whatever the motivations of the Irish protagonists, can be seen as the growing Irish community in Britain flexing its muscles, symbolically as well as literally. The Universal News published its own version of events and collected money on behalf of the arrested and injured, as it did in the aftermath of Orange riots in Birkenhead, later in the year. For the writer, the Hyde Park affair was important not only in relation to differing opinions on Italy, but principally in terms of the position of the Irish in Britain. The Irish had by their actions, he claimed, established themselves as a force to be contended with, "that which only the other day seemed but a weak party connected by a vague sense of patriotism has suddenly assumed the strength and proportions of a solid nationality". In a strident commentary on the riots, the ostensible cause for which was Italian politics, the paper goes beyond its ultramontane opposition to Garibaldi, to include the wider political concerns of the Irish in England as well as some of the prejudices and it must be said a less than absolute commitment to free speech. ⁷

⁵ Nowlan, *ibid* pp25-6

⁶ Edwards RD 'The Risorgimento and Ireland 1848-70' in Edwards RD (ed) 1960 'Ireland and the Italian Risorgimento'. Dublin : Italian Institute of Dublin p32

⁷ Rescued somewhat for posterity by the paper's last sub-editor, JP McDonnell, who was one of those, in company with many of the very same 'red republican scum' who were instrumental in securing the right to free assembly in public parks, in 1869. Biography of JP McDonnell p4

We need not remind our countrymen," the article continued, "that a month ago the Irish in London ranked with the gypsies and were considered infinitely inferior to the red republican scum and sediment which the continent casts upon London. Know the contempt with which we were regarded was openly and deliberately expressed. No Irishman could enter a public room or place of assembly without having his best feelings outraged by the sneers, sarcasms and unqualified abuse of everything Catholic and Irish with which those around were gratifying their brutal hatred of his faith and race. Today all this is changed.⁸

Accounts of the riots as they appeared in the British press were criticised, particularly that of the *Telegraph*, which took a consistently anti-Irish line and whose editor, it was noted, in an article written, (or so it would no doubt be claimed), in defence of the defenders of true Christianity, was himself a Jew. So while JF O'Donnell could write poetry in which Irishmen could identify with the sufferings of the Jewish people, O'Cavanagh⁹ drew attention to the ethnic identity of Jewish critics of the Irish. Not content with seizing the ground from the Garibaldians, the Irish had, the paper said, kicked all of the speakers from the park.

Nor do the moral advantages of the conflict end here. It is more than probable that the Irish have put the muzzle for good on the mouths of those beastly raving fanatics by whom the public parks were infested Sunday after Sunday....We have reason to hope that henceforth no one shall be scandalised at hearing the sacred name of Christ tacked to a nigger melody at one tree while his very existence is blasphemously questioned under another. Within the past three weeks the Irish have done more to make Christianity respected in England than all the pseudo-missionaries with whom Exeter Hall and the bible societies have inundated the country.¹⁰

The Irish were out of step with general public opinion on Italy and this reinforced the Irishman's sense of other-ness, of being out of kilter with the society in which he found himself. The article also betrays perhaps a feeling of unease with the cosmopolitanism of a great international city where atheists vie with evangelicals, to the strains of 'nigger' melodies. The main targets were religious rather than

⁸ *Universal News* 18/10/1862 p8

⁹ Here I say O'Cavanagh as he was the editor at the time & therefore generally responsible for the tone and content of the paper. It is impossible, except in a few rare cases to ascribe authorship to any article. Poetry and stories are a different matter, of course.

¹⁰ *Universal News* 18/10/1862 p8

political. The objects of the attention of the 'pseudo-missionaries' of course were very often the readers of the *Universal News*, themselves and the paper takes great delight in pointing out to them that Irish Catholics far from needing their ministrations, were in fact second none in defending Christianity.¹¹

"The Irish Yahoo generally confines itself within the limits of its own colony, Except when it goes out of them to get its living. Sometimes, however, it sallies forth in states of excitement, and attacks civilised human beings that have provoked its fury. Large numbers of these Yahoos have been lately collecting themselves in Hyde Park, and molesting the people there assembled to express sympathy with GARIBALDI and the cause of United Italy. The Yahoos are actuated by an abject and truculent devotion to the POPE, which urges them to fly at all manner of persons who object to grovel under the Papal tyranny, and all others who assist or even applaud them in the attempt to throw it off."

Fig. 9 Punch's view of Irish involvement in the Garibaldi riots.
'The Missing Link' *Punch* 43 18/10/1862 p165

The paper returned to the Hyde Park and Birkenhead disturbances in its opening issue of 1863 in order to discuss the part it played in the subsequent controversy. A paper like the *Universal News*, had a vital function to perform,

in the absence of anything like a definite, comprehensive organisation it provides a focus for the dissemination of opinion thereby securing promptitude and simultaneousness of action. It will be admitted we do not doubt that in momentous emergencies an honest Catholic journal may play an important part in disabusing the English mind of unjust prejudices and impressions and assist in procuring an equitable hearing for the Irish people.¹²

Without the *Universal News*, those arrested or injured in the events would have been left entirely to their own meagre resources. The paper had mounted a campaign on their behalf publicising their case and organising the collection and distribution of funds for legal expenses and to allay hardship.¹³

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *Universal News* 3/1/1863 p8

¹³ Ibid.

In 1880, John O'Connor Power, an Irish journalist resident in England, mused upon the conspicuous ethnicity of the Irish population and the barriers this created for them, when he said:

Recognition is slow to wait upon those who cannot forget that they are Irish, and, save in exceptional instances, the warmth of social welcome is reserved for those who have allowed the ice barrier of their nationalism to melt away.¹⁴

That some of them did allow not only their nationalism, but their nationality to melt, is certain. A change of accent could render Irish migrants indistinguishable from the native population, as a change in attitude could make them acceptable. The hostility that surrounded them must have made these tempting strategies for many. This was an option the *Universal News* deplored in a leading article in 1864. Some, it said, under the pressure of prejudice and hostility tried to Anglicise themselves.

They change their names, or mispronounce them; they copy English habits into their households; their conversation abounds with Cockney namby-pambyisms..." By this method "you obtain the credit of being polite and undemonstrative. You are at once singled out from the 'ruck' as an Irish gentleman whose political notions are far from being vulgar and whose admiration for British institutions entitles him to universal respect."¹⁵

For these 'composite Irishmen', the paper warned, awaited a fate worse than that which befell the bat, which was decreed neither bird nor beast.

Editors had to tread a fine line between what was allowable politically, "in a journal which has some claims to conscience and respectability, " as the paper described itself at the end of 1863, and what was likely to retain readers like those who supported the NBSP. So, though the *Universal News* no longer carried the reports of the Brotherhood, and would not even print letters from members, and

¹⁴ John O'Connor Power, quoted from 'The Irish in England', *Westminster Review* vol 27 Jan-June 1880, p410 quoted in Harris Ruth-Ann M The Nearest Place... p194 note 19

In 1880 an Irish journalist, resident in England mused upon the conspicuous ethnicity of the Irish population when he said: "Recognition is slow to wait upon those who cannot forget that they are Irish, and, save in exceptional instances, the warmth of social welcome is reserved for those who have allowed the ice barrier of their nationalism to melt away"

¹⁵ *Universal News* 15/10/1864 p9

though it was involved in a controversy with the NBSP's Dublin paper, the *United Irishman and Galway American* in the autumn of 1863,¹⁶ it was, subsequently, muted in its criticism, confining itself to reprinting an article detailing the split between the *United Irishman and Galway American* and the brotherhood, over the Rotundo affair.¹⁷

The doings of the National League, a 'moderate', or more accurately, respectable, middle class, nationalist organisation, which was founded in early 1864 by John Martin and the impressively named The O'Donohue, replaced the NBSP in the paper's columns. It was a direct rival to both brotherhoods, overt and covert, was organised, as they were, in both Ireland and Britain, and incurred their joint displeasure. In a report of one meeting of the National League in Bradford at the latter end of 1864,¹⁸ the paper remarked mildly that a Mr Hughes, by denouncing the proceedings as 'parliamentary humbug' showed himself to be a true member of the NBSP. Again somewhat mildly, trying reconcile two different schools of political thought, namely constitutional and revolutionary, the leader column in the same issue said that some good had come from constitutional agitation, so it was too soon to write it off completely. Silence on the subject was found to be the best policy, inviting criticism from neither Fenians nor clergy. It seems the paper did the minimum necessary to conform to the clerical authorities' wishes, publishing articles from the likes of John Mitchel,¹⁹ and also correspondence from Fr Lavelle, whom Cullen detested. Indeed, in April 1864, a leader column had rebuked former director George Wigley, who had written, complaining, 'as a shareholder', about the inclusion of a letter from Lavelle, addressed to the Pope, detailing his argument with Archbishop Cullen. He was told in no uncertain terms that his money did not buy him editorial control, and that the paper would print both sides of the argument for its readers, without offering an opinion of its own.²⁰ To emphasise the point, the following issue also contained a

¹⁶ *United Irishman and Galway American*, 5/9/63 p5

¹⁷ *Universal News*, 26/3/1864 p4 Fenians broke up a meeting at the Rotundo in opposition to a statue of Prince Albert being erected in College Green. Among those speaking were AM Sullivan, the particular object of the revolutionaries' attentions, being forced to flee the hall as the platform was stormed by Irish People manager O'Donovan Rossa and comrades. For a lively but partisan account see Sullivan, AM (1877) *New Ireland: Political Sketches and Personal Reminiscences of Thirty years of Irish Public Life*. London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd. Pp 250-255

¹⁸ *Universal News* 8/10/1864 p7

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 7/5/1864 p4 Article on Thomas Devin Reilly by John Mitchel.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 2/4/1864 p9 2nd leading article.

letter from Lavelle copied from Martin O'Brennan's *Connaught Patriot*.

Whatever Lavelle's detractors might think of him, he was undoubtedly popular. At meetings he addressed, which were attended by large, enthusiastic crowds, and at which CC Hoey often spoke, the "Irish in Britain could express their Irishness and show the wretched social conditions which they endured in Britain and Ireland."²¹ The undue influence of Irish priests on the politics of their congregations was the occasion for constant criticism from English commentators, though, being cited as one of the reasons why Ireland was not fit for self-government. For those looking at Irish society from the outside, in an age which prided itself on its adherence to reason, science, utility, the exaggerated esteem in which priests were held, reinforced notions of Irish strangeness, backwardness and superstition. Those at the head of the IRB, Stephens, Luby etc., and some, it is not known how many, of the membership, also wished to see priestly political influence diminished, but for different reasons. They were however, distinctly in advance of general opinion in Ireland or amongst the Irish abroad. It was in defence of this involvement that the *Universal News* carried a leader 'The Priests and the People' in October 1864.

English opinion on the matter was based upon ignorance, the paper said. In a country like Ireland which suffered from such injustice, and which was essentially leaderless, and likely to plunge over the brink into mayhem at any time, it was a necessity. The paper contrasted parson and priest, the former was stout, contented and well-fed on capons. For its description of the latter, it rehearsed the normal English caricature, in which the Catholic priest, was the

contumacious head of a bewildered faction-he loves the hustings, the long sentence, and the responsive 'hurrah'. He rears pigs, baptises miserable children, is a favourite in the hovel of the poor, and a rebel to the Government.²²

There were reasons for this rebellion and disloyalty,

The priests are disloyal-to what? To the power which conspires, with all the agencies it can control, for their humiliation and abasement.

²¹ Moran, G note 150 p122

²² *Universal News* 5/11/1864 p8-9

As there were for the priest's identification with the interests of his parishioners,

The priests are loyal-to whom? To the people from whose ranks they have emerged and to whose welfare they are devoted.

The people were in sore need of assistance, their enemies were many and powerful,

Against the people are arrayed the Government, the Government creatures, the Government landlords, the Government press, the allies of the Government abroad, the pimps of the Government at home.²³

GM Young, has written that

The Irish difficulty went deeper than the philosophy of the age could reach. The twin cell of English life, the squire administering what everybody recognises as law and the parson preaching what everybody acknowledges to be religion, had no meaning in a country where the squire was usually an invader and the parson always a heretic²⁴

Leaving aside the somewhat complacent attitude to English opinion on law and religion, he does encapsulate the ideological gulf that existed between the peoples of the sister isles. It is clear then that even at its most moderate, acting within bounds acceptable to its spiritual leaders and patrons, an Irish Catholic paper was very much at odds with English society. This was the experience of many of the Irish migrants-there were ways of gaining acceptance, in any case prejudice was neither uniform nor universal, but the Irish generally found themselves on the margins-economically, socially and politically. Not all were as unfortunate as Mary Collins, whose case the paper took up in November 1864: seventeen years resident in the same town, but when she was widowed and applied to the Poor Law Guardians for assistance, was told to go back to Ireland.²⁵ They were though, a people under pressure, who, as the coverage of the Hyde Park riots suggests, felt that they had to literally fight for their place in English society.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Quoted in Newsome, D (1993) *The Convert Cardinals: Newman and Manning* London: John Murray p312

²⁵ *Universal News* 5/11/1864 p9

2.6 Pipers and Those Who Paid Them

The *Universal News* was not the first paper in which the tensions between editor and proprietor(s) was to be problematical, indeed as we shall see, the *Irish Liberator* was similarly afflicted. Nor was it the first to see frequent changes in ownership. The "ins and outs" of these changes of personnel, both of editors and owners were, a chronicler of the Catholic press at the time said, of so convoluted a nature, they would fatigue any but those closely involved.¹

The period of tenure of the first editor and manager, AW Harnett, has already been discussed, as has the manner of his departure. His place was taken by the company secretary, JE O'Cavanagh, who, along with John Francis O'Donnell, a wunderkind journalist from the *Tipperary Advocate*, whom AW Harnett brought over with him as his sub, was to be the most frequent partner in the pas de deux danced between editor and proprietor. O'Cavanagh himself stated that he had originally been elected editor by the board, who had subsequently changed their minds before the paper appeared. O'Cavanagh then was the original editor but was ousted before the paper's launch in December 1860. Following Harnett's demise, O'Cavanagh edited the paper for two years, until, again in his own words, "the interference of the lessee in my department caused me to retire." The previous December, O'Donnell had left the *Universal News* to edit Duffy's Hibernian Magazine in Dublin. He returned to London in 1864 and edited the *Universal News* until May 1866, when JE O'Cavanagh was 'a third time elected editor by a unanimous vote.' This period of tenure, during which time O'Cavanagh was the paper's manager as well, was to be short and 'new complications arose'² at the end of October the same year which 'suspended' his services. The game of musical chairs continued, JF O'Donnell, then briefly took up the reins, again until replaced by Christopher Clinton Hoey, possibly as early as January 1867,³ though he is not spoken of as the is spoken of as the editor until September. He was joined in January 1868, by his colleague from the NBSP and (fellow Fenian), JP McDonnell. This partnership contin-

¹ FC Husenbeth, in reply to corrections to his survey of Catholic papers, from JE O'Cavanagh which had omitted the latter's role in the paper entirely. In all likelihood, deliberately so. N&Q 3 XI 30/3/1867 p265.

² O'Cavanagh JE Notes and Queries, 3rd Series XI Feb 28 1867, p155

³ According to the Husenbeth survey in Catholic Opinion 30/1/1867 p2 O'Donnell had edited the paper until recently, being replaced by another Irish Catholic.

ued until the paper's demise in December 1869.

O'Cavanagh claimed to have been the moving spirit behind the *Universal News*, and was, he said, responsible for raising over £3000 in capital to that end, though he does not appear to have bought any of the shares himself. Elsewhere,⁴ it has been written, that the paper was founded by Canon Oakeley, but this is erroneous, Oakeley, as an influential cleric sympathetic to the Irish migrants, merely presided over the inaugural meeting. He was not a director, nor was he a shareholder, but that the paper was launched from his school, is an indication of the esteem in which he was held by the projectors and the Irish Catholic population of London at large. To what extent he may have influenced the paper's affairs is uncertain, and what role he played, if any, in the paper's demise again is not known. Given the views he expressed on Catholic organisations quoted in the last chapter, it would seem likely that he would have at least had an opinion on the subject, and any opinion did have, would have been respected.

O'Cavanagh was a Celtic scholar, who contributed to *Notes and Queries*, inside whose learned, not to say esoteric pages, however, the ideological battle between Saxon and Celt, English and Irish, still simmered, if it did not achieve the same intensity as it did in other less genteel publications. It was necessary for the Irish to defend themselves. O'Cavanagh had, for example, in 1867 contributed an article entitled 'By Whom Was the Harp brought into Europe?' His thesis, which was of course that it was the brave, noble Irish, was refuted serially by one Wm Pinkerton, in a fashion typical of the time, "The paths of civilisation and progress," he opined sagely at one point, "have ever led from the East, and as Ireland unfortunately laid at the extreme West, they reached her last."⁵ O'Cavanagh had previously edited and owned the *Catholic Vindicator*, which had been started in response to the Papal Aggression furore in 1851,⁶ by Patrick Burke Ryan. O'Cavanagh renamed it

⁴ Edwards and Storey, Op.cit. p 161

⁵ O'Cavanagh, *Notes and Queries*. 3rd Series XII 24/8/1867 141-3-Notes; Pinkerton, N&Q 3rd Series XII 21/9/1867 p229 and previous issues.

⁶ Husenbeth FC 'History of Catholic Periodicals' appeared serially in *Notes and Queries* 3rd series late 1866 and early 1867 and also in *Catholic Opinion* vol.1 n.130/1/1867 p1 O'Cavanagh's contribution in which he gives details of the *Universal News* is, as above, O'Cavanagh JE *Notes and Queries*, 3rd Series XI Feb 28 1867, p154-155. No copies survive of the *Catholic Vindicator* under O'Cavanagh. Oscott College library holds copies for 1851.

the *Catholic Vindicator and Irish Magazine* when he acquired it in January 1852, but it only survived a matter of months until August of the same year. He edited the *Universal News* from 24/5/1862 until December 1864, and the manner of his departure then, namely that he resigned after 'interference' from the lessee, Francis Scannell, had a direct bearing on his subsequent ousting in 1866, after a period of tenure of only a few months.

The period of Scannell's proprietorship was, as we have said, one of relative prosperity. The report of the 1863 annual meeting of the News Newspaper Co. contrasted the present conditions with that of the previous year, which had been 'perilous' the paper only kept afloat by the directors themselves, who had had to dig deep into their own pockets. The directors were naturally generous in their praise of the man who had relieved them of this burden. Scannell had

virtually been the pilot that found the Universal News sinking upon the sands of pecuniary distress without sufficient water to float into a safe harbour; when he raised the lessee's flag and by dint of matchless perseverance and untiring energy dragged it through into a haven of safety secured by the universal approbation clergy, shareholders and the Catholic public generally.⁷

The following year, though the directors were proud to announce that the paper was now "a leader among Irish Catholics", having obtained, they rejoiced, "very largely the support of the Clergy, so essential to the success of a Catholic newspaper," there were still, or there had been financial problems. Scannell had defaulted on one of the terms of his lease, and the paper had therefore automatically reverted to the company. The directors however, clearly did not want the responsibility for running the paper, wishing instead for Scannell to be reinstated as lessee. The difficulties which had caused him to default were connected with the sorry state of the paper when he took it over, when it was scarcely saleable, and he had done, they thought as much as was humanly possible to rescue the paper. They proposed, and after some discussion it was agreed, that he be allowed to retain the paper.⁸

⁷ *Universal News* 20/2/1863 p12

⁸ *Universal News* 6/2/1864 p4 report of the AGM

By 1865, the year Scannell relinquished the lease of the paper, the directors were able to announce a dividend to shareholders, (2% to paid up shareholders, 5% to preference shareholders). At the same general meeting, Scannell paid the balance he owed in interest to the company, £148/11/11d, in addition to the sum of £29/10/- he had paid in 1863.⁹ When Scannell had taken up the lease, the paper had been losing £10 per week, when he left, it had increased its circulation by 1,500 and was "perfectly solvent". His direct involvement ended on 29th September but he continued as a director until June the following year. His departure from the management signalled a period of disruption which lasted for the remainder of 1865 and almost the whole of 1866. Meetings to settle the future of the paper were announced and then cancelled, the correspondence columns were taken up with notices apologising for delays in replying to correspondence, non-arrival of papers etc. There were accusations of impropriety and even subterfuge as one individual or group was supplanted by another in an intriguing if somewhat bewildering glimpse behind the scenes at the struggle to gain control of the paper.

For the nine months following Scannell's departure, the paper had been run, according to a front-page article by would-be new proprietor Richard Archer on June 16th 1866 "on a sort of charitable arrangement". What kind he did not specify, but it had not been very successful as it had led to 'lessened circulation and damaged prestige'. "It would be affectation" he wrote, "to state that the News now holds the position or pretends to the influence which it once exercised..." Archer and his 'friends' as he termed them, determined to halt this decline, a decline that had been caused not only by unsatisfactory management, but also by the political line followed by the paper in the recent past.

There were two parties in Irish politics, he maintained-those who believed parliament would deliver Ireland from her woes, whose policies he dubbed "the peace-at-any-price programme", and "a great and rapidly growing party who pronounce the constitutional scheme a failure" .the supporters of the "war-at-all-hazards" Fenian movement. The former grouping he characterised as belonging to a past age, advocating "old remedies" that were formed and had their solitary triumph in

⁹ *Universal News* 13/5/1865 p12

Catholic emancipation, and it was to them, the "Petition and goose-quill party" that the paper had recently lent its support. If this was done because they believed it to be the best course to follow, they were blameless, but, and here he continues, if "they conformed not to their instincts but to a base and cowardly fear of consequences, they deserve the shame which is certain to attend those who desert their country's colours in the hour of the country's agony and need". In particular, he condemned the paper's treatment of the Fenian prisoners, which had been designed to "stab their reputations to death" whilst they were facing "like heroic men that terrible silence upon which few human voices will break for months to come".¹⁰ The fate of the Fenian prisoners, both the conditions under which they were held and the question of amnesty was to become one of the burning issues of the day. Indeed by his defiant demeanour at his trial and his stubborn resistance to the prison authorities, *Irish People* business manager and Fenian organiser Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa amongst others, was to prove as great a threat in political terms inside prison as out. He extended the battlefield to the courts and more particularly to the prisons, a tactic which was not lost on subsequent generations.

The Fenians, intending revolution, had only achieved a fiasco, but had acted with integrity, for which they were suffering. This view that the Fenians in the main, were at worst wrong-headed rather than evil, was very common. Cardinal Manning believed that though their actions could have led to great harm, the motives of the rank and file were honourable and an understandable reaction to injustice. Earlier in the paper's history, we speculated that the *Universal News* had traded Irish readers for English investors, when its content became more openly nationalist. Here it is possible the flow was the other way. By taking a more mainstream (in English terms) approach, the paper had alienated its Irish readers, without, it must be added, the benefit of increased investment. "No popular leader" Archer wrote on the two poles of Irish opinion, "no journalist, however disposed to modify his views, in the hope of serving the general good, need dream for a moment of the chances of reconciling these two sections"¹¹. This however, is what he proposed to do. Or, rather, he intended to steer a course between the two extremes, as he character-

¹⁰ *Universal News* 16/6/1866 p1

¹¹ *Ibid.*

ised them, and that in future the paper would "give the utmost support to that party which will endeavour the right thing for Ireland". The "right thing" amounted to ignoring the blandishments of both revolutionaries and parliamentary 'agitators', and refusing to give up possession of the land of Ireland by emigration. To follow the revolutionaries was to lose one's freedom, or worse; to follow the agitators risked the loss of home and livelihood if it entailed refusing to back the landlord's preferred candidate at elections.¹²

His stated intentions notwithstanding, Archer's period at the helm was to be brief-the following Saturday ¹³ his departure was announced. He had only been the 'caretaker' until a more permanent solution was found. The writer of the article deemed it unwise of him to have set out his policy for the future of the paper before it had been settled, though it is clear from Archer's 'Explanation' article of the 16/6/1866, that he at least believed it had been. Scannell, the former lessee, had ceased all connection with the paper, due to private business demands on the 6/6/1866. A shareholders meeting held on the nineteenth had decided to elect someone other than Archer to succeed to the lease. The paper was to continue to be "Thoroughly Catholic in tone and with Irish nationality for its politics" but with different management. A new name now appeared on page eight as the person to whom all payments should be made, John Hurley, and a further shareholder's meeting was announced to finalise details of the lease. Archer and his friends were vanquished then, but as we shall see, he was not so easily cast off and his name will reappear shortly.

Hurley lasted scarcely longer than Archer, and his successor Charles Reid was in place by the issue of the 14th July 1866, but he too only held on until 20/10/1866. This whole period was one of considerable disruption, the business affairs of the paper were in disarray and the correspondent's column was full of enquiries about unsent papers and unacknowledged correspondence. Numerous shareholder's meetings to settle the future of the paper were also announced and then cancelled. In

¹² It must be remembered that ballots were not secret in the UK until 1872 and even after that it took the wary Irish peasant some time to feel assured his landlord would not be able to find out how he had voted.

¹³ *Universal News* 23/6/1866 p8

October, ¹⁴ an article appeared blaming Scannell for the chaos. Entitled 'Complaints, the Lottery Scheme, the Distribution of Prizes,' it incorporated as an example of present difficulties, a letter from a subscriber in Ireland who had sent in money but had received neither papers nor a reply to further enquiries. The present conductors of the paper absolved themselves of any blame, saying they had no record of that and many other similar "unpleasant transactions" up until the time of Scannell's departure as lessee in June. The management since the complainant had first remitted his money in April 1866 had changed three times. They printed Scannell's home address and advised such disgruntled persons to apply to him. The article further criticised Scannell for instituting a lottery which had been a disaster and condemned by all of the shareholders. This article caused a furious row which can be seen by the insertion (and it must have been against the wishes of those then conducting the paper) of a notice from the company solicitor Chas Eldred and some of the shareholders. It was a defence of Scannell's stewardship of the paper. It went as follows,

Francis Scannell

In our last impression, an article appeared seriously reflecting on the conduct and indeed the honesty of the above gentleman, the late lessee of this paper. The article was written by the party who is, pending the sale of the paper or the appointment of a new lessee acting as the editor. The solicitor and a large body of the shareholders of the company to which the paper belongs wish it to be distinctly understood that the malicious and libellous article was inserted without their knowledge and concurrence: and in fact that they know the statements contained therein were utterly false and without even a shadow of foundation. Mr Scannell's direct connection with the Universal News ceased upon Sept 29th 1865 and not as stated in the article above referred to in June last. ¹⁵

The editor at this time and since May that year, was none other than John Eugene O'Cavanagh. We have his word for it in *Notes and Queries*. We can do no more than speculate but, referring back to O'Cavanagh's earlier tenure, it ended because of a row with Scannell. Now, with subscribers complaining, and sales on the slide, the temptation to put the blame for all the disorder on a past adversary may have been too much for O'Cavanagh, who, it will be remembered, prior to this, felt

¹⁴ *Universal News* 20/10/1866 p10

¹⁵ *Universal News* 27/10/1866 p8

he had been ousted unfairly once before. It was to be third time unlucky, because his intemperate article on Scannell cost O'Cavanagh the editorship for good. This time there was to be no return, as a note which appeared in January 1867 makes clear. It read,

Found, outside the Strand Music Hall, and left at the Office, a Pocket-book, containing sundry letters, among which are some cards bearing the name of 'John Eugene O'Cavanagh, Manager of the *Universal News*.

The owner, the note went on coldly, could have his property "on application and paying the expenses attending." Then, perhaps as payment in kind for his character assassination of Scannell,

In relation to the above we beg to distinctly state that Mr O'Cavanagh has long ceased to have any connection with the *Universal News*, and the public and supporters of this paper are hereby cautioned that he is totally unauthorised to represent or transact any business whatever in relation to it.¹⁶

On 27/10/1866 the short-lived Reid's place was taken by one of the directors, Patrick Boland. The meeting to settle the lease was held in the beginning of November and was reported in the trade press. There were two bidders, Boland and John Hurley. Hurley, it will be remembered, briefly controlled the paper in July of the same year. Both parties put their offer to the shareholders, who decided in Boland's favour. On the face of it, Hurley's offer seems the more attractive. Boland offered to accept a lease on the paper, on the condition that he should have it gratis for the first two years and subsequently pay two and a half percent to the shareholders. A second tender was read from Mr. John Hurley, who proposed to pay five percent to the shareholders after the first year, to pay off the mortgage debt of the company¹⁷ in ten years and then to give an additional two and a half percent to the shareholders.

¹⁶ *Universal News* 12/1/1867, p8

¹⁷ The trade paper was *The Newspaper Press*, subtitled *The Press Organ: A medium of intercommunication between all parties associated with Newspapers and a record of Journalistic Lore*. Edited by Alexander Andrews, London: EW Allen vol 1 n1 Jan 1867 p14 Andrews gives the O'Donnell's initials as FH, which is mistaken. FH was journalist on the *Morning Post*, who became a nationalist MP Further evidence of O'Donnell's tenure is provided by the Husenbeth survey, (see below), where he states in January 1867, that O'Donnell had been the editor until recently. The current editor, the survey went on, like the previous two, was an Irish Roman Catholic

Perhaps after all the disruption of the preceding months the shareholders took the view that Boland's was the more realistic bid. The motion to accept Boland's offer was seconded by the then editor, JF O'Donnell, who had just returned to the paper, after a brief hiatus, following the exit of O'Cavanagh.¹⁸

JF O'Donnell had only just been re-appointed editor. He, along with O'Cavanagh, who had replaced him between May and October, was one of the paper's mainstays, spending one period as sub-editor and two as editor. He was one of the most famous Irish journalists of his day. His career began at the age of fourteen, when he sent in prose and poetry to the *Kilkenny Journal*. Until his untimely death in 1874 at the age of thirty five, he wrote for the *Kilkenny Journal*; *Munster News*; *Nation*; *Tipperary Advocate*; *Universal News*; *Dublin Illustrated Journal*; *Chambers Journal*; *All The Year Round*; *The Shamrock*; *Duffy's Hibernian Magazine*; *Irishman*; *Irish People*; *Tablet*; *Zozimus*; *The Lamp*; *Dublin Review*; *The Boston Pilot*; *Fun*; *Catholic Opinion*. This is almost certainly an underestimate, his verse and prose fiction usually appeared under the pseudonyms Caviare and Monkton West, but his journalistic endeavours were anonymous. O'Donnell is an unusual case for a journalist of his time, simply because something has been written of him, largely as a result of his verse, but also because of ubiquity. However, his story is arguably much more typical of his profession, than are those of fellow Irish journalists like, for example, Justin McCarthy, and TP O'Connor, who found fame in England. His life was one of unending toil, insecurity and, ultimately an early death.

The convention of anonymity, from a journalist's point of view was both a benefit and a curse. Earlier in the century it had been a necessity, especially given the conflict at the heart of Anglo-Irish relations. Journalism was a dangerous profession and what those journalists we do know about have left to posterity, are largely the records of their trials.¹⁹ Anonymity could, therefore, in theory at least, give a measure of protection to journalists. It also allowed them to work for papers which might

¹⁸ Further evidence of O'Donnell's tenure is provided by the Husenbeth survey, (see below), where he states in January 1867, that O'Donnell had been the editor until recently. The current editor, the survey went on, like the previous two, was an Irish Roman Catholic

¹⁹ Peter Finnerty (1766-1822) is a case in point-he was imprisoned for two years, forced to stand in the pillory, fined and bound over for a further seven years in 1797 for seditious libel; was again imprisoned in 1811, for eighteen months for a libel on Lord Castlereagh; and was almost imprisoned again in 1819 for refusing to close his notebook when told to do so while covering Parliament.

have contradictory views without being seen to be inconsistent. O'Donnell certainly did that—he wrote for the *Nation*, the voice of 'constitutional nationalism' almost all his working life. Before it was suppressed in 1865, he also wrote poetry for its commercial rival and political enemy, the Fenian *Irish People*, though unlike almost everyone else connected with it, he escaped arrest. This was possibly because he was based in London at the time, editing the *Universal News* and working as sub-editor on the distinctly un-revolutionary *Tablet*. That position, he occupied "for three years, until 1868, a prodigiously long time for O'Donnell to care about any routine employment, for he was as fond of change as a schoolboy"²⁰ He was criticised by Yeats in 1892, as "the type of the facile Irish poet-journalist",²¹ but strangely enough, his contemporaries were not so condemnatory. James Stephens, who one might have thought would have disapproved of his connection with the *Tablet*, which was widely condemned in the 1860s for being anti-Irish. Writing in later years, he does not appear to have considered it important.

The other writers on the journal [*Irish People*] were, like the gentlemen I have named [Luby O'Leary etc], possessed of high intellectual culture, and were facile and accomplished wielders of the pen, such as Mr. JF O'Donnell, who subsequently edited the *Tablet*, and contributed many a sparkling song and story to the pages of several English magazines...²²

The above could suggest that Stephens was unaware that O'Donnell worked for his paper and its Tory critic at the same time. Perhaps with the passing of time, he had forgotten. He was respected in the profession—a 'journalist's journalist. Richard Dowling, a friend and colleague who edited the posthumous collection, recalled that he wrote his poetry on the spur of the moment, sometimes in mid-conversation, in journalist's shorthand. He came upon him once in the composing room of the *Nation*, on a high chair at a large table used for assembling the pages, writing. It was a kind of gallery and on the floor below was an enormous machine, churning out the week's edition. Dowling shouted above the noise and asked what he was doing,

²⁰ Dowling, R in 'Donnell JF (1891) *Poems by JF O'Donnell*, with an introduction by R Dowling. London: Ward and Downey. p xvii

²¹ Welch R (1996)(ed) *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p422

²² Ryan, D (1967) *The Fenian Chief*. Dublin: MH Gill & Sons. P321

"I am doing my poem for this week."

"What! in this awful racket?..."

'Yes,' he said, 'I like the noise. It soothes me.'²³

Anonymity was also a curse, because it turned journalists into 'penny-a-liners', writing was piecework, and the journalist was just another artisan at the service of proprietors, as an article from an American journal stated in 1888,

Mr Bright, in a speech on the land Bill naively remarked that he is not a landowner, and therefore he is strongly on the side of the tenant. I am not a capitalist, and my sympathies are strongly with the men who live from hand to mouth. In England, capital dominates intellect somewhat unduly.

...There is nothing more sad in the history of intellect than the fact that the anonymous press of England has literally ground up, body and soul, some of the brightest and most able men of the country. Statesmen, philosophers, novelists, poets, whom the world has never heard of, have gone down to their graves poor and unrecorded, broken on the wheel of the daily press. The great leader-writers know this. They know they are effacing themselves under the Juggernaut Car of the Anonymous in the interests of the proprietors.

In France, it is the writer who keeps the paper, not the paper that keeps the writer. The Americans associate names with journals, so that powerful and popular writers become known there as well as the papers they serve. In England, the great papers absorb the writing power of the time like sponges. Some of the brightest and wisest brains are exhausted in the editorial pages of the daily newspapers, to die and be succeeded by others, without their names ever being known to the public. They have, however, contributed their bricks and mortar to the proprietary edifice of the capitalist and the more giants that are effaced in the work, the firmer is the golden basis of the newspaper owner's property.²⁴

The bulk of the Irish papers we are dealing with here, were political weeklies, rather than commercial dailies, but graft, O'Donnell and his anonymous contemporaries certainly did, and the low pay meant that few made even a comfortable living

²³ Dowling, R in O'Donnell JF (1891) Poems by JF O'Donnell, with an introduction by R Dowling. London: Ward and Downey. pxiv

²⁴ Today in America, quoted in Hatton, (1882) Journalistic London. London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington p125

by it. Dowling, himself a journalist, was well aware of the ephemeral nature of the work,

A vast quantity of his [O'Donnell's] best work was thrown off-in journalism from week to week, and with the close of the week most of the interest in it passed away for ever. He had to toil hard and incessantly to make ends meet, and he told me in 1872 that for 13 years he had never taken a holiday but one of a week, when peremptorily ordered to rest by his doctor.²⁵



Fig. 10 "A notoriously careless dresser"
—JF O'Donnell by his friend Edward Fitzpatrick²⁶

And this was a journalist who never lacked work. He was a prolific writer, his chief characteristic was speed, "toujours pret", according to TD Sullivan.²⁷ In one week in 1872, from Sunday to Thursday he wrote: two columns of notes, two columns of London Gossip, a one column leader, and a column of verse for the Nation; for Catholic Opinion, two pages of notes and a leader; for the Illustrated Magazine, three poems and a five-column story. Despite all this effort, he reminded his friend, in the same letter, he was always aware that he lived only half a mile from St Mary's Workhouse.²⁸ He did not die in the workhouse—a senior Irish judge, Lord O'Hagan

²⁵ Dowling, R Op.cit. pxviii

²⁶ From Sullivan TD 'A Memory of John Francis O'Donnell' Catholic Bulletin Vol 1 June 1911 p300

²⁷ Sullivan, TD, 'A Memory of John Francis O'Donnell' Catholic Bulletin Vol 1 June 1911 pp299-304

²⁸ Dowling, R Op.cit. p ix quoting from a letter from O'Donnell to himself dated Thursday 19/7/1872.

was induced to find him a secure position in the office of the Agent General of New Zealand. This promised both security for his family and a respite from the life of a hack, leisure time to concentrate on his literary pursuits-even a new suit of clothes. A notoriously careless dresser, on his appointment he paid a visit to a tailor-and was transformed, "I don't know myself" he wrote to Dowling, "My wife doesn't know me. The children shriek as if I were a stranger."²⁹ He died a few months later after a short illness.



Fig. 11 JF O'Donnell, after his visit to the tailor's perhaps³⁰

O'Donnell's contribution to the *Universal News* was primarily as an editor, not as an author or poet, though it is as a poet he is remembered. During the periods when he worked on the paper, literature did not feature as strongly as it did under Christopher Clinton Hoey's editorship. Presumably, this was a decision of the owners at the time. CC Hoey, the paper's last owner, replacing Patrick Boland in July 1867, used the name Charles Clinton in this regard. Hoey, and his sub-editor JP McDonnell, (not to be confused with JF O'D) certainly favoured historical, biographical and literary subject matter, including poems from O'Donnell.

The career of JP McDonnell (1847-1906) as a Fenian, supporter of the French Commune and Secretary for Ireland on the First International brought him and the Fenian movement into contact with the leading revolutionaries of the day. He was a political animal from an early age and was known as 'Little JP McDonnell, the Boy

²⁹ Dowling, *Ibid.* pxx

³⁰ From MacDonagh, M (1888) *Irish Graves in England*. Dublin p9

Orator' in his youth. His father had intended him for the priesthood, and indeed Archbishop Hughes of New York, after being addressed by McDonnell while on a visit to Dublin, told him that if he did, he would not only be a bishop, but a "great one." However, his path in life took him elsewhere. According to Cormac O'Grada,³¹ he was expelled from the Catholic University which was preliminary to studying for the priesthood, for tearing down decorations put up in honour of the visit of the Prince of Wales to Dublin. McDonnell's wife bears out that he was involved in efforts to disrupt the visit in March 1863—he and fellow secretary of the NBSP CG Doran, went round Dublin turning off gas lamps at the mains and giving out pamphlets—but he was not expelled for it. He was twice threatened with expulsion for speaking on behalf of the NBSP but was saved by family influence.³² What prevented him from joining the priesthood was the Maynooth oath, which called for priests to report any subversive activity and which was anathema to a young man of his nationalist and republican views. His politics took him into journalism and he was an editor of the NBSP paper the *United Irishman and Galway American* and wrote for the IRB *Irish People*. He was arrested in 1866 after the suspension of habeus corpus, but released after some ten months without being charged.

On leaving prison he went Mullingar and established the *Irish Star* newspaper from a newsagents and tobacconists. An associate was Fr Christopher 'Kit' Mullen, who was 'an active fenian', and 'if they had entered the field, he intended to lead a company of his own'.³³ The paper failed, his wife averred, because of the interference of the local police, who watched his place of business very carefully and conducted numerous searches, not considering it to be a legitimate commercial concern at all, but "a perfect blind for other designs".³⁴

³¹ O'Grada, C (1975) 'Fenianism and Socialism: The Career of JP McDonnell' pp31-41 in *Saothar, Journal of Irish Labour History* vol1 no 1 May 1875 p33 O'Grada writes of the difficulty of obtaining material on McDonnell. He utilised Marx and Engels on Ireland London and Moscow :1971; previously unpublished material from the State Paper Office (now the National Archive of Ireland) in Dublin, as I do, in this and the following section on the *Irish Liberator*, which contains a lot of correspondence to and from McDonnell while he was in the NBSP; and published material in the USA, but appears unaware of the McDonnell archive which is held in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

³² Biography of JP McDonnell, dictated by his widow Mary in 1908 and in the JP McDonnell archive State Historical Society of Wisconsin. His uncle was on the board of education for the National Schools. P1

³³ O'Grada, Op.cit. p35 & Mary McDonnell, Op.cit p3.

³⁴ McDonnell, M Op.cit.p3; O'Grada Op.cit., p34

Whether as a means of making a living, or as a cover for fomenting revolution, the *Irish Star* and attendant shop failed. The close attentions of the state meant that many suspects were unable to find employment, or if they had their own business, customers. The only course of action was to leave Ireland-usually for America. McDonnell, as his father-in-law Samuel McEvatt had done some twenty years before in similar circumstances, tried his hand in England first, and, thinking perhaps that the authorities would be unable to maintain the same level of surveillance in the metropolis as they had done so effectively in a small market town, came to London in 1868. He had been a member of the provisional council of the IRB since 1865, and this, together with his secretarial role in the NBSP meant he was not short of contacts in nationalist and revolutionary circles. He joined his old colleague in the NBSP, CC Hoey on the *Universal News*, and was for a time London correspondent of the *Irishman*. What is at first sight surprising is that he should have found employment on a 'mainstream' English newspaper, the *Evening Standard*, where he acted as summary editor. He was after all, a fairly prominent, not to say notorious character. An explanation is that there were already large numbers of Irish journalists working in the English press, as there had long been, a state of affairs which did not please everyone-the *Birmingham Monthly Argus* had claimed, for example, that Catholic Emancipation in 1829 had only made been possible because of the influence of Irish journalists, of whom there was a majority "on all of the morning and most of the evening papers".³⁵ When McDonnell founded *New Ireland* in 1870, which his wife described as "an Irish revolutionary paper", many London journalists wrote for it, including James D Daly, the editor in chief of the *London Daily News*, which was "a government organ".³⁶

This again was made possible by the practice of anonymity. As previously stated, to have worked on papers such as the *Tablet*, does not seem to have damaged John F O'Donnell's reputation among nationalists, and whether or not the English owners of the *Daily News* would have objected to their Irish editor pursuing his own political beliefs elsewhere, we do not know, but a senior Fenian such as McDonnell does not appear to have found the reverse a problem. Daly could

³⁵ Quoted in Aspinall, A (1949) *Politics and the Press, c 1780 -1850*. London: Morrison and Gibb. p324.

³⁶ McDonnell, M *Op.cit.* p4



Fig. 12 JP McDonnell "a very striking figure...with a rather small face a n d clean-cut small features, wonderful eyes and an abundance of red curly hair. He was brainy and very gentle, had a beautiful speaking voice and courage for any venture." ³⁷

make a living on the English press and write for him. One could take the attitude that the journalists of the time were simply pens-for-hire, and though some of them undoubtedly were, it would be a mistake to make it a general judgement. This was, after all, an age in which one worked or starved, sometimes one starved even if one worked. It was even possible to try to exert an influence by being oblique. Journalists sometimes had to use subterfuge if they had an agenda of their own they wished to put across in a paper unsympathetic to their views. FH O'Donnell, (not to be confused with JF O'D or JP McD), nationalist MP and colleague, then rival of Parnell, worked for a number of years on the London *Morning Post*. He became an expert on continental politics, but managed to include his own Irish nationalist viewpoint,

³⁷ Picture from the *National Labor Standard*, NJ 20/1/1906. The comment is from his friend and colleague Samuel Gompers, quoted O'Grada Op.cit. p40

in describing the struggles for autonomy of the Yugoslavs and the Czechoslovaks - names then unknown in England - he was able to deal many an indirect blow for Irish autonomy, while the fine Tory proprietor and his editor remained quite unconscious of the use that was being made of their paper.³⁸

JP McDonnell became prominent in the Amnesty Association, organised to free the Fenian prisoners. This enjoyed wide support beyond Irish circles, and it was this involvement which brought him into contact with Marx, Engels and the other members of the General Council, to which he was elected unanimously in 1871. Prior to that he had spent some time in Clerkenwell and Newgate, for organising a brigade of Irish volunteers to go to republican France's aid against the Prussians. The German ambassador complained to the British authorities that this was in breach of the neutrality laws and McDonnell was arrested. While in Clerkenwell, he wrote an expose of the filthy conditions prisoners had to endure and was transferred to Newgate. When he eventually emigrated to America in 1872, like so many thousands of his compatriots, it was in the steerage and he wrote a series of articles on the conditions there as well, precipitating a US government enquiry. He became a prominent US trades unionist and was credited with being the 'Father of Labor Day'.³⁹

On the General Council, McDonnell supported and was supported by Marx and Engels, in the face of suspicion from some of the English members that the Irish sections, there was one such in Soho, were Fenians under another guise. This was undoubtedly true, they almost certainly would have been Fenians but that does not mean that they were not sincere members of the International. That, it would appear was the attitude of Marx and Engels, who welcomed their involvement, Engels speaking in support of national working class organisations.⁴⁰ McDonnell was involved in the abortive attempt at establishing branches of the International in Ireland, which was defeated by the combined efforts of the clergy, press and government. In America, it has been argued, he moved away from an analytical Marxist po-

³⁸ Hindle, W (1937) *The Morning Post, 1772-1937: Portrait of a Newspaper*. London: George Routledge & Sons. p214 The quote is from TP O'Connor

³⁹ Obituaries of JP McDonnell in *Van's Series* 23/1/1906, the *National Labor Standard* Paterson NJ 20/1/1906

⁴⁰ O'Grada, Op.cit. pp35-6

sition to one which was more straightforwardly 'labourist'. This appears to be the case but the explanation given for this is one that is worthy of some comment.

One might just as well plausibly argue that McDonnell never fully understood what Marx and Engels meant but that, like several others on the General Council, he supported them more out of a sense of personal loyalty. Certainly, we have no evidence from his letters to Marx and to Engels of original thought or analysis from a socialist perspective; the most one can credit him with is a vague radicalism. The same is true of several other members of the General Council. If this reading is correct, then it is not difficult to see why a combination of weak theoretical basis and the concrete situation in America, would move him towards the position he took.⁴¹

This appears a reasonable argument at first sight, but on closer examination, that there may be no evidence that McDonnell contributed 'original thought or analysis', does not mean per se, that he was incapable of understanding it when he saw it. This then, is a question of interpretation. As an interpretation, it is one that is in keeping with much recent writing from left and right in Ireland on Fenianism-namely that they had no politics beyond a vague romantic nationalism, and had no social programme. This is mirrored in the argument that the Fenian movement's undeniable popularity is explained away by asserting that it was a form of recreation. McDonnell was one senior Fenian who was a documented internationalist and socialist. How to deal with him then? Others such as JJ O'Kelly, London Head Centre and later nationalist MP, went to fight in Paris but have no record of note on social issues. McDonnell, does, and his links to the International were solid and public, unlike those of say, James Stephens about whom Marx was so famously dubious. McDonnell's problem it appears, was that he did not understand what it was all about. It is just as likely, more than likely, and O'Grada quotes him on it,⁴² that McDonnell no longer believed in total solutions, in panaceas, in what he came to see as dreams-he decided to devote himself to what he could practically achieve. His own lived experience would have provided him with the motivation for such a

⁴¹ Ibid. p 40

⁴² Ibid. p39 He quotes McDonnell "as long as there are working people starving, it is utterly wrong to spend money on objects which bring no immediate relief to the toiler" Also, "political action must be of a practical character. To convince the masses that we are in earnest, we must always act for the material interests of the whole working class, never indulge in mere speculations."

course. As an Irish revolutionary he had seen the Fenian uprising crushed and himself and his fellows imprisoned and exiled. As an internationalist he was again imprisoned and saw the communards butchered. Michael Davitt, Fenian gunrunner, learned the hard way in Dartmoor, that it was better to take British rule in Ireland apart piece by piece, field by field. McDonnell, I would suggest, came to similar conclusions about the best way to achieve justice for the many. This is neither to agree nor disagree with him, but to question the notion that he did not understand. To opt for the bird in the hand is not *prima facie* evidence that one is an intellectual lightweight. McDonnell was perhaps not an intellectual of the calibre of his illustrious German colleagues, but then few were, or are—he was an activist, a political journalist, propagandist and organizer in the cause of Irish independence and socialism.

2.7 "Outpourings of a patriot's heart"

Declan Kiberd has suggested that Ireland is an invention: of the Irish themselves, as epitomised in the phrase Sinn Fein, (Ourselves); of the English, "as a laboratory...and as a fantasy-land"; and, lastly, cognisant of the saw that 'exile is the nursery of nationality', of the Irish abroad. The subject of his huge synthesis of the literary, the social and the political, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, is particularly interesting, he says, because of the way the Irish literary and cultural revival, (of which the publication of JF O'Donnell's poetry was one of the opening shots) pre-dated, predicted and even made possible the struggle for independence in the first decades of the twentieth century. The American nation, he notes, was imagined after their War of Independence, the Irish, before.¹

The original *Nation*, which ran from 1842-48, is seen as being the inspiration for the cultural nationalism which featured so largely in the movements of the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its reputation is built mainly on its patriotic poetry and essays, especially the work of Thomas Davis, and although it was eventually suppressed in 1848, along with, in quick succession, the more militant *United Irishman*, *Irish Tribune* and *Irish Felon*, its very moderation and its literary rather than its manifestly political content, was, arguably, the paper at its most subversive, as this comment from an English observer² suggests-

I don't think the *United Irishman*, the *Tribune* or the *Irish Felon*, made their presence conspicuous in England, but the *Nation* was much read - not from any sympathy with its politics, but for the sake of its beautiful ballads, revolutionary though they were. These stirring songs, set to Irish airs, and sung in Irish ears, were soul-stirring, and I have seen, in Orange drawing-rooms in loyal Wicklow, the welling up of feeling and emotion, as fair and undoubtedly well-affected daughters of Erin gave utterance to their seditious strains. "Ninety Eight" "Erin Aboo!" "The Saxon Shilling" "The Voice of Tara" "The Harp of the Nation", sung to the airs of "*Mollin a Stor*" "*Shan Bhean Bhoeth*" "*Chreevin Erin*" "*Noc mbainim sin do*" "*Cruisgin lan*", or "*Sheela na guira*", made the grey eye blaze, or the (longing?) lips tremble, and the singer falter over her notes, til a burst of irrepressible applause buried the tremulous voice and the audacious sentiment together.

¹ Kiberd, D (1996) *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. London: Vintage pp 4-5.

² "A Servant Of The Press" *The Newspaper Press*. Alexander Andrews (ed) London: EW Allen 1867 vol.1 n.1 p.3&4

Elsewhere the same writer says, "Some of the most beautiful songs that ever breathed treason were published in the columns of this paper, by clever, impetuous young men, who sought with the light of genius to kindle the flame of rebellion."³ Later in the century, John Pope-Hennessy was to find that the reading rooms of the Catholic Young Men's Society, a militantly moderate organisation, which in the 1860s was an ideological counterbalance to the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, had become "our civic academies of Nationality". His informant, a parish priest, said that though supposedly Catholic and non-political, the reading rooms and libraries of the various branches had

taught the young clerks and well-to-do artisans ten times more about Irish history, poetry and biography than was known to all the habitués of the fashionable clubs...where the upper and middle-class Catholics maybe seen.⁴

Gaelic sports and the Irish language were also enlisted in the anti-colonial struggle, and so it continued. This was lost on the incumbents of Dublin Castle however. During the inquiry into the 1916 rising, the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, had this to say of the period of the Literary Revival, which had produced some 'remarkable' prose, poetry and drama,

all tending towards, and feeding latent desires for, some kind of separate Irish national existence. It was a curious situation to watch, but there was nothing in it suggestive of revolt or rebellion except in the realm of thought.⁵

Before judging Birrell too harshly, it should be remembered that the reconstituted IRB who organised the revolt, had by then perfected the techniques of the right-hand-not-knowing-what-the-left-hand-was-doing, and were thus impervious to penetration by the Castle's spies, in decided contrast to the 1860s. However, that was for the future. With the example of the *Nation* for both inspiration and as a source of recyclable material, Irish editors in Ireland, England and elsewhere were careful to include poetry and prose, often in serial form in their pages. Historical

³ Andrews, A (1859) *The History of British Journalism*. London: Richard Bentley Vol. II p 303.

⁴ Pope Hennessy, J 'What do the Irish Read' *Nineteenth Century* 15 June 1884 p926 See also Comerford RV(1981)'Patriotism as pastime: the appeal of fenianism in the mid-1860s' in R Fanning & D Harkness (eds) *Irish Historical Studies* (22) 1980-81. Antrim: W&G Baird pp 249-50

⁵ Ryan, D (1957) *The Rising*. Dublin: Golden Eagle Books Ltd. p3

subjects were popular, often harking back to an age before the Norman conquest, and can be seen as an attempt to create a golden past in order to relieve the gloom of the present, and as a foundation upon which to build a glorious future. Martin O'Brennan, a Gaelic scholar and historian, argued the politics of the day in historical terms in his papers, the *Connaught Patriot* and *Irish News*.⁶

However, lest it be thought that all the literary output of the newspapers of the period amounted to a romantic imagining of a past that never existed, the role of the present, and the recent past—the material, social and political conditions under which the Irish lived, both in England and in Ireland was also a resource upon which to draw inspiration. Indeed, some of JF O'Donnell's best poetry, which was widely published in journals was that which referred to the alienation and loneliness which was part of being an exile.⁷ At the time, what made his name was his patriotic poetry. He never was a Fenian, but his contribution, in terms of literature, to Fenianism was such that a contemporary, Michael McDonagh considered him "the poet of the Fenian movement".⁸ Fellow journalist and poet TD Sullivan, who occupied a similarly equivocal position, as brother of the Fenian's chief literary enemy AM, but himself a major Fenian bard, wrote of the first production of the Southwark Irish Literary Society, a collection of O'Donnell's verse, published after his death,

In this compilation are a goodly number of the bard's national poems, strong, strenuous, impassioned outpourings of a patriot's heart. For though he took no part in the agitations and joined none of the national organisations of his time, he was a Nationalist in every fibre of his being. If he brought to the service of the cause neither pike nor gun, he gave to it the lightning of his genius, and what popular movement can prosper without such aid?⁹

The following two poems are examples of O'Donnell's patriotic verse, which appeared in the *Universal News* in January 1867, (on the 19th and 12th respec-

⁶ As noted by ML Legg in, for example, her (1997) 'Martin Andrew O' Brennan And The Connaught Patriot' in John A Claffey (ed) *Glimpses Of Tuam Since The Famine*. Tuam: Old Tuam Society p69; and in her (1999) *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press 1850-1892*. Dublin: Four Courts Press. I must thank the author for giving me a copy of the essay.

⁷ See the entry on O'Donnell in Welch, R (ed) (1996) *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* Oxford: OUP. p422

⁸ MacDonagh, M (1888) *Irish Graves in England: Evening Telegraph Reprints*. Dublin. p95

⁹ Sullivan, TD, 'A Memory of John Francis O'Donnell' *Catholic Bulletin* Vol. 1 June 1911 p301

tively), under his usual pseudonym for the time. That they describe the gloom of winter and look forward to the coming of spring is conventional enough considering their mid-winter publication. That the anticipated light will be the light of freedom, is again what one would expect in this type of poetry, but the year, 1867, a month before the Fenian's projected rising gives the words added significance.

Ireland

Thy brow is seemed with agony's white scars,
 Thy mouth, dear Mother, is blood-red with pain;
 Ashes and corpses at thy feet have lain,
 Through immemorial nights of clouds and stars.
 Sadly thou sittest by the moaning sea,
 And with the tempest and the breaker's roar,
 Thy rent harp wails, and wails for evermore,
 A mystic and unrestful melody.

But lo! the morning over moor and sedge,
 Lights up its splendrous presence, wild and proud,
 And crimson shines the ocean's glowing edge,
 And bright the sun looks from the parting cloud.
 Arise, O tearful Woman, reappear-
 Thy hope, thy God, thy Liberty is near.

Caviare

Fig.13 'Ireland' by JF O'Donnell *Universal News* 19/1/1867—Was the ending convention, or did he know?

Our Irish Future

I

The Land is dark and waste tonight-the last night of the
year-
And women's eyes are blind with grief, men's faces white with
fear;
We tread an isle of sepulchres, an isle of funeral song,
And up to God ascending goes the Nation's cry of Wrong!

II

Where are our young men, souls of fire, the chivalrous, the
brave?
Go ask the gaoler, ask the earth, the fierce Atlantic wave.
Where are our triumphs, once assured, for Heaven, though
slow, is just?
Ah, pitying Lord, our triumphs are banners draped in
dust.

III

From East to West, from North to South, the Celt is beaten
down,
He hears the hated tyrant's curse, he sees his baleful frown;
The Stranger's flag is in his sky, his mail'd heel on his soil,
His glory and his heritage are British shame and spoil.

IV

Toll, dreary bell of midnight, toll the year is waning fast;
Toll for the buried months and days, toll for a Nation's past;
I hear the snow and rising wind against the casement beat,
And in the barren fields abroad the tread of hurrying feet.

V

'Tis the New Year, all dowered with cloud, and diadem'd with
stars:
What bringest thou, in thy wierd face-what tale of peace and
wars?
What hope for us who sit and watch beside the Western sea?
Shall Ireland—I conjure you to speak—shall Ireland yet be free?

VI

"Work on and hope," the voice replies, "the land is living
still;
Work on, the very hills would move at Man's determined will.
You have a flag, you have a cause, you have a People's might;
March forward to the stormy cry of 'God and Human
Right!'"

VII

Then rising in the dark I saw the Heavens transfigured fair,
A sudden glory seemed to fill the wilderness of air;
And as the Moon behind a bank of morning vapour set,
Another voice said to my soul, "There's hope for Ireland yet!"

Caviare

The bulk of the poetry and fiction then had a nationalist slant, as did the biographical and historical writing. It was also intended to be wholesome and uplifting, and imbued with a spirit of Catholicism. It was to act as an antidote to the corrupting influence of life in the great metropolitan cities such as London, in this regard normally called Babylon, and especially the popular English press. In a leading article in 1864 entitled *Prospects of Irish Literature*, such filth was condemned as was the fact that it was widely available in Ireland as well as in England. It was a religious duty, just as much as building schools or churches, the paper opined, for Catholics, the laity and the clergy, to combine to produce cheap wholesome prints to combat the pernicious influence of the likes of *Reynold's News*. Such papers were full of

scoundrelly insults to the national faith and the national nature. In their pages, Madonnas wink, priests cajole their penitents and laugh behind their backs, Popes are old fools, Irishmen are never sober, Irish women are filthy in their personal habits, the hero of every ridiculous story is a Paddy, and so on through the long category of baseless and infamous slanders.¹⁰

The *Universal News* sought to counter these negative images of the Irish in its fiction and poetry with as much vigour as it advocated their cause in its editorials.

This was most prominent under the last editor, Christopher Clinton Hoey. Unlike most of his editorial contemporaries, he came from a working class background and began his literary career contributing poetry to the *Irish Builder* in Dublin in 1860, while still working as a bench-hand for a Dublin builder. He wrote for the *Irishman* under Richard Piggott and for various journals in London, and Scotland, as well as in Ireland, contributing poetry and prose. He also wrote on architecture and other technical subjects. He was a political animal as well as a literary one and was one of the leaders of in the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, which led to an involvement in their London paper the *Irish Liberator*. His verse contributions to the *Irish Builder* under the pseudonym Civis, collectively titled Civic Lyrics, were not strictly-speaking literary pieces, but were topical verses on civic issues, public health etc. The *Irish Builder* "exuded enthusiasm for improvement of every kind, not least

¹⁰ *Universal News* 24/12/1864 pp 9-10

in the provision of public services such as piped water and sewage", and was an example to RV Comerford of one of the better features of the Victorian outlook, both in its progressive, public spiritedness and in its assumption that "the prose of a trade journal should be as well-turned as that of a literary review."¹¹ Hoey, was as enthusiastic for improvement as the journal and, in the words of his obituary,¹² "in the advocacy of public rights or in condemnation of public wrongs, he must have, so to speak, stood upon the corns of some thin-skinned public, or would-be public characters." As we shall soon see, he certainly stood upon the corns of the Bishop of Birmingham.

In the early months of the 1867, the paper even published a series on Orange literature, ballads and songs, but the doings of the Fenians came to assume ever greater importance, as they did in the news columns. Along side biographies of past rebels, were tales and poems of more contemporary interest. Though it is the case that the Fenian leadership have been criticised for their lack of a social programme, which they did not acquire until the New Departure of 1879, and even then in the face of opposition from some of the old hands, reading the newspapers of the 1860s, the Land issue was ever-present, as was the spectre of the Famine, a permanent rebuke to the occupants of Dublin Castle. Rose and Quinlivan are quite right in their assessment that Irish nationalism was as much a response to economic and social evils as to the "new assertion of nationhood" of continental Europe from the 1840s.¹³

In the summer, the death of a young Fenian, Richard Stowell in Naas prison, was the inspiration for a verse drama called *Going on Board* by Tyrone, which is typical in its concerns.¹⁴ Stowell had died from consumption, caused, it was claimed, by the conditions he had endured in captivity. Two friends, Francis and Edward are waiting in Dublin to catch a ferry when they see Stowell's bereaved mother. Francis

¹¹ Comerford, RV () Ireland 1850-70: post famine and mid-Victorian' in WE Vaughan (ed) *A New History of Ireland V Ireland Under the Union 1801-70* Oxford: Clarendon Press. p394

¹² *Irish Builder* Vol XXVII, No.609 May 1st 1885, p127. Hoey died in London of consumption at the age of 54

¹³ Rose P (1970) *The Manchester Martyrs: the story of a Fenian Tragedy*. London: Lawrence and Wishart p 80

¹⁴ *Universal News* 13/7/1867

asks her history, who her son was and what happened to him. The answer was that he was murdered. By whom?

EDWARD-The harpies of Britannia—the slaves of slaves—the tools of tyrants, the hirelings of our foe.

...Tyrants know how to shudder when they hear
that slaves have arms. They cannot sleep. Their deeds,
Like sheeted ghosts, stand up about the bed.
If an owl nears the window with a whoop
At midnight, their nice ears catch the alarm
Of starved and plunder'd tenants ready armed,
And thirsting for their innocent blood. Day
Brings them no rest; a cottier cannot keep
His hat upon his head, when they go by—
In rushing chariots—without the thought
Of raw-boned, fierce democracy, touching
Their quick."

Fig. 15 Extract from 'Going on Board' by 'Tyrone'

The Irish, in this reading, are slaves, starving and plundered, and the signs of disrespect for their betters the harbingers of their nemesis, democracy. Home then from Home—A Christmas Tale, by William J McCauliffe,¹⁵ was a melodrama set in the Irish countryside. It encapsulated themes of immigration, landlordism, eviction, agrarian violence, the role of the priesthood and the cruelty of the judicial system. The events were described with all the heightened emotion and sentimentality so common in the period, but had a basis in everyday reality. The catalyst for the story is the arrival in the home of a poor tenant farmer, of a letter from America. It is from his eldest son, announcing his intention of returning home to spend Christmas with his family and is full of joyful expectation and kind wishes for his father, his married younger brother, his wife and their son. What the elder brother does not know is that fate, in the shape of their landlord, has made a cruel mockery of his

¹⁵ *Universal News* 2/1/1869 p3

wishes, as his father has been evicted, and now resides miserably in a shack close to the former happy home. Worse is to come, the young wife is dead, presumably as a result of subsequent hardships. The fond hopes expressed in the letter, contrasted with their bitter present conditions were too much for the younger son, and he swore to kill the landlord. He set off, blind with grief and bitterness to have his revenge, but by a tragic error only succeeded in slaying the landlord's daughter. Disaster is followed by disaster, and the old man, who had followed him to try to dissuade him from such a reckless course, is himself arrested for the crime. The local priest, an example of a true 'soggarth aroon', portrayed throughout in heroic terms, (defending, as the paper avowed Irish priests habitually did, 'the people from whose ranks he had emerged and to whom he was devoted') leads a deputation of villagers including the murderer, to the barracks to free the innocent old man. Fighting ensued and the younger son and four villagers were killed, with many more wounded, including the heroic priest. He then tries to convince the authorities that they had killed the real culprit and that the old man is innocent, but they, typically, hang him anyway. The older son then arrives to this scene of disaster and takes the infant boy back to America with him. And well he might.

In the following issue,¹⁶ was the true story of the murder of a landlord, one George Cole Baker, the son of an Anglican vicar, by a tenant. The paper took the view that it had "no sympathy with a murderer" but that it did for people whose living conditions forced them into such desperate acts. A similarly equivocal response to 'agrarian outrages' as they were known, had been evinced some years before by an article culled from the pages of an American contemporary, *Mooney's Express* of San Francisco. The editor, Mooney, had offered \$500 for the head of a rack renting landlord, Major Brabazon, opining that if they cut the heads off a few landlords and stuck them on spikes it would serve as a good warning to the rest. The *Universal News* did not approve of such violence, but did not question that there was just cause.

¹⁶ Ibid. 9/1/1869 p8

...But is our instructor as courageous as he is sagacious, he advises murder but he is safe from the consequences. He cannot forget that the gibbet is an extensively patronised institution in these islands, or that hangmen and sherrifs abound. "Failures of justice" as they are called, are exceedingly rare, and for one victim claimed by the peasantry, the law frequently contrives to claim two for itself. This week a man named Dillane was hanged at Limerick, being the third person who suffered death for the murder of Fitzgerald.¹⁷

McCauliffe's tale is similarly ambiguous—there are a number of readings of the central drama—the attempt on the landlord's life. One, of course, is that such actions are intrinsically wrong and will inevitably lead to innocents suffering. However, the use of violence is not condemned in the absolute, the villagers and the priest do attack the barracks. If one were so inclined, and it must be assumed that many of the readers would have been, what was wrong with the son's actions were that they were committed alone, from personal motives, and had no political objective—which was being supplied by the IRB at the time.

'Irish Life in London Just Now', a comic serial story by Argus, appeared late in 1867, from the 26th October to the 28th December, and was set against the hysterical atmosphere in the London of the time. The search for Captain Kelly the Fenian Head Centre, was in full swing; the trial of his rescuers, the Manchester Martyrs Allen, Larkin and O'Brien had taken place and their execution fell in the middle of the story's run, causing it to be suspended for that week (30/11/1867) out of respect; the streets were full of special constables; the papers full of Fenian scare-stories. On the thirteenth of December, an attempt to free another senior Fenian, Ricard O'Sullivan Burke, by blowing down the wall to the exercise yard of Clerkenwell gaol with a barrel of gunpowder, went wrong and killed nine Londoners. The explosion and the aftermath of this last disaster provides a bitterly ironic commentary on a story which was itself intended to be an ironic commentary on life as experienced by London's Irish inhabitants. The hero was one John Dempsey, a strong, handsome, upright Irishman, arrested in London one night on suspicion of being a Fenian, but really on account of his nationality, by a collection of pathetically comic

¹⁷ Ibid. 18/4/1863 p8

policemen, who first of all examine his boots, to see if was an Irish-American.¹⁸ Though there is no evidence upon which to hold him, he is carted off to the police station to be interrogated by a similarly foolish detective, called Snivels. Snivels, his prisoner's manly non co-operation notwithstanding, believes he can persuade Dempsey to talk, by plying him with whisky, which, as every Englishman knows, no Irishman can resist. The second last episode ends with him running off to get the bottle, salivating over the prospect of his imminent victory. When he returns, Dempsey promptly grabs him by the throat, half throttles him, steals his keys, makes his escape and eventually sails for America, a free man.

The real stories of arrest and interrogation which were being played out on the streets and in the police cells of London were somewhat less heroic and correspondingly more tragic. After the Clerkenwell explosion on December 13th there ensued a huge manhunt. This was only to be expected but the pressure on the police to get results was heightened by criticism that though they knew of both the attempt and the method to be employed in advance, and had kept the prisoners away from the yard, neither the police nor the prison authorities had done anything to protect the public and had left the outer walls unguarded. Large numbers of Irishmen and women were arrested. Among these was a tailor called Mullany, who became an informer in order to save his own skin. One of the people he informed against was a shareholder in the *Universal News*, a tailor and former employee of his, called Nicholas English. English had also been closely involved in the NBSP's London paper, the *Irish Liberator* (of which more anon). English displayed none of the athleticism of the fictional Dempsey, for he was lame. For this reason, his betrayer said, it was "not likely that he would be selected to wheel the truck,"¹⁹ containing the explosives, but had been the centre in charge of collecting money for arms. Nor did English resist with true manly fortitude, the threats and blandishments of the police, and escape. After some weeks in custody, he himself made statements to the police. They were never used, as none implicated anyone unknown to the authorities, but sealed his own reputation for posterity as a traitor to the cause. He was eventually

¹⁸ This is not as daft as it sounds-JIC Clarke, in his (1926) *My Life and Memories*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., says of his role as a London Fenian centre in 1867, "Officers from the American army came in twos and threes. Our first aid to these young men full of ardour and desire for battle was to get rid of their black slouch hats and boots with square or pointed toes." p44

¹⁹ PRO MEPO 3/1788. Statement by Mullany, 14/1/1868

freed, along with all the others implicated in the affair, apart from Michael Barrett, who became the last person to be publicly hanged in the UK.

Most of the stories, ballads and poems would not be considered to be great, or even good literature. Most of the writing prose and verse, was as ephemeral as any newspaper copy, read once and thrown away. Sentimental and stereotypical much of it may have been, but it was not literature for its own sake, it was in the paper to serve a purpose, or purposes. It was meant to entertain. It was also intended, especially in the press of the migrants, to keep alive a memory of the homeland, its towns, landscapes, people, customs and history. It also explored the migrant's present-where else but in a poem or story could the loneliness that was so much a part of the experience of exile be articulated? Tales of past glories might blunt the edge of present day misery and tales of present struggles were used as exhortations. In this literature, Paddy was not a drunk or a figure of fun, but a hero like John Dempsey. In comic tales, wily Irish peasants outwitted agents and landlords, the tragedies gave names and histories to the departed inhabitants of hidden Ireland. The literature was an intrinsic part of the political project of the nationalist press-engendering and sustaining a shared identity, a sense of worth, celebrating achievement and galvanising the exiles into political involvement.

2.8 The People's Paper

It was the *Universal News*' proud boast that it was the property of the people. In its spat with Martin O'Brennan in March 1867, the criticism was that his *Irish News* was financed privately, and therefore the creature of private interests, whereas they were owned by their readers. Who might these owner/readers readers have been then?

The evidence is contained in files at the Public Record Office ¹. The Memorandum of Association (see Fig) details the original subscribers for shares in the News Newspaper Company Ltd, which was formed on the 29/10/1859. They were:-

| | | shares |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------|
| Wm. Humphreys, | Licensed Victualler | 30 |
| John Eugene Mac Carthy, | Gentleman | 20 |
| Samuel Joseph Nicholl, | | 5 |
| Francis Joseph Moran, | Jewel Casemaker | 40 |
| Patrick Houlahan, | G. P.O. Officer | 2 |
| Sylvester Donnelly | | 10 |

Fig. 16 Original subscribers for shares from the Memorandum of Association with (where given) occupation.

The company was launched with £10,000 capital, in 20,000 shares at 10/- each. Only 2/6d was payable on allotment, the rest could be called in at any time as needed. This was standard practice but impracticable-it was to prove very difficult to persuade the generally impecunious shareholders to come up with the balance, leaving the paper undercapitalised and financially vulnerable. Indeed, the directors were forced in the early days of the paper's career to put their hands in their pockets in order to save it. The first editor, AW Harnett was also the paper's manager, though this does not seem to have been the case with all subsequent editors. Supervising him was a board of directors, who qualified for election to the board by having twenty five shares.

¹P.R.O. BT 31 427 1653. The company was dissolved on 7/3/1882.

The first board was as follows:-

Directors

Mr Michael Bowen, 17, Devonshire St., Islington (Chairman)
 Mr Chas Joseph Eldred 8, Gt James St., Bedford Row
 Mr Francis Joseph Warren 18, Chalcott Terrace, Regents Park
 Mr William Humphries, 3, Donnington St., Clerkenwell
 Mr Francis Scannell Broad St., Ratclif
 Mr George J Wigley 16, St James Terrace, Barrendon Road Notting Hill
 Mr Thomas Kelly 83, Culford Road, Kingsland
 Mr John Williams Foley 8, Duncan Terrace, Islington
 Mr Patrick Boland 9, Primrose St., Bishopgate GPO

Fig. 17 First Board of Directors News Newspaper Company Ltd.

Eldred, a solicitor, was also the company treasurer. The paper was leased to one of the directors, Francis Scannell, a cooper, from 8/3/1862 until 29/9/1865, the following year was one of considerable instability with a number of managers, until another director Patrick Boland who worked in the General Post Office became lessee on 29/10/1866. He was replaced by Charles (Christopher) Clinton in September the following year. Each year ²the paper produced a Summary of Capital and Shares which contained a list of shareholders, giving their names and occupations and is from these documents we can learn something of the paper's backers. In the year between the company being registered and the appearance of the first edition, JE O'Cavanagh, the company secretary and others managed to persuade over three hundred people to invest in the venture. Shares were not traded, so people whom one might have thought would have sold their shares evidently did not. It must be assumed that AW Harnett, would have been very desirous of offloading his two hundred shares after he was sacked as editor, but he did not. Most, were investors on a much smaller scale, holding only one or two shares each, though for journeyman tailors, labourers and the like, this would have represented a real sacrifice, and one can wonder what it would have meant for such people to own even one share in a newspaper, which was sold up and down the country, and abroad as well. Some of the labourers, may only have been able to read the paper that they financed with difficulty, or not at all.

² In the same file in the PRO. Summaries were produced 1860-1866 but not thereafter.

The occupations given for the Year 1863 were as follows:-

| | |
|----|-----------------------|
| 97 | Artisans |
| 70 | Labourers |
| 57 | Traders and Merchants |
| 33 | Civil Service |
| 19 | Gentlemen |
| 17 | Professional |
| 15 | Clerical |
| 13 | Commercial Agents |
| 11 | Servants |
| 10 | Printers |
| 8 | Silk-weavers |
| 7 | Manufacturers |
| 6 | Priests |
| 4 | Shipwrights |
| 4 | Teachers |
| 3 | Prison warders |
| 2 | Authors |
| 2 | Professors |
| 2 | Soldiers |
| 2 | Hawkers |
| 2 | Pensioners |
| 1 | Spinster |

Fig. 18 Occupation of shareholders 1863

The preponderance of artisans-tailors, boot-makers, etc., and general labourers is clear, numbering over half the individual investors. The traders are a diverse group, including grocers booksellers, milliners etc., some of whom would have been reasonably comfortable, but some little better of than street traders or hawkers. Most of the clerical workers too, would have been poorly paid, and they too, usually owned shares in single figures. The artisans too, are diverse, Francis Scannell, the director and lessee was a cooper, but other trades such as tailoring, which have been included in this category, were sweated occupations.

There were clusters of occupations. Here it is worth noting that the categories should not be taken as scientific fact, but as a general indication. In the table above, a figure of four shipwrights is given. For the year 1860, the figure was fourteen. Some of the names who appeared as shipwrights in 1860, were recorded as being labourers in 1863 It is possible that they had changed occupation, or possibly that they were always labourers in the shipyards. All their addresses were in Deptford, as were other shareholders in other occupations. Many of the Deptford sharehold-

ers appeared in the list together, which was not drawn up alphabetically, so it may have been that they signed up for shares together at work, rather than as individuals. Shipbuilding is not an industry with which Catholic Ireland (it can safely be assumed that none of the investors were Protestants from the North East) is associated, but it thrived in Cork and Dublin until at least the second half of the century.³ Another such cluster is of twenty eight who worked in the Customs House. Why this should be so, is explained by the presence of one E Masset, who worked there as a clerk, and owned twenty five shares which enabled him to become a director, passing the required holding by five shares. Masset was also an enthusiastic speaker at meetings, and so one can imagine him doing the rounds at work, dragooning his colleagues. Another, more atypical group is of people employed in the silk weaving industry. Unlike almost all the other shareholders they are not from London, but from Bedford Leigh. They also have English surnames. George Taylor, a gentleman, owned one hundred shares.

Though the paper held out the promise of being a good investment, the possession of shares in such a venture is better seen as an indicator of commitment. This was demonstrated in some cases, by people increasing their holding from year to year. Some had an obvious motive—Edward Maddick, the paper's publisher, increased his holding from an original one share, to seventy seven, making him one of the largest shareholders. AW Harnett, the editor, was the largest shareholder with two hundred. The motive of others is not transparent, plumber Cornelius Driscoll bought his shares in two bites—one of twenty, one of ten. John, and Jeremiah Thomas Riordan must surely have been brothers. Though of different addresses, they were both coopers and bought their eventual thirty five each mostly consecutively numbered shares, in parcels of twenty, then five and finally ten. The six priests who bought shares were important, they lent the venture respectability and even an air of religious duty. Sympathetic priests, we have seen, also appointed agents and encouraged their congregations to buy the paper. That they were also in a position to damage it will become one of the central factors in the story of the succeeding years.

³ I am indebted to Patrick Maume of Queens University Belfast, and Donald MacRaild of the University of Northumberland for this information, given to me in reply to a query on the Irish Diaspora discussion list run by Patrick O'Sullivan of the University of Bradford. In Northumberland, geographically close to Ulster, there were sizeable numbers of Irish people working in shipbuilding, the Protestants supplying the skilled workers, the Catholics the unskilled.

| List of Persons holding Shares in the <u>News Newspaper</u> Company, <u>limited</u> on the <u>20th</u> day Shares therein at any time during the Year immediately preceding the 18 <u>63</u> , showing their Names and Addresses, and an Account of the | | | | | of <u>la</u> said <u>2</u> Shares <u>80</u> |
|---|-----------|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|--|
| NAMES, ADDRESSES, AND OCCUPATIONS. | | | | | |
| Folio in Register Ledger, containing Particulars. | Surname. | Christian Name. | Address. | Occupation. | Shares held by existing Mem- bers on the 20 th day of Jan ^y 18 <u>63</u> |
| 129 178 179 | Masset | Alfred | 12 Stamford Place Stoke Newington | Mr in Commission | 5 |
| 129 | Poley | Alfred | 4 th Terrace Stoke Newington | Surgeon | 1 |
| 129 | Lunley | George | 17 Wellington Road Stoke Newington | Clerk in Bank of England | 1 |
| 13 | Foley | John | Bath View, Mallow, Ireland | Comm ^l Traveller | 20 |
| 7 | Heating | John | 11 Water Lane Tower Street | Printers | 100 |
| 8 31 | Blackburn | Leonard | 28 Cumberland Market Regent's Park | Agent | 50 |
| 21 | Donovan | Denis | 9 Fulwood, Kent Holborn | Printer | 6 |
| 23 | Maroden | Henry | Mother's Lane Bedford Leigh | Silk Weaver | 1 |
| 28 135 | Phelan | David | St George's Repository St George's Cathedral, Lancashire | Bookbinder | 5 |
| 33 | Boardman | Thomas | Drill Lane End Bedford Leigh | Silk Weaver | 2 |
| 33 | Gerard | John | Brewery Lane Bedford Leigh | Silk Weaver | 1 |
| 33 | Jameson | James | Brewery Lane Bedford Leigh | Engineer | 1 |
| 111 | Moirath | Timothy | 1 Cottage Lane, Warrington Woolwich | Labourer | 1 |
| 57 | Meade | Edward | 2 Ashland Villas Shrubland Grove, Datchet | Whitewasher | 5 |

Fig. 19 List of shareholders 1863. Note director Alfred Masset and some of the silk-weavers from Bedford Leigh

No shares were sold after 1862, and cheesemonger John Lynch was the last to purchase any, adding five to his earlier total of ten.⁴ In total, of the ten thousand shares in the projected capital, only slightly over three thousand were sold. As stated above, only 2/6d, or one eighth of the full price of 10/- was payable on allotment. As the table below demonstrates as soon as the conductors tried to call in the remaining amounts, people began to default.

| Year | Shares sold | Amount called | Paid (£sd) | Unpaid (£sd) |
|------|-------------|---------------|------------|--------------|
| 1860 | 1604 | 2/6d | 225/7/6 | 0 |
| 1861 | 2408 | 5/- | 529/7/0 | 72/12/6 |
| 1862 | 3208 | 10/- | 1425/0/0 | 179/17/6 |
| 1863 | 3262 | 10/- | 1451/2/6 | 179/17/6 |

Fig. 20 *Universal News* shares sold 1860-3.⁵

Figures, verifiable or otherwise for circulation do not exist. The paper claimed a circulation of 6,000 in 1861, but it is not possible to confirm or deny it. The only, incomplete record that might give some sort of an indication is contained in the records of Stamp Returns.

Even after the repeal of the stamp legislation, it was still possible to stamp papers, ensuring they were delivered by the Post Office. This is an imperfect and only partial measure of circulation but it does have the advantage of being objective and it may be possible to extrapolate from the figures. For example, the second half of 1864 sees a fairly dramatic falling off in purchases of stamps by the *Universal News*, which, though it could indicate that papers were distributed other ways than by the post, can be reasonably construed as an indication of falling support for the paper. The files on Newspaper Stamps are held in the PRO in the files of the Inland Revenue.⁶

⁴ Shares were numbered, his were nos 1861-1870 and 4387-4841.
⁵ Source PRO File BT31/427/1653 For subsequent years, the figure remained the same.
⁶ The relevant files for the period in question are IR 69 20-1862, 1863 & 1864; IR 69 21-1865, 1866, 1867; IR 69 22- 1868, 1869, 1870. Unfortunately, IR 69 21 is missing.

| | 1862 | 1863 | 1864 | 1868 | 1869 | 1870 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|
| Universal News | 6353 | 7854 | 5643 | Nil | Nil | |
| Tablet | 74218 | 71099 | 68386 | | 60430 | |
| Northern Press | 1500 | | | | | |
| Glasgow Free Press | 3000 | | | | | |
| Universe | | | | | 1665 | 1530 |
| Weekly Register | | 52519 | 53574 | | 56900 | |

Fig. 21 Catholic Papers, Newspaper Stamp Returns. The file for 1865-7 is missing

1863 would appear to be the best year for the *Universal News*, 1864 lost on the gains of the previous year. If one examines the figures as they appear in the IR records, that is quarterly, then the fall in numbers in the second half of 1864 is clearer.

| 1862 | 1863 | 1864 |
|------|------|------|
| 1300 | 1914 | 1636 |
| 1444 | 1942 | 1715 |
| 1551 | 2048 | 1092 |
| 2059 | 1850 | 1200 |

Fig. 22 Quarterly Stamp Returns, *Universal News*

Included in Fig. 21 are the returns for other Catholic papers for comparison. On first sight, the difference in circulation between the *Universal News*, an avowedly 'popular' paper and the quality press as represented by the *Tablet* for example, as suggested by these figures is immense, the *Tablet* achieved sales on this strength at least ten times larger than the *Universal News* managed. What it is not possible

to know for certain, is what this might represent as an indication of total circulation. If the *Universal News* had, as it claimed in 1861 weekly circulation of 6,000 and all of the papers were stamped, then one would expect a total for the year in the region of 300,000, and not the 6000 plus it was. Either the directors were lying about their circulation figures, or there must be another explanation. The readers of the *Universal News* were in the main, the same as their investors-that is poor. The 2d a week the unstamped copy cost them dear enough. The extra penny for the stamped copy would have put it beyond the means of many. The Irish also lived as we have seen in scattered groups throughout the country, but they were in groups and some of them, in cities such as London, Manchester and Liverpool would have been large enough to distribute through a system of agents and vendors. Conversely, the readership of the *Tablet* and *Weekly Register* would have been more prosperous as less worried about an extra penny on the price. They also would have been less likely to live as close together as their poorer co-religionists. The partial record provided by the Stamp Returns may therefore represent for the *Universal News* that proportion of their sales accounted for by those who could afford it as individuals, or those sales to reading rooms, libraries etc., where the extra cost would not have been felt so much.

2.9 Rascals, Loafers and Literary scamps

The history of Irish Catholic journalism, the paper wrote in November 1866,

is a chequered volume. It is a tale of chivalry, persecution, sunny memories and undying hopes. It is the daily history of the progress of faith and struggles and conquests of its confessors. Through not the least remarkable phases and fields of those stoutly contested battles with a holy fortitude for "Faith and Fatherland" the *Universal News*, as the people's leader has led and won. It could not hope to pass unscathed in the glorious fight. The wounds it has received in the people's cause is the testimony of its fidelity and fixity of purpose. Through weal and woe to battle to the last. As an organ of the Irish Catholics in England Scotland and Wales it was started, when all seemed drear and dark, to be the herald of new hope and the courier of glad tidings to our exiled kith and kin; to strengthen their faith and awaken the holy memories of their country, which clings around their heart like the pillar towers of their native land binding as well as preserving them...

It was to get considerably more chequered, as we shall see. The year had been a trying one with frequent changes of owner and proprietor, accusations of impropriety and public disagreements between editor and board of directors. The appointment of a new lessee, Patrick Boland, in October promised, after so much disruption, a period of relative stability. This was not to be. In the same issue appeared an article, on the setting up of a paper in opposition to the *Universal News*, which, the writer assured his readers would be a miserable failure, expressing his evident distaste in visceral terms -

Attempts have been made, similar to what are now making to build mushroom reputations on its ruin and to hasten illegitimate offsprings into a forced and unholy existence. But no amount of moral or physical operations will succeed in galvanising into bodily vigour those prurient secretions. Doom is written upon them in the womb, and the spasms that usher them into being are the certain monition of abortion.¹

Those responsible for the new journal were not frightened by hair-raising lan-

¹ *Universal News* 10/11/1866 pp8-9

guage, and at the beginning of the next year they tried to terminate the *Universal News*, at least for a week. At the end of January, one Friday evening after the compositors had gone, someone stole the forms of the outside pages of the paper while they were awaiting transportation to the printers. They were chosen because they contained the block with the illustrated heading, which the perpetrators hoped would be impossible to replace. The culprits, were "a knot of pothouse politicians" who had been trying for some three months to "build a reputation" on the ruin of the *Universal News* and when "systematic lying and constant vituperation" had failed, they had resorted to "burglary and robbery". The theft was discovered, and they managed, even minus their own men, to make up two new pages. "A more foul attempt", the article continued, "we never remember to have been made in our experience of the press. " This is what could be expected however, of "men some of whom have let themselves drift down to the lowest dregs", where they were "obliged to vegetate on the literature of the slums". That last is probably self-righteous Irish for the popular English press. Their attackers had been thwarted completely as they even had a duplicate of the heading, "This item, we know, will grievously disappoint the rascals and their confederate loafers and literary scamps."²

This was not the first time such tactics had been tried. In November, the paper alleged that "its agents were tampered with, its correspondence intercepted, and one of its offices was negotiated for and transferred by a stratagem." All this was done "to lift a new journal into existence, yea, its very name was partly assumed." To cap it all, "prying curiosity was exerted to its pitch and its matter was strove to be anticipated by an invasion of the premises where it was being printed."³ A letter from two Mile End stonemasons, Charles O'Kelly and Michael Farrell In January 1867, said that agents for another journal had been canvassing in their area, telling people the News would soon be 'done up'; if not, it would be 'taken in and done for'.⁴

The paper returned to the same subject in a retrospective article in July 1867, pointedly entitled 'To Our Countrymen and Supporters',⁵ where the writer detailed

² *Universal News* 26/1/1867 p8

³ *Universal News* 10/11/1866 p8

⁴ *Universal News* 26/1/1867 p7

⁵ *Universal News* 27/7/1867p8

some of the difficulties the paper had experienced.

From the moment the paper passed under its new management it was surrounded by a host of deadly enemies. Moral assassins would be a weak phrase to designate the ravenous wolves who followed our trail, and who not only hungered but conspired for our ruin. All that human malice could suggest or envy invent was tried week after week and month after month...

The paper linked these attempts to earlier ones. It will be remembered that AW Harnet alleged in 1861 that someone had been travelling the provinces sowing the rumour that the *Universal News* was the tool of Emperor Napoleon. This had been because of his support for the Papal States.

Some of the earlier attempts of the parties who could not crush the journal by conspiracy and slander were to try and supplant it by a rival. Let it be understood, we never did, nor never will object to any legitimate effort made in establishing a kindred journal. The market is open to all: but what we do and did object to was, the starting of a journal on false pretences and with the avowed and expressed purpose of leaving nothing undone in establishing it on the ruin of another. To canvas for a new venture it is not necessary to canvas against one already in existence, and to try to do it by systematic misrepresentation.

The underhand tactics did not end here—a "surreptitious issue of the *Universal News* was printed and privately circulated", and the week the forms were stolen a large number of another London Catholic title (again no names!) was printed and supplied to their agent "our non-appearance being calculated upon".

The writer, to the irritation of latter-day researchers, did not give the name of the paper, and did no more than to hint at the actors involved. However, in announcing the demise of the *Universal Express* on 2nd March 1867, it did say it was started "in opposition to the *Universal News*".

So, the paper in question was the *Universal Express*. It was started in September 1866 in London, and failed the following February. No copies are known to have survived. Some extracts appear in other journals, though, and it featured in a survey of the Catholic press in 1867, and had an entry in Mitchell's for the same year:-

Universal Express Sat 2d & 3d Est. Sept 1866

The Express supports the Catholics, and especially the Irish section. All news concerning the Fenians is carefully reported, and the interest of the large religious body for whom the paper was established are supported by articles and correspondence.

The publisher, whose address was 5, Red Lion Court, Fleet St. was none other than R. Archer would-be proprietor of the Universal News. He, it will be remembered, tried unsuccessfully to buy the paper in June 1866. Referring back to the article of 10/11/1866, as well as having its name partly assumed, the paper also had one of its offices "negotiated for and transferred by a stratagem". According to the Post Office ⁶ the occupants of 147 Fleet St for the year 1867 were:-

The Bakers Record Newspaper Office

The Reporter

The Tissue Office

The London Miscellany Office

The News Agents Newspaper and Publishing Company Ltd,
(publishers of the Universal News)

The Universal Express Newspaper office.

What motivated Archer (and his 'friends' if they accompanied him in this venture) is not known, be it politics or financial considerations, but to operate from the same premises, with a similar title would suggest that what the Universal News was suggesting, i.e. that this was an attempt at supplanting it, does indeed appear to be the case. Almost nothing is known of Archer, beyond that he held eight shares in the News Newspaper Company in 1866, gave his occupation as an illuminator,⁷ and was connected to another paper, *Catholic Opinion*. In his 'pitch' for the paper, he had advocated steering a course somewhere between the twin poles of insurrection and parliamentary agitation. Now whether or not it was this that caused his bid to fail, it is not possible to say definitively, but the following week, in announcing that someone else had been successful, an article had appeared deeming it unwise of Archer to have set out his stall so publicly. This was especially so as he was only acting as 'caretaker' and had not in fact taken the paper over at that time as he ap-

⁶ The Post Office City and Clerical Directory, reel 108 Guildhall Library

⁷ File in the P.R.O. Kew BT 31 427 1653 List of shareholders for the year 1866

peared to think was the case. Someone else was chosen "by a very large majority" and would ensure that the paper would in future be,

Thoroughly Catholic in tone and with Irish nationality for its politics the paper must be true to its colours and must speak with not uncertain sound on the multitudinous wrongs and grievances which afflict us as Irishmen and Catholics.⁸

So perhaps his political stance was not straightforward enough. He was certainly devious in his running of the *Universal Express* and he seems to have thrived on trickery, (see the section on sources). He was also a suspect figure in some circles. In July 1864, he and a friend had been thrown out of one of Fr Lavelle's meetings in London. Archer had written to the Correspondent's column complaining of the treatment they had received, claiming they had been insulted, accused of being police spies on account of their dress-Archer was wearing a light-coloured suit, and his friend, a white hat-though how that would have signified an association with the police, we cannot know, and ejected. Lavelle, he said, called them 'blackguards'. Someone who had attended the meeting wrote soon after that Lavelle had indeed called Archer's friend a blackguard, as he had caused a disturbance, and their ejection was fully justified.⁹ We might conjecture that their appearance more likely marked them out as dandies rather than spies, though at a demonstration in support of Lavelle, champion of the poor peasants of Partry, anyone who looked like they came from the other side of the tracks may have been viewed with suspicion. Archer claimed he was himself a supporter of Lavelle, but those present may have known differently.

Who edited the paper, is unknown. In 1868, in the midst of a strikingly similar dispute with the Dublin *Irishman*, which accused the then editor of the *Universal News* CC Hoey, of setting up a paper in opposition to it, partly assuming its name, Hoey hinted that the London correspondent of the *Irishman*, who he blamed for the dispute, had been the first editor of the *Universal Express*. Of course he named no

⁸ *Universal News* 28/6/1866 p8

⁹ *Universal News* 30/7/1864 p8; 16/8/1864 p6.

names.¹⁰

The Roman Catholic church aside, the Irish in England had no generally accepted social organisation. The National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, which can be seen as an attempt to set up one such body, was long defunct by 1867 and there were no other prospects on the horizon. In a period when the vote was denied to the vast bulk of the population, there was no party political organisation and the vacuum was very often filled by newspapers. They provided a forum for discussion and a focus for political organisation and action. They could also become, and this is perhaps particularly true of the Fenian papers, the political battleground themselves. In the absence of political parties, the paper one read was a marker of one's political identity. The fortunes then, of the paper, whether it prospered, or even survived, was an indication of the survival, in public at least, of a particular strain of political thought. The struggle with the Catholic church about which forms of political action were legitimate, which had been characterised by delicate negotiation and a willingness to defer to clerical authority, but which, in the heightened atmosphere of the late 1860s, was to turn into open warfare, was fought over the bodies of newspapers: the *Irish News*, the *Glasgow Free Press*, The *Irish Liberator*, the *Universal News* itself.

¹⁰ The row featured in the *Universal News* in June and July 1868-They had brought out a late London edition, which was called the *London Irishman*, identical to the normal edition apart from two pages of late news. The *Irishman* accused Hoey of taking government money in order to destroy them, which given Hoey's circumstances and record is not really credible

2.10 Fenians Masquerading as Catholics-CC Hoey and the Bishops, 1867-9

The atmosphere in both England and Ireland was at times approaching hysteria. 1865 had seen the government's pre-emptive strike against the Fenians in Ireland, the seizure of the *Irish People*, the arrest of Head Centre James Stephens and the uncovering of (some) of the Fenian penetration of the British army. Aided by informers, the authorities seemed to be gaining the upper hand, and the gaols were filling up with Fenians. However, Stephens escaped and defeat turned into victory for the rebels once more. By 1867, depleted but regrouping again, the IRB set about organising the long postponed rising. Officers and men from the US army drifted back to England and Ireland, money was collected, transports of arms organised. In New York Stephens met with French revolutionary General Gustave Cluseret, who agreed to take command of the Fenian army in Ireland once it was in the field. With him were two other European revolutionaries Octave Fariola and Victor Vifquain. However, concerned at the factionalism and lack of preparedness of the American wing of the movement, Stephens attempted once again to postpone the rising. He was deposed and Union army veteran Colonel Thomas Kelly was chosen Chief Executive of the Irish Republic. The plotters set off for London.

There they renewed Stephens' old contacts with British radicals, and before the Irish Republic was declared on the eve of the March 5 rising from premises off the Tottenham Court Road, the declaration was shown to Charles Bradlaugh, who even made some alterations.¹ Prior to that, in February, another American officer John McCafferty had attempted an audacious raid on Chester Castle, intending to carry off the arms stored there to Holyhead, commandeer a boat and set sail for Dublin to raise the flag of war. One thousand Fenians assembled from all over the north of England on the appointed day February 11, only to find the plans had been divulged to the authorities, and the affair had to be aborted. Most escaped, but McCafferty and some others were arrested. The actual rising in Ireland in March was a complete fiasco, which went ahead despite the objections of Cluseret, who

¹ Newsinger J (1994) Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain. London: Pluto Press p54

realised the failure to obtain sufficient arms from the USA had made success impossible. The authorities quickly dealt with the poorly-armed rebels, who were further hampered by appalling weather and a further round of trials and tribunals ensued.

The authorities may have thought the worst was over when they captured Chief Executive Kelly in Manchester in September, but no matter how badly damaged the IRB had been in Ireland, in England it was more or less intact. Less than a week after his capture, Kelly and another Irish-American officer were rescued in broad daylight by a band of armed Fenians. In the escape a policeman was shot and killed. A nationwide search for the escapees proved fruitless, but three Irishmen, known afterwards as the Manchester Martyrs were hanged for the offence in a cruel and botched execution in which one of the condemned men, Michael O'Brien took over forty minutes to die. There had previously been nationwide appeals, from English radicals and others as well as from the Irish community for clemency but to no avail. Another incident which led to loss of life and a heightening of tension in Britain involve the capture of yet another Fenian leader, Richard O'Sullivan Burke, who was arrested in November and incarcerated in Clerkenwell prison. On Friday 13th December 1867, in a botched rescue attempt of which the authorities had been informed, a barrel of gunpowder was placed against the prison wall and detonated. In the ensuing explosion, a row of houses was demolished and nine Londoners killed, with many more injured. As well as losing the Fenian movement a great deal of sympathy among the British and Irish population, this event coupled with other incidents fed the atmosphere of public panic. By February 1868, almost 130,000 special constables had been sworn in, over 50,000 of them in London alone.² Convicted for the explosion, Michael Barrett became the last person to be publicly hanged in England in May 1868.

As far as the hierarchy was concerned, Fenianism presented the church with both opportunities and threats. It was the Fenians who brought the holy mass into English prisons. Manning informed Cullen (February 5 1866) 'Your Grace will be happy to know that the Fenian prisoners in Pentonville have asked for Mass, and the Government has granted it. This is a strange victory on which I make no com-

² Ibid. p 65

ment except "Thank God!"³ The piety of ordinary Fenians notwithstanding, Manning believed the faith of the Irish people was imperilled, by those who instigated it rather than their followers, through rebellion against the civil power, which just as much as the divine power of the Church was ordained by God. Many of those who took part in the abortive rising of March 1867 did so

in the full belief that it was a holy cause. They were men who loved their faith, who went, before meeting the hour of danger, to make their peace with God: unconscious of doing wrong...⁴

To Manning, they were the dupes of malevolent revolutionaries and demagogues rather than evil themselves and it was this belief that led him to crush a paper like the *Irish News*, described by its detractors as 'infidel'. He was, in the words of one biographer, "keenly alive to the influence of the press, Catholic and non-Catholic"⁵. It did not matter that the paper's defenders claimed it was so far out of the mainstream of Fenian beliefs that its editor was ridiculed week after week in their organ the Dublin *Irish People*. To Manning there was little to choose between hard line anti-clericals like Luby of the *Irish People* and O'Brennan of the *Irish News* and *Connaught Patriot* who questioned the propriety of clerical involvement in politics. Both encouraged disobedience. Faith on the other hand was "the mightiest power of obedience" In his St Patrick's Day pastoral he wrote that St Paul had told the early Christians that they had a divine obligation to obey the laws of Rome even if they were pagan, so should the Irish obey the British empire, " To rise against it is to resist the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves, not only the penalties of man, but the judgment of God". He was genuinely concerned to redress the injustices against the Irish people, "an accumulation of evils and sufferings which generations alone can remove", but that was achievable only if "the gradual and onward movement of England and Ireland to perfect unity and equality be not hindered by violence". He continued in similar vein,

³ Leslie, S (1921) Henry Edward Manning, His Life and Labours. London Burns Oates p194

⁴ Manning St Patrick's 1867 pastoral in the Catholic press *Universal News* 13/4/1867 p1

⁵ Purcell, ES (1895) The Life of Cardinal Manning. London: Macmillan Vol II p391

England was once seven kingdoms: for a thousand years it has been a monarchy. England, Scotland and Ireland were once three kingdoms: they are now one indivisible realm. What God has consolidated by ages of time no human hand can dissolve. The onward march of divine providence has accomplished this fusion of races, in their higher and mightier unity.⁶

The problem which Fenianism presented to Manning was that for a considerable part of his flock, 'perfect unity' between Ireland and England was at the root of Ireland's ills. Repeal of the Act of Union had been a rallying cry for the Irish for the past thirty years at least, and this had developed, encouraged no doubt by example from continental Europe, but principally by the progress of the Irish in the Great Republic of the West, (as they were wont to describe the USA) into calls for total independence and republican government⁷. His pastoral made him very unpopular among the Irish both in London and elsewhere. A correspondent of the *Connaught Patriot* claimed some people left the church he was attending in protest as it was being read. Manning also turned down an invitation from Cullen to visit Dublin at around this time, deeming it not prudent.⁸

However, if his condemnation of Fenianism caused problems with his Irish flock, it was likely to have the reverse effect with English opinion, especially that of the government. The hierarchy was able to present the Church as the mainstay of order

Much as he [Manning] disliked an anti-Irish policy he felt it exhibited the Church in its true light as the source of public order. 'I have never known a more propitious moment to make the government feel they cannot do without us', he wrote. He relished the prospect of beating the government with the stick of Fenianism for its support for Italian nationalism, writing to Ullathorne 'We have an opportunity for showing that Mazzinianism and Fenianism are one principle, and that our government is reaping as it has sown.'⁹

⁶ St Patrick's Day Pastoral, *Universal News* 13/4/1867 p1

⁷ Manning himself was fully aware of this. He wrote of the Fenians "no greater self - deception could we practice upon ourselves than to imagine that Fenianism is the folly of a few apprentices and shop - boys. Fenianism could not have survived for a year if it were not sustained by the traditional and just discontent... This feeling is to be found... Among those who are in immediate contact with the land question... These are neither apprentices nor shop boys, Neither are they a handful, but a population in close kindred and living sympathy with millions who have tested the civil and religious equality, and are thriving under the laws of the United States. " Letter to Lord Grey quoted in Butler, Dom Cuthbert (1926) *Life and Times of Bishop Ullathorne 1806 - 1889*. London: Burns Oates p143

⁸ Purcell (1895) p393

⁹ Leslie(1921) p194

In his notebook in 1867 he expressed the opinion that the Fenians were deluded but he clearly enjoyed the discomfiture of the government,

I have warned those who have praised, flattered, fostered, abetted, justified, glorified the Italian Revolution that the same principles would recoil upon themselves. They have come! The Church condemns them both in Italy and in Ireland.

These last words made their way into his pastoral.¹⁰ This then was the background against which the *Universal News* was operating in the years from 1867 to 1869—insurrection and the suspension of Habeas Corpus in Ireland; and in England, raids, escapes, explosions, political trials and the massacre of civilians.



Fig. 23 The Fenian Guy Fawkes—a senseless brute about to destroy his own children. Tenniel's drawing in *Punch* 53 28/10/1867

¹⁰ Ibid p196

The *Universal Express* was possibly a commercial, rather than a political rival to the *Universal News*, but as we have seen Hoey linked it to other controversies which had more to do with the relationship between English and Irish Catholics, and between Irish Catholics and the English hierarchy. In the battles to come, from 1867 to the paper's demise, this was how the paper consistently characterised its problems, which it argued were over the right of an Irish Catholic newspaper to speak to and for its readers as Irish rather than Catholic, in the face of opposition from those, clerical and lay, who were no more Catholic than they, but were first and foremost Englishmen.

This was a theme taken up by Irish papers both in Ireland and in America. An article culled from the pages of the *Mayo Telegraph* in May ¹¹ headed CATHOLICITY IN ENGLAND & THE PRESS It discussed a recent work of Cardinal Manning - 'England and Christendom' in which he said,

The influence of the whole tide of anonymous writers all over England, and in all its towns, is hostile to the Church, to its head, and to its faith; and not only so - it is, in a great part, hostile to Christianity, for the papers that defend it are few, or feeble, and little read. Of all the newspapers which, week by week, or day by day, colour and direct the public opinion of England, hardly half a dozen are Catholic.

The *Mayo Telegraph* agreed with the Cardinal, but went on to ask whose fault was this? The blame could not be laid at the door of English Protestants, for why should they support Catholic papers? No, the culprits were English Catholics. They should support Catholic papers, but refused to. Frederick Lucas had been forced to take the *Tablet* to Ireland because it had argued for Irish rights and this was unacceptable to English Catholics. The clergy, and well to do English Catholics read anti-Catholic papers like the *Times*, and the only support for Catholic papers came from the poor Irish. However, those papers favoured by the poor Irish migrants were not to the taste of their co-religionists, whose own journals condemned them.

Fr Lavelle, stated in a letter in July that the paper's agents had been told by another London paper not to handle the *Universal News*.¹² The paper was the

¹¹ *Universal News* 18/5/1867 p6-7

¹² *Ibid.* 20/7/1867 p9, letter dated 16/7/1867

Weekly Register, which had long been critical of the growth of Fenianism, which, it said was doing the work of the Know-Nothings in America, and the Protestant Association in England. To the representative of propertied Catholics, the Fenians in America,

proclaim their revolution to oust the present owners of the soil of Ireland and to distribute the land of the country among themselves and they have made no concealment of their hostility to the well-earned influence of the Catholic clergy over the minds of the Irish people.¹³

The *Weekly Register* returned to the subject the following month in an article on the progress of the Catholic press, which, it said, had increased greatly. It praised the *Universe*, "a well-conducted Anglo Irish cheap newspaper", also the *Northern Press* and *Glasgow Free Press*, both of which,

are highly calculated to serve as antidotes to the cheap Fenian prints which now rising rise up in every large town in England; and although at direct variance with the doctrines of the Church, unfortunately find a too ready sale with the poor Irish of the labouring classes, in whom they instil the venom of rebellion and revolution quite as much as the most infidel journals of Italy are doing among the people of that country. But Irish Catholics are seldom long deaf to the counsels of their clergy, and so we don't predict a very long existence for any of their mischievous prints, which are far more baneful to those for whom they are written than the tracts of the Protestant Association. The latter come before the Irish as avowed enemies, and as such set them at once upon their guard. The former put on the appearance of Catholicism, and thus instil their antagonism to the powers that be.¹⁴

In order to prove its prediction correct, in July the paper set about dissuading agents from handling the *Universal News*. Fenian journalism, it said did more damage to Catholicism than Murphy the rabid anti-Catholic preacher who had provoked riots up and down the country, most recently in Birmingham. As it had before, the paper questioned the catholicity of those connected, however loosely with such journals,

¹³ *Weekly Register* 23/3/1867

¹⁴ *Weekly Register* 27/4/1867

We allude to certain cheap papers, which under the mask of being Catholic, and on the pretence of being Irish, are nothing more than the advocates of Fenianism, and as such are condemned by the Archbishop as they have been by every authority in the Church from the HOLY FATHER downwards. It is unnecessary to mention the name of the prints; any person who can read may judge of them for himself. No good Catholic can or ought to sell such papers; this is a truth which every priest will tell those who ask the question. The evil they do is immense. Unfortunately, their low price recommends them to the poorer classes, and this makes them all the more dangerous...

The poorer classes, English and Irish were, of course, always dangerous. In the Autumn the Chronicle, a liberal Catholic paper, usually well informed and sympathetic to Irish grievances, wrote that the Irish in Britain contained within their ranks, "desperate men, animated with intense hatred towards the established order of the country." All the migrants were suspect, chiefly for the havoc they could wreak among the English working classes.

Those Irishmen who have emigrated, if only across the Channel, are usually the most disaffected of their race; and few people are aware how large an Irish element is mingled with the working classes in England, or how influential it has become in many cases from its readiness of speech and aptitude for secret organisation.¹⁵

The paper noted that the English working classes did not condemn Fenian violence as their betters did. Indeed, some English radicals used the prospect of an English/Irish alliance as a stick to wag in the faces of the wealthy. The *Commonwealth*, writing of the anticipated Reform meeting in Hyde Park, in the spring, (which the *Universal News* supported), declared,

Whoever lives to write the history of the Reform movement of 1866-7 will, if we mistake not, have occasion to write the word blood ere he has concluded his task. The people are in no mood to be trifled with.

The writer asked,

What would become of the ruling powers if the English Democracy were to shake hands with the Democracy of Ireland?

Then, motivated no doubt by the spirit of caution which even English radicals dis-

¹⁵ *Chronicle* 5/10/1867 p649

played towards their Irish counterparts and which prevented a real union between them, he spoiled the threat somewhat by adding,

We do not advise it; but we would tell our Tory friends that such a union has been more than hinted at.¹⁶



Fig. 24 The nightmare of the middle classes—the ‘democracy’ of the Irish and English united. *Punch* 53 12/10/1867

¹⁷ *Universal News* 28/9/1867 p11
¹⁶ *Commonwealth* 27/4/1867

As indeed it had, Colonel Kelly, still at large and negotiating with nervous London radicals, had a letter delivered to the *Universal News* office and which was published in the autumn critical of a *Spectator* article which he said called upon the English working class to treat all Irishmen as Fenians who only awaited the moment to fall upon them, "from natural spite". Nothing could be further from the truth he said, he himself had been instrumental in setting up "within two miles of Buckingham Palace," the English Republican Brotherhood, which like its Irish elder brother had "the overthrow of the monarchy and its attendant vampire aristocracy as its guiding principle."¹⁷

The Fenians, the *Weekly Register* said, scandalised Protestant and Catholic alike. In dealing with the Irish it was clearly more comfortable wearing its English rather than its Catholic hat. It reminded its readers that they enjoyed freedom of the press, more so than in many Catholic countries, even if, it had to concede, there were a few bigots here and there. Such freedoms were clearly not necessary in Ireland,

In the Green Isle itself, Fenian journalism has very properly been cut down, but here in London the evil weed is appearing above ground. We repeat-and every priest in England and Ireland will bear us out in what we say-that those who directly or indirectly help the sale of these papers are disobedient to the Church, enemies to Ireland, and valuable assistants to Protestantism in its most intolerant phase. It is not to advocate the sale of our own paper that we write this strongly, for there are good and cheap Catholic journals to be had besides those we here denounce. But every newsagent is able to read, and he can judge for himself as to which papers are, and which are not, Fenian and disloyal to the lawful authority in these realms. If he does not do this, or if, having done it, he still promotes the sale of seditious prints, he is no true Catholic.¹⁸

The following week, the *Universal News* announced, clearly expecting the interference of the police,

Owing to causes which, the poet Young says, are "too tedious to mention," this journal nearly missed publication this week. Henceforth let our countrymen feel not surprised if it should fail in reaching them some fine morning. In a country where we exercise the boasted "LIBERTY OF THE PRESS," it is necessary to shut up; and remembering Tallyrand's famous saying,¹⁹ we better conceal our thoughts before WE ARE SHUT UP.

The rest is better imagined than described.

¹⁸ *Weekly Register* 13/7/1867 p25

¹⁹ *Universal News* 20/7/1867 p8 "Speech was given to man to disguise his thoughts."

In his letter, Fr Lavelle had praised the *Universal News* for its "unflinching patriotism." That their patriotism (or their particular brand of it) was what was being objected to, CC Hoey seemed certain. If the "love of country and the creed of manhood...going in for the salvation of the Irish race" and proclaiming "Ireland for the Irish" was flirting with Fenianism, it was in their case incurable. Although the 'powers that be' had been informed of their supposed Fenianism, it would appear that it was the criticism from within the Catholic community that was of most concern to the paper. Those who conducted it were

conscious, thank God, of doing our duty by our countrymen...fortified in this by the good wishes and approbation of many a good and patriotic priest in this country, as well as in our own.²⁰

And it would have been clear to all that they were referring to Cardinal Manning, (who had earlier in the year issued a Pastoral letter against Fenianism, and specifically Dr. O'Brennan's *Irish News*),²¹ when they counselled their fellow countrymen not to

blindly follow anyone in the matter of politics, no matter how high, or holy, or distinguished the individual may be.

The *Universal News*, mindful of the example of the *Irish News* in London and of the Dublin papers associated with Fenianism, warned its readers of problems ahead,

Also it is our desire, now that this journal has fairly entered a certain crisis in its career, to make known to our readers and our countrymen in general that the principle that has guided its conduct for months past will remain unaltered, and that its usefulness will grow with its growth under its present management. It only remains for us to add that we hope that we shall not bespeak the confidence and encouragement of our numerous patrons and countrymen in vain, and that their continued support will enable us to bid defiance to the public and private machinations of open and covert spies and informers, and all the other rotten fungi who have preyed upon the vitals of this journal, to the injury of their country and their fellow man.²²

²⁰ *Universal News* 27/7/1867 p8

²¹ The pastoral issued for March 17th, St. Patrick's day, was carried in full by the *Universal News*, the *Weekly Register* and other Catholic papers on Saturday 13/4/1867

²² *Universal News* 27/7/1867 p22

In August, the paper alleged that the vendors who sold cheap Catholic papers at churches in the capital had been warned not to handle the *Universal News* in future. This was naturally described as an attempt at preventing the 'poor creatures' from 'turning an honest penny', and gave as the reason for this turn of events, its support of Fr Lavelle's fundraising efforts on behalf of his parishioners. Of course Hoey was defiant, and promised to publish a list of the places where the paper where it could or could not be sold, but it was a worrying development-the beginning of the death of a thousand cuts that the paper was to suffer over the course of the next two years. Perhaps still unwilling to have an open confrontation with the clergy, Hoey claimed the ban was the result of the actions of "some over-officious lay-men, who are acting without authority", but elsewhere replying to claims from an American paper that the clergy had indeed been involved in the campaign against the *Universal News* conceded that said that "some few clergymen", had, as they put it, "been led to commit an error" but added that "there have been other influences brought to bear upon us, through spies and informers, to which we care not to allude."²³

However, it becomes apparent that there was a concerted effort on the part of the church to bring rebellious elements in the Catholic community to heel, as reports from various parts of the country showed. It had begun with O'Brennan's *Irish News* in London in March. First, there had been public condemnations of the paper in orthodox Catholic papers, then pressure was applied to agents and vendors and finally, the weight of the hierarchy was brought to bear in the shape of a pastoral from Cardinal Manning. The criticism and warnings in the *Weekly Register* were followed by other forms of pressure. In September, a Patrick Abbot wrote in from Blyth, saying their parish priest had banned them from collecting money for Lavelle's parishioners, criticising them as "self-constituted collectors", (presumably inferior to those who had been constituted by him), and saying that the *Universal News* was a "blackguard paper". A John Francis McAuliffe, Knight of St Gregory, who lectured on Irish subjects wrote that he had been opposed by the church in Northwich, had been

²³ Ibid. 31/8/1867 p2. The extract from the NY *Irish People* was as follows:-"It would undoubtedly be a dreadful blow to the Irish cause if the *Universal News* were to be crushed just now; but it would be a much more serious injury to the interests of the Catholic church if it should turn out that its ministers had, (as we fear they have had) 'hand, act, or part' in the foul play that has been practised against our gallant contemporary for the past twelve months."

condemned from the altar, and the parish priest had gone from house-to-house telling people not to attend. He had fought for the Pope and been wounded at Castelpoords though, he observed, that did not seem to count for anything, anymore. A letter the previous week had confirmed that the lecture had been a failure because of the interference of two 'degenerate villains', who McAuliffe said were local big-wigs, a building contractor and his ganger. He accused them of being informers—saying that it was they who had prevailed upon the local clergy to condemn him, in what was an example of 'respectable' Catholics and clergy acting together to defeat those trying to foment revolution.²⁴

The year 1867 had begun with turbulence in the field of politics and a recession in trade. In January the paper had highlighted the plight of the shipyard workers in the east end of London. Some of them were its own shareholders and the paper brought its own distinctively Irish analysis to the subject, comparing the distress felt among the families of those laid off, to that of the victims of the Famine, and called upon the government to institute a programme of public works. In Ireland, there was 'distress', which meant people were going hungry, and the paper collected money on behalf of the sufferers. The issue of the 30th November carried extensive reports of the execution of Allen, Larkin and O'Brien in Manchester the previous Saturday, for the murder of Sergeant Brett while rescuing Colonel O'Kelly and his companion Deasy. This event had a profound and lasting influence on Irish political life, the three seen not only by the Irish, as victims of the desire for revenge on the part of the British state. It was widely believed that the slaying of Brett had been accidental—the fatal shot was intended to blow the lock on the prison van of which he was a guard; the identification evidence was perjured—one of those originally condemned was a marine who had nothing whatever to do with Fenianism, and after a campaign by British journalists was released, though the same witnesses convicted the others; and the manifest decency and fortitude of the three men who made eloquent speeches from the dock, touched a chord in the heart of the public. Engels²⁵ thought

²⁴ *Universal News* 14/9/1867 p11 In McAuliffe's case they may have been onto something—he was one of two men arrested in Manchester on 18th September 1867 outside the building where Kelly & Deasy were being remanded and accused of trying to stab a policeman. He was released in October for lack of evidence *Universal News* 19/10/1867 p1.

²⁵ Engels F quoted in Newsinger, J (1994) *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain*, London: Pluto Press. p64 TD Sullivan wrote the song God Save Ireland! In commemoration of the three. It became the anthem of Irish nationalism until it was replaced by the Soldier's Song.

it "accomplished the final act of separation between England and Ireland." English radicals joined with the Irish in pleading for clemency, but to no avail. Funeral demonstrations were held all over Ireland and among the Irish in Britain, attended by those from all shades of opinion. AM Sullivan of the *Nation* and Richard Pigott of the *Irishman* were jailed in Ireland for seditious libel the following year for their coverage of the affair. Soon afterwards the Clerkenwell explosion ratcheted up the tension up even further.

If the authorities saw Fenians lurking everywhere, a letter from 'Vigilans' early in 1868 ²⁶ showed that paranoia was not limited to those in power. Condemning the wholesale sacking of Irish workers at the gasworks in Warrington, he (or she) maintained that the ruling classes contemplated slaughtering all the Irish in Britain, especially in London where they were widely scattered. There was mistrust on all sides and opinion, within the Catholic community as well as outside it was becoming more polarised. The Pope's position as a temporal ruler was once again under threat, and as earlier, Catholics were being asked both for funds and to volunteer for the papal legions. Irish Catholics had always been to the fore as supporters of the Papal states, but the response of the *Universal News* to appeals for money and volunteers in the English Catholic press, illustrates as far as English and Irish Catholics were concerned, that what had earlier been an inability to co-operate effectively had become outright hostility. The paper argued against the attempted raising of Irish Catholic troops, saying that those doing the recruiting were English, so let them go. It claimed the Irish were being chastised for a lack of faith if they failed to volunteer, by people who were no friends to Ireland,

They are English Catholics, journalists if you like, who have as much sympathy with the cause of Ireland as the hawk has with his prey, or a hyena for his victim...Paddy is a surplus article, a ready article, a willing, anxious agent possessed of a light heart and light heels, ready to fight for the love of the thing - so Paddy is advised to go out. Yea, not only advised, but directed to do so under fear of a censure for his lukewarmness.²⁷

²⁶ *Universal News* 4/1/1868 p11

²⁷ *Ibid.* 4/1/1868 p9

Those requesting donations for Rome were reminded that there were hungry mouths to feed in Ireland and asked whether those 'lordly souls' whose names appeared as contributors to the Papal Fund contributed to distress in Ireland, or to a Fair Trial Fund in Manchester. They thought not. They advised their countryman, willing as he always was to donate his 'pittance' for his religion "as his friend in need to keep his whole bones intact." For what purpose they do not say. The paper no longer made any pretence of trying to address all Catholics.

We speak on behalf of our Catholic countrymen...their least humble but independent advocates...Irishmen in this metropolis have long waited for the kindly recognition of their English co-religionists, but it comes not! ²⁸

They declared that the time was past when they would endure unfairness for the sake of religious unity. Of their own practice of journalism in England:

We have no interest to serve save that of the Irish people; we have no personal object to secure; Irish journalism in this country is a trying ordeal, and happiness or contentment can never be won, no more than lucre, by those who eschew tuft-hunting and time-serving, and honestly advocate the rights of Ireland and Irishmen in this bigoted land.

Of their English co-religionists:

Behold the policy of English Catholic journalists in England today. Does it need further demonstration? Alas! no. From the sixpenny trombone whose guttural bass, to the penny whistle whose sepulchral squeak is sounded in the dischordant concert, these professional champions of religion and Rome are the bitter enemies of Catholic Irishmen and their national independence. ²⁹

The gulf between the conductors of the paper and the clergy was ever widening as this letter from 'A Looker-on' published in December 1869 ³⁰ makes clear. It was a page long bitter attack on those people and papers involved in the Amnesty Association, which had been set up to press for the release of the political prisoners. Although many Fenians were involved in it, including JP McDonnell, the paper's sub editor, it also attracted supporters, many of them the more well to do amongst the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *Universal News* 4/1/1868 p9 .

³⁰ Ibid. 24/12/1868 p13-14

TO PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS!
GREAT MONSTER
AMNESTY
MEETING
IN HYDE PARK,
ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1869.

On Sunday, October 24th, the "Greatest Demonstration" which has ever been witnessed in England will take place in HYDE PARK to demand the Unconditional Release of all the Prisoners of Conscience, and an Amnesty for those who are in Exile.

500,000 Persons will Attend!
Representatives of every Nation will take part in the proceedings.

Chair to be taken at 3 o'clock.
 The People will meet in their respective Districts, and under the control of Marshals, proceed in Military Order, with Bands and Banners, to the "Greatest Demonstration" between the hours of 11 and 2 o'clock, to the "Greatest Demonstration" in Hyde Park.

The Executive Committee meet every evening at the Central Committee Rooms, "The City of London Tavern," 25, Broad St., Holborn, to which all communications are to be addressed. All the Trade Bodies, Leagues, and other associations have been invited and fully engaged.

Great Delegate Meetings will be held at the Committee Rooms on the 14th inst., also on the 23rd, 24th and 25th.

People of all Nations!
 Assemble in your hundreds of thousands, to demand in the name of Truth, of Justice, of Liberty, and for the sake of the future, the unconditional Release of ALL the Imprisoned Patriots!
J. P. McDONNELL, Hon. Sec. English Amnesty Movement.

Monster Preliminary
AMNESTY
MEETINGS
ON
Sunday Next, Oct. 17,
AT 2 O'CLOCK
At the End of the
NEW BRIDGE,
CHELSEA.

At 4.30, same Evening, at
BLACKHEATH, GREENWICH.

On Monday Evening, the 18th,
at 8 o'clock, at the "Brown
Bear," Leman-Street,
Whitechapel.
Mr. J. P. McDONNELL and other Gentlemen
will attend.

The Great Monster
AMNESTY
Demonstration
IN
HYDE PARK
ON
Sunday Next, Oct. 24.

THE
Holborn Contingent
Will Assemble in Thousands
AT 12 O'CLOCK
in the water-park of residence for the District.
Lincoln's Inn Fields
J. P. McDONNELL, Chairman.
 R. LUTON, Hon. Sec.

TO PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS!
GREAT MONSTER
AMNESTY
MEETING
IN HYDE PARK
ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1869.

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J. P. McDONNELL, Hon. Sec. English Amnesty Movement.

Fig. 25

JP McDonnell, was a leading member of the Amnesty movement while sub-editor on the *Universal News*³¹

³¹ From JP McDonnell archive

Irish, who would have blanched at active involvement in Fenianism. It is what the writer has to say about the clergy and the 'devotional revolution' which occurred in Ireland after the famine which is of particular interest. The writer says that those involved in the amnesty movement

without any exception are honest, loyal, repealers and want to discipline their countrymen to the same course as the big beggarman ³² and profound impostor and profligate whom the Cardinal of Dublin and the Bishops and priest spies of Ireland used as a tool, and would not object to have the ignorant people worship as a saint... a leadership which resulted in many thousand famine deaths and the exile and destruction of millions of people and the erection of monkeries and monuments and workhouses and cathedrals and the wholesale levelling of cabins-at which work all the loyal ten pound repealers ³³ played a part. Thus then, we shall stand face to face with the fact that the statesmen of England believe Fenianism is a power in the land-an armed power; they point to the recent meetings and speeches, and pass over the fact that the meetings were made up of confraternities and trades' societies, always ready to make exhibitions, and of young ladies and schoolgirls and other bad material for a battlefield, and all the heroics were uttered by men who would rather hear a battle of champagne corks than a whizzing of rifle bullets in the holiest cause under heaven.

That the paper was prepared to publish such a bitterly anti-clerical letter is an illustration that they no longer saw any chance of accommodation between themselves and the hierarchy and had decided, for good or ill to slug it out.

But the statesmen of England are also deceived by the Castle reports, these reports being made up from those of the priests and the police. There is no use in trying to conceal the fact that the Roman Catholic priests of Ireland and elsewhere out of Ireland report to her majesty's government every political incident of their parishes. All these infamous documents are accumulated in the Fenian department in Dublin castle and digested for the use of the Irish Attorney General and the Lord Lieutenant's Privy Counsel and her Majesty's cabinet by Mr. Matthew Anderson, who lives in the memory of every man who enjoyed the protection of Mr. Price, governor of Kilmainham, by warrant of Lord Woodehouse created Earl Kimberly in commemoration of his victory over Fenianism, as the marquis of Abercorn was created a Duke subsequently for his achievements. The priests corroborate the police, and the police the priests, and out of these

³² The 'Liberator', Daniel O'Connell

³³ A reference to the raising of the property qualification for the franchise from 40 shillings to ten pounds, as part of the deal over Catholic Emancipation in 1829, which though it allowed Catholics to stand for parliament, removed the franchise from most Catholic voters.

reports and the speeches of the Amnesty narrators and the articles of the National newspapers, the reports upon which the government of England act are made up, and these reports state boldly and directly that a dangerous armed conspiracy for the overthrow of English authority exists in Ireland.³⁴

The writer maintains all is fraudulent—there is no conspiracy and there are no weapons nor men under arms. These speakers, demagogues and newspapers are encouraging people to fight but know full well that they themselves have got no intention of fighting and will provide nothing. Whether or not the writer is being honest in his assessment of the Fenian movement, it is impossible to say. It is in the nature of the politics of the times that we can never take anything at face value, for the Fenians were far from defunct at this time, but were regrouping and arming and posed a much more serious threat than they did in 1867. He concluded,

Ireland is worth 25 millions a year; and to save it, this sovereign people cannot after ten years' labour buy 50,000 rifles; but in this time they have spent 50 millions on cathedrals and clerics who have piously consigned them to eternal hell. There must be something wrong with this sovereign-this sovereign people; what it is I leave to you and others to find out and when you have found it out you will have a complete answer to your question What are we to do?³⁵

In Birmingham Bishop Ullathorne had an answer to charges such as these. He, along with Manning (according to a subsequent clerical biographer) was genuinely sympathetic to Irish wrongs and recognised English culpability and had great sympathy for the Irish people. "But they were both of them great Britishers" and would not countenance the lessening of the ties that bound Ireland and England together, "and they had nothing but condemnation for all revolutionary agitation or appeal to force."³⁶

They both therefore condemned Fenianism. Towards the end of 1868, in his Advent Pastoral, Ullathorne condemned the Fenians by name, as evidence of the spirit of rebellion which was abroad.

³⁴ *Universal News* 4/12/1869 p13-14

³⁵ Ibid. 'What are we to do?' was a constant theme for correspondents.

³⁶ Butler, Op.cit. p139 quote taken from Purcell on Manning, p579

Europe is now undermined by the plots and machinations of unprincipled adventurers, heading numbers of dupes, and banded together with them in secret societies - Freemasonry, Carbonarism, Fenianism - and under other denominations, aiming, with anti-Christian fury, at the destruction of the Church, as the one great representative of all divine, as of all human authority and obedience.³⁷

This did not go down well with the Birmingham Fenians. On December 30 Ullathorne wrote to Manning,

We have a nest of Fenians here who are giving us some trouble. They have used the pretext of my last pastoral to try to alienate the people from me, and to put me in the same box with you; so at last we are fellows in misfortune. I hope to do without publicly noticing these men, whose persons and movements I know pretty well, as I do not want to feed their importance. But if I see the need arise, I shall come out sharply and mark them off.³⁸

The controversy did not go away however, as we can see from a letter to Manning a few weeks later, (16.1.69). 'I am in hot water' he wrote, 'For two years past there has been a Fenian conspiracy in this place to alienate the Irish people from me.' He mentioned a 'Fenian paper which is read by the poor people', which had, he said, distorted a sentence in his pastoral to the effect that it accused him of calling the Irish people the 'enemies of religion' ³⁹ It had been suggested in the paper (*Universal News* 16/1/1869 in a letter purporting to come from a local priest) that a social function presided over by Ullathorne should be boycotted, or if not for those attending to walk out as a body if he failed to retract his pastoral. He suggested that people should donate the price of the ticket to charity. To Ullathorne, the time had come for action.

It is doing great mischief in alienating the poor flock from its shepherd... I must put out a pastoral both strong and striking, warning the poor people against these wolves; and that, of course, will bring more heat. But I have long forborne; and if I keep silence after yesterday's issue of the paper in question, I shall be guilty of a very grave laxity of duty.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid. p142

³⁸ Butler Ibid. p141

³⁹ Butler Ibid.p142

⁴⁰ Butler, Op.cit. p142

In his second pastoral, he specifically condemned the *Universal News*, thus,

I might yet conclude were it not that I have yet to warn the faithful of the unsoundness of that publication which is the organ of that society of which I speak. This I am the more bound to do because, although published in London the *Universal News* professes to have special relations with Birmingham. That paper, whilst professing zeal for the Catholic religion, is a teacher of what the Church condemns, is a propagator of treason, and a receptacle of all sorts of attacks upon those prelates of the church whose duty has required them to warn the faithful against secret societies, or against the principles upon which they are based. Nor does it stop here, in proof of which I need only refer to a letter to which it has given a conspicuous place in its very last number. In that letter, even Father Lavelle himself is called to account, and that for his very letter in which he defends the Fenian secret society, because at the same time he condemns the Freemasons and the carbonari, the latter, as you know, being the followers of Mazzini and Garibaldi. Listen to the one who signs himself "An English lover of Freedom" and to whose sentiments the *Universal News* gives circulation. He maintains that, so far being antagonistic to Christianity, freemasonry and carbonarism "involve the very essence of Christianity. Although they may sometimes run counter to priestianity and be denounced on that account". A paper which inculcates sentiments like these may be anything else, but it has no right to call itself Catholic.⁴¹

These last were exactly the terms in which the *Weekly Register* had condemned them. Fr Lavelle provided a long letter in defence of the paper. The leader column dealt with related topics:-

The Press the Priests and the People ⁴²

Last week in one of our leading articles we cursorily touched upon the patronage bestowed by Irishmen on cheap and nasty English prints which seize every opportunity... Our attention is called to the subject again this week by a letter of a correspondent. The fact cannot be gainsaid or denied that Irishmen do not support their own newspapers as they ought, nor do the Catholic clergy as a body support Catholic journals". If an Irish national newspaper objects on purely political grounds to the interference of the clergy on matters outside their domain, a few intolerant clerics will be found to denounce the journal and journalists so sinning; and let it be borne in mind that perhaps the journal so attacked is free from any immoral taint-fit in every way for family reading, conducted with

⁴¹ Printed in the *Universal News* 6/2/1869 p12 along with its own rebuttals p6&7, p8&9

⁴² *Universal News* 16/1/1869 p9

ability and replete with information of a superior literary class. It avails not; and let the fact be bluntly stated and nakedly known that the English Catholic clergy and many also of the Irish in England will prefer having the Standard, Morning Post, the Times and other journals on their tables daily, with the variety of other conservative ones weekly, to the exclusion of the papers very papers which it is their interest to uphold.

No matter what attack any of those papers should make on the Church, the Pope or religion, it is passed over, and they are still supported notwithstanding.

When an example is thus set by the Church how else can some of the unthinking multitude act? Irishmen in London and elsewhere throughout England and Wales require Irish and American information, they do not find it in the English penny, weekly, or two penny or sixpenny press. Yet hundreds of them here in London prefer helping their enemy to slander them by encouraging their debased and revolting newspaper literature.⁴³

Hoey returned to the attack the following week, using essentially the same arguments, i.e the Church (specifically English clerics) should support Catholic papers instead of criticising them and should instead warn the people against the "revolting and debasing literature that circulates by the thousand around them." In an interesting point which highlights that though the Catholic hierarchy and the Irish press had mutual interests, their relationship was not one of equality. "We are sorry to reiterate" he wrote,

that the English Catholic clergy, and some of the Irish also, will not support the journals published in their interest, yet they expect to have the free use of a Catholic journal for advertising their wants, while they are willing or obliged to pay in other quarters. This is a specimen of the Christian doctrine, live and let live.⁴⁴

The pages of the *Universal News* and other papers were full of notices from priests asking for funds for schools and churches etc., and Hoey, beginning to come under financial pressure, clearly felt aggrieved at what had become to him an imposition. Elsewhere it has been written that these adverts could be seen as a subvention⁴⁵ from the hierarchy, but Hoey's complaint makes it clear who was subsidising

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 23/1/1869 p8

⁴⁵ Dudley Edwards, O & Storey, P J (1985) 'The Irish Press in Victorian Britain' in R Swift & S Gilley, *The Irish In the Victorian City*. London:Croom Helm p166

whom. This would probably be seen as a duty for an editor who also wished to call himself a good Catholic. The quid pro quo was simply access to the Catholic public. Even when this was being progressively withdrawn, Hoey clearly did not feel able to charge for such services, and the paper carried them until its demise.

He did feel able to criticise, however, week after week, letters, articles appeared critical of Ullathorne or the English Catholic clergy generally. At the end of January, 'A Spectator' in Walsall wrote hinting that Ullathorne or someone close to him had bought up the local supply of the *Universal News* of the 16th January which had carried Father Lavelle's criticism of the bishop ⁴⁶. An article, signed 'M' in the same issue criticised clerical involvement in elections in Ireland and warned the priesthood not to become too involved in worldly matters, lest they destroy the relationship between themselves and the faithful Irish people. In a riposte to Ullathorne's emotional appeal to the Irish amongst whom he had spent his adult life, toiling on their behalf, the paper emphasised the indebtedness of pastor to flock, the priesthood,

should be the natural and careful leaders of a people who have suffered for their order, who have borne the malignity of a dominant and bigoted supremacy for their sakes, who were the companions of the priesthood when its members were hunted through many a scene of bloodshed, rapine and desecration. Their order has had the whole of the devotedness which it was possible the people could lavish upon it: and looking at this fact, we must say that terrible indeed, in the breasts of this generous and deeply feeling people will be the revulsion should they think that all that has been borne and more, only to find the hope upon which they depend for a reward of the assistance needed in the nation's fight has sunk and vanished. ⁴⁷

Though both Manning and Ullathorne equally opposed, it has been written, 'abstract' Fenianism, the former was possessed of 'a better understanding of, and more sympathy for the concrete Fenian'.⁴⁸ Manning's famous remark, 'Show me an Irish Catholic who has lost the Faith, and I will show you a Fenian', is an example of this. In Ullathorne's second pastoral issued in January 1869, he reversed it - 'Show

⁴⁶ *Universal News* 30/1/1869 p7

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p9-10

⁴⁸ Butler *ibid* p14249 Dudley Edwards, O & Storey, P J (1985) *Op.cit.* p166

me a Fenian and I will show you a bad Catholic.' This went to the heart of the dispute between Fenianism and the Church, most Fenians regarded themselves as good Catholics, and Ullathorne must have known that this would outrage them. This dichotomy, that one could not be both Catholic and Fenian is echoed in recent writing on the paper by Dudley Edwards and Storey, who say that "the *Universal News*, after the Fenian trials and insurrections, became a Fenian paper masquerading as a Catholic journal."⁴⁹ It was certainly accused of being a Fenian journal, but to be accused does not make one guilty. Even if that were the case, why this should preclude it from being Catholic journal is not clear to this writer at least. As we have said the vast majority of Fenians considered themselves to be good Catholics, and Manning, loving the sinner and hating the sin, and not accepting that the converse of his remarks was necessarily true, said "I feel sure that multitudes of good Catholics are misled by various causes into Fenianism. Their advocacy of armed rebellion did not stop Fenians from being Catholics but the reverse was the case for many—their Catholicism would not allow them to take part in or support revolution.

Whatever his feelings on the subject, Manning was in hearty agreement with Ullathorne's pastoral though. In February 1869 he wrote congratulating the bishop on his condemnation of Fenianism⁵⁰

I wish both in Ireland and in England we had all done so together some time ago. Many might have been saved. Still it is not too late. The Glasgow affair may teach us a lesson. Unless we are firm we shall have a demand for an Irish Pope in Liverpool some day.⁵¹

The argument raged through February and March, the issue of February 6th bringing allegations of behind-the-scenes skullduggery from a 'J'; who had just returned from business in Birmingham, where he "was pained to hear from men whom in private life I highly esteem serious aspersions cast upon you and *the Universal News*" He went on,

⁵⁰ Letters of Cardinal Manning and Bishop Ullathorne v120a 17/2/1869 Westminster Diocesan Archives

⁵¹ This about an Irish pope does not appear in McClelland (1962) when this passage is quoted. One wonders why. The Glasgow affair refers to the *Glasgow Free Press*, which was condemned and failed the previous year in not dissimilar circumstances, though one of the issues was over the preference of Scottish over Irish priests which does not appear to have arisen in London.

The accusations levelled at you, were, I am happy to say, as to facts and instances, were of the vaguest kind, yet of a very grave character, when aimed at the editor of a paper such as yours, who is nothing if not patriotic in the most ingrained sincerity of his inmost convictions. The imputations charged upon you were of wholesale insincerity-insincerity as a man, as a writer, as a patriot.⁵²

There were more problems ahead. Assassination, both of Hoey's character and his person⁵³ aside, economic pressure began to be applied to the paper. The leader column of 13/2/1869, after giving notice that they intended to sue Ullathorne, had the following:-

Leaving the question at issue between ourselves and archbishop Ullathorne to another tribunal, we may, however, state that since last week injury has been added to injury by the undue influence of Bishop Ullathorne. Our agent in Birmingham has been obliged to discontinue selling the *Universal News*. How the screw was applied we do not care to state, but that it was applied, we have ample knowledge. We will not accuse our agent of cowardice, we will now call him names. We believe he is a Catholic and an Irishman, and he has a right to do whatever suits his interests best. But to the Bishop and those who executed the Bishop's commands we have this to say, that this paltry and despicable act of petty tyranny will not swerve us from our duty. Our paper will still be sold in Birmingham, and in larger numbers than ever, notwithstanding the brutum fulmen of bishop Ullathorne. And we beg to tell all our readers, clerical and lay, and we have many, that the white feather will never be shown by us, to the humiliation of them.... We claim the right to exercise the liberty of speech without libel. We claim the right to advocate the political interests of our countrymen without ecclesiastical interference; and as we claim religious and political toleration for all sects and classes, we refuse to subscribe to unchristian sentiments levelled at innocent and honest men. Above all, we claim the right to be heard; and failing in that we seek the protection which the laws we live under afford, or ought to afford to every subject who may seek it, the security of his person or property.

Hoey, as usual, was defiant, sticking to his theme of the iniquities of English clerical interference,⁵⁴

As an independent advocate, and the only one of Irish Catholic and Irish national opinion published in England in the interests of the exiled Irish, we deny the right of being intermeddled with or dictated to by English churchmen, or English politicians whose

⁵² *Universal News* 6/2/1869 p7

⁵³ In May CC Hoey, reports & dismisses rumours that a certain party had left his home somewhere in England, and was heading for London, intent on assassinating him. *Universal News* 8/5/1869 p9 A minor cleric had left Ireland armed with a revolver. He had previously fought in Italy for the Pope and had been involved in a dispute in the pages of the paper with another correspondent.

⁵⁴ *Universal News* Leader 13/2/1869 p8-9

views we do not represent and whose support we have never solicited or received. When Irishmen come to this country, they do not settle down here on the condition that they shall abjure the instincts which they have sucked with their mother's milk. They do not forego by their residence in England the love they bear their native land, and the respect they entertain and ought entertain, for their own pastors.

In March Ullathorne wrote to Manning,

The Fenian affair is not yet cooled down here although on St Patrick's Day the clergy were successful in drawing the mass of the people to an entertainment provided by them and reduced the opposition to about 130 men and women, including all they could bring in from the black country.

They are determined still to try it on and the editor of the *Universal News* is to deliver...lectures here and in the neighbouring towns.⁵⁵

As indeed he was, his subject was to be, the 'Soggarth Aroon'. Ullathorne continued,

It is now admitted in that paper that a sect is begun amongst them, still small, who will no longer worship in Churches. I have lectured against them in every church in Birmingham...⁵⁶

Worrying news for the embattled editor was contained in a letter from 'A Simple Irishman' from Crook,

To the Editor,

Sir, change the name of the Universal News, as our parish priest, the Rev Mr Wilkinson, will not allow any person to receive the blessed sacrament, who takes in the "Universal Rag" as he calls it. We must be deprived of the Irishman's friend, all that we have to console us at present; but there is nothing said about those spurious prints in which we can read about child murder, suicide, breach of promise, and the divorce court. There are about 5,000 Irishmen in this parish, but they must either live a pagan life or give up the Universal News; so change the title or send us the Budget, or some of your cockney penny-a-liners, perhaps they would answer. Barney Meehan is running about with the *Universe*, a penny paper. It is not dear if it is worth the money but it is far too stale for the present and will not do.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Westminster Diocesan archives v124 Ullathorne to Manning 27/3/69

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *Universal News* 27/3/1869 p12

So Hoey could embarrass the Bishop by invading his territory, but the threat of the withdrawal of the sacraments was a serious business for devout Catholics and they would have to be very loyal readers to ignore it. Each similar instance was a further weakening of the economic position of the paper. O'Brennan's *Irish News* had been crushed within a month, but it was a new venture, and we simply do not know how strong its finances were. The *Universal News*, a paper with some profile and of nine year's standing was a far tougher nut to crack, but the slow seepage of sales which such interventions would have meant, would inevitably take its toll. In April, Hoey 'reluctantly' agreed to arbitration in its dispute with Ullathorne, insisting that he did so in order to heal a damaging rift in Catholic ranks, reiterating once more that he was not responsible for the views of the paper's correspondents. That this would not impress Ullathorne, or Manning, or any other senior cleric should have been apparent. In November, just before the *Universal News* finally folded, another famous convert Herbert Vaughan, who had just bought the *Tablet* gave his view of the responsibilities of a Catholic newspaper.

I hold myself responsible for the general tone and policy of the *Tablet*. With respect to matters which are ecclesiastical, I consider that a Catholic newspaper ought not to offer and arena for discussion of subjects upon which competent authority has decided, whether of doctrine, discipline, or Church government. The Catholic Church is governed by a Hierarchy, and not by a House of Commons. The ecclesiastical decisions, therefore, of every Bishop in the United Kingdom will be represented by the *Tablet*, and no opportunity for canvassing them will be offered in the pages of its Correspondence. In this respect the *Tablet* will be entirely and heartily dependent on no lower authority than the Catholic Church; and it will gladly open an official column for any notices or documents our Bishops may be pleased from time to time to communicate. In pure politics, literature, fine arts and every other subject proper to a newspaper, I accept no dependence upon any person.⁵⁸

The question remained, what constituted 'pure politics?' Here we have the priestly side of the row with the Fenian press. Put together Manning's view that all human conflict was ultimately theological, with Vaughan's ideas on the duties of a Catholic press, and, given the nature of the times, there was no area of Irish politics which had not been pronounced upon by the hierarchy and therefore outside of the

⁵⁸ The *Tablet* 14/11/1868 vol. 33 n. 149

remit of clerical censure and control. Manning had explored the question of the relationship of the clergy to the secular world in a lecture in 1863, against the background of the *risorgimento*, which the church viewed as a conspiracy directed against it. "What is the relation of the Church to the civil society of the world?" He asked.

Has it any duty towards it, or direction over it? Do politics enter into morals, and has the Church any jurisdiction within the sphere of politics? Can politics be separated from the faith, and Christian society from the Church?...

These were issues which could not be avoided by Catholics, issues which were carrying some Catholics beyond the influence of the church, even into direct opposition to it. "Do not think," he added,

I exaggerate, or speak as a theorist. Every parish priest will know that the subtlest form of political sedition is at this moment being propagated among our Catholics in England by brotherhoods, secret societies, and obscure newspapers. For all this we must prepare ourselves.⁵⁹

Six years later, he knew what he had to do. For both sides of the argument, clerics like Manning and Ullathorne, and radical journalists like Hoey and McDonnell, the stakes were high. To the journalists, it was a question of the freedom of the press, of the free flow of information and discussion. For the hierarchy, what was at stake was the souls of their Irish flock, who were in danger of being led into apostacy and damnation. These were the terms in which the argument was couched but it was also a battle for the hearts and minds of the Irish migrants, to decide through which channels would political communication be carried, who would be the arbiters, what would be the limits of the acceptable. Earlier in the year, with reports coming in of the pressure being applied to vendors, agents and readers in parishes up and down the country, Hoey had said they were not afraid, they did not live in "an upstart village or town," and were not dependent on the patronage of local worthies. They lived in the metropolis and in a great, cosmopolitan city were immune to such bullying⁶⁰. Manning, attuned to his congregation, had stayed his hand

⁵⁹ Manning, HE 'The Subjects Proper to the Academia' in HE (ed) *Essays on Religion and Literature*. London; Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green. pp48-9

⁶⁰ *Universal News* 10/4/1969 p8

for a long time, but ultimately Irish journalists had to learn that outside the Catholic community, there was, apart from the radical few, at best indifference to the migrants and their concerns, inside, the clergy and not they who made the rules.

The end when it finally arrived, came with a whimper not a bang. The correspondents column of 11/12/1869 p8 announced,

The Universal News

This independent organisation of Irish national opinion will shortly appear in the new form and with new features.

And nothing more. London had not seen the last of this kind of journalism, though. Some months later, JP McDonnell began *New Ireland*, a paper which, a publicity pamphlet said, had 'absorbed the interests of the late *Universal News*', and would 'continue to be the secular organ of the Irish residents in this country.' Its politics were still nationalist, its motto 'Our Country Right or Wrong', and still antagonistic to clerical influence in worldly affairs, and to the influence of religion on Irish politics generally. Its opening lines were,

God save Ireland! She wants saving; saving from priestly politicians and political priests; from the bigots who object to the name of priest, from the priests who object to the name Protestant.⁶¹

Later it discussed the thorny issue of denominational education, in terms which ensured that it was never going to be sold at church kiosks. Cullen it said, had for a long time been trying to prevent mixed education, for reasons of Vatican policy. He belonged to that arm of the church, the ultramontanes, which believed in papal infallibility. In order to ensure the Irish people supported that policy it was necessary to gain a hold on the education of the young. That could only be achieved by persuading the English government that the church could be trusted.

To carry out this purpose all independent thought must be crushed out of the people. For that object the control of education is essential, and that could only be secured by persuading the English Ministers that to give that control was the best way to get rid of Irish patriotism.⁶²

⁶¹ *New Ireland* 14/5/1870 p1

⁶² *New Ireland* 21/5/1870

NEW IRELAND:

A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

POLITICAL, LITERARY, NATIONAL, PATRIOTIC, READABLE.

Vol. I.—No. 1.]

SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1870.

GOD SAVE IRELAND!

GOD SAVE IRELAND! She wants saving; saving from priestly politicians and political priests; from the bigots who object to the name of priest, from the priests who object to the name of Protestant. In religion, now as at first, faith is a question of degree. We all believe the same fundamental verities—we differ only in our application of and deduction from them. The Catholic should tolerate the Protestant who may not be thought in the enjoyment of as much light as himself; the Protestant the Catholic whom he might consider blinded with excess of light. Is not that one of the greatest sayings in the world, "Love one another"? We, not restrained by hands, having a mission neither from Pope nor from Presbyter, from Whig, from Tory, nor from Radical, in ourselves neither Protestant nor Catholic, and yet both, preach what is practically in Ireland this new Gospel of Peace and Goodwill. We hear of Ireland's chains—what are they? Disunion, hatred, intolerance, cultivated and maintained for two centuries at least by English statesmen for their own base purposes. We hear of Ireland's misery. How was it caused? By the fomentation of that feeling of alienation between men of different classes and men of different creeds, which has turned amiable men into Fenians and driven peaceable men into exile from the Green Island, that ought, God knows, to have maintained every one of them in happiness and in comfort. We hear of what Mr. Disraeli once called—and happily called—the haemorrhage of Ireland. How was it caused? No doubt directly by the dependence of the bulk of the population on one article of food; but it must not be forgotten that this dependence was itself produced by the alienation of capital from Irish industry, and this alienation of capital was the direct outcome of England's repressive legislation, which prevented security of tenure of life and property, and which, therefore, prevented the capitalist from embarking his money in enterprises that were neither transgenerative nor safe. All this we charge upon England; this lies at the door of the English Government; of this she must now pay the penalty. She first proscribed the Catholic, then she despoiled the Church of the Protestant. To both ends of the island is due the luxury of revenge. How shall we obtain it? Not at the DISUNION OF THE EMPIRE, BUT AT THE UNION OF IRISHMEN!

Do we use sufficient plainness of speech? The harks of the battle will be in our title, and in our words, the beginning of *their* end. The patriot will recognise the declaration of a policy of healing. The Fenian, now all but despairing of a successful struggle against the military might of England, will see that we hope to achieve the happiness of our common country by milder and surer means than his. The patriot priest will unite with us, although we deny to his class the right of keeping our political consciences in the pocket of his cassock; the patriot Churchman, no longer hampered by the trammels of an alien Establishment, will with us claim an independent Legislature for Irish questions to keep company with his independent Church; the patriot Presbyterian will see that we echo in politics the self-same claim for freedom from English dictation that his Covenanting forefathers demanded for their belief through many a day of bitter persecution; the patriot Catholic layman will hold out to us the right hand of fellowship, because we seek to elevate our countrymen regardless of creed, of theological squabbling, of those fine distinctions which have so much to do with the individual conscience, so little with the duty of the citizen to the State, of the State to the citizen.

Sixteen centuries ago Cormac, King of Ireland for forty years, asked by his son and successor, Cairbre, "What is good for the

"welfare of a country?" replied, in words of wisdom that remain models for all time to patriot Irishmen:—"Let there be frequent convocation of sapient and good men to investigate its affairs, to abolish each evil, and retain each wholesome institution; let chieftains be upright and unwilling to oppress the poor; let peace and friendship reign—happy and good morals—union and brotherly love; let there be heroes without haughtiness, sternness to enemies, friendship to friends, generous compensations, just surmises, just decisions, just witnesses, mild instruction, learning in every art and language, pleading with knowledge of the laws, decision with evidence, giving of charity to the poor, sureties for covenants, lawful covenants, attention to the counsels of the wise, purging the laws of the country of all their evils. All these are necessary for the welfare of a country."

And, surely, if necessary then, no less necessary now. Let the peddling administrators of the Office walk over to the library of Trinity College, and get somebody to read to them what is written in the fragment that remains to us of King Cormac's manuscript. In A.D. 250 the rulers of Ireland at least knew what ought to be done by a good government; history tells us that they practised what they knew. We doubt very much if in A.D. 1870 the rulers of our country either know or care what a good government ought to do. We are certain they do not practise it. How is this? Because they persist in looking at Ireland through English spectacles, instead of examining its condition and its wants with the eyes of Irishmen. They regard it as a man may regard an uncared-for nephew or stepson, not as a father who shares the hopes, the aspirations, the pursuits, the temperament of an ardently loved child. We have no quarrel with the English people. They are in the main a noble race. What Ireland has suffered in the past was not from their hands, but from those who directed the policy of the nation; the efforts that have been made, spasmodically and unsystematically indeed, to repair the wrongs of Ireland have always had the warm support of the great mass of the English folk. Why should we refuse to them the acknowledgment? But their statesmen have never acted up to the level of the moral sense of those whom they govern. A rule of expediency, alternated by a reign of terror, has been their highest notion of what government for Ireland should be. The day for that has come to an end—or is coming.

We appeal not to arms, but to hearts and to heads. Ireland's redemption must be wrought out by purity, by sincerity, by unity, by patience. There is no nostrum by which the evils begotten of centuries can be cured in a day. We have no faith in the political quacks who would rescue Ireland from the grip of England by subjecting her either to America or to Rome. True to ourselves, and above all true to one another; not exchanging the throne of the patriot for the desk of the placeman, not cultivating corruption for the sake of commissionerships, not playing the game of either prolate or politician for a snug berth under the Whigs, we believe that Irishmen have won the ball at their feet, that if they will only take the tide at the turn they may float on it to that glorious time that Pate has set in store, when, still under the same Sovereign, and still linked in brotherly love with the English people, they will achieve for themselves that home government on home questions which is not denied to Victoria, to New South Wales, to South Africa, to the Canadas, even to the petty Manxland and the still more petty Channel Islands—which has been snatched by Austria and Prussia. We may thus realise what has suggested our title—a land free from sectarian hatred, from ignorant or wilful misrule, from the depression occasioned by want of security for life and for property, from the numbness in the body politic produced by the pressure of intrigues at Westminster—a land flourishing once more in art, in learning, in commerce, in industry—a land so different from the four provinces of to-day, that it may well be called by the name we have chosen for a sign to our house of, we hope, entertainment as well as instruction,—the name of

NEW IRELAND!

Fig. 26 New Ireland

New Ireland did not long remain an irritant, and failed while McDonnell was in prison awaiting trial for breaking the neutrality laws during the Franco-Prussian war of the same year. All his funds, (and his wife's jewellery), went in legal costs.⁶³ It is not known if CC Hoey had been a part of *New Ireland*, but he continued in journalism, writing for the *Irish Builder* until he died of consumption at the age of 54 in London in 1885. Of his turbulent time at the *Universal News*, his obituary in the for whom he was principal writer for sixteen years had only this to say,

Some years after he settled in London he started a newspaper, advocating principals of a certain political bias, but its life was a brief one, entailing loss and disappointment.⁶⁴

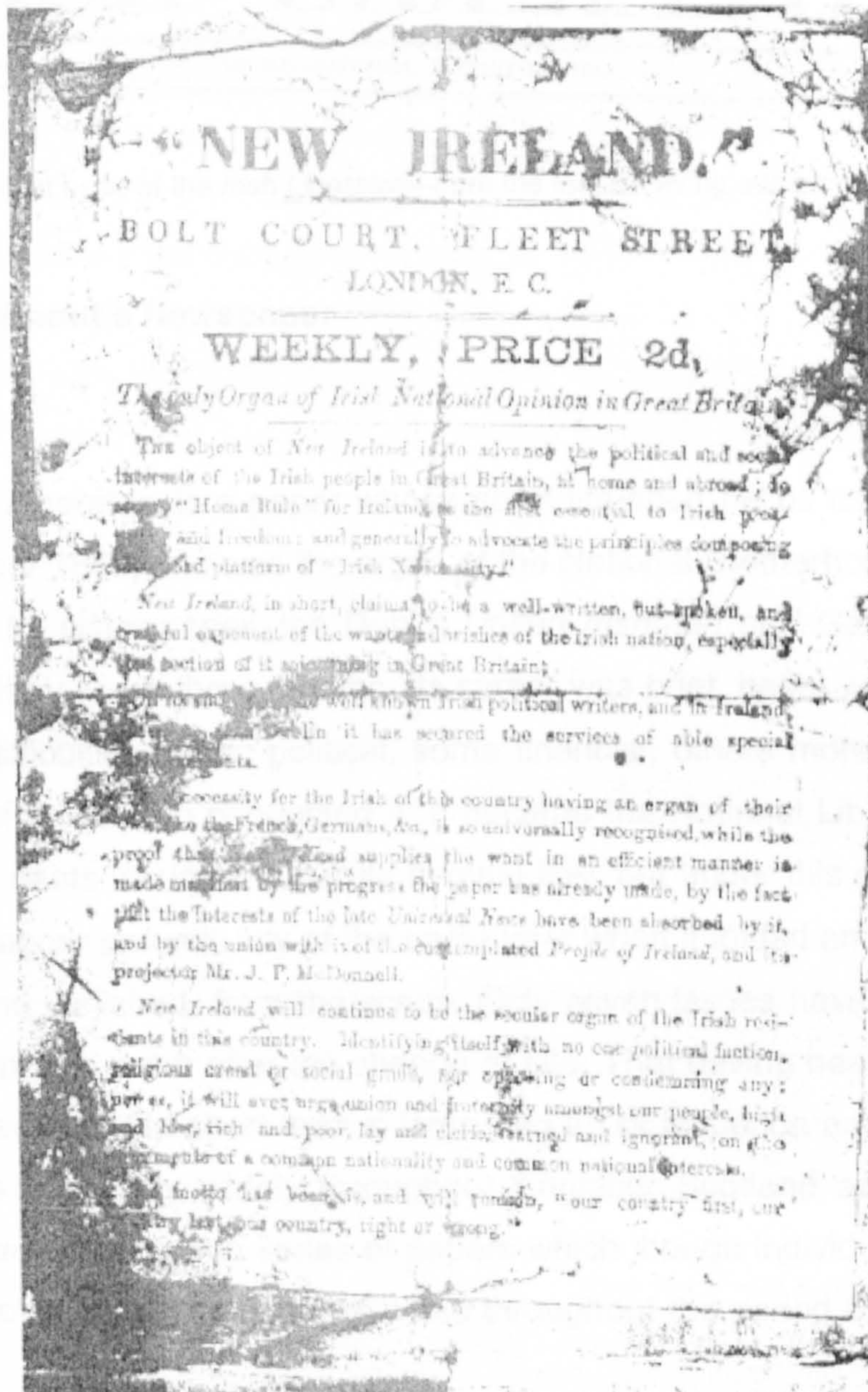
The career of the *Universal News* might be divided then into three phases-co-operation, compromise and opposition-according to the strategies adopted at different times. It began as a joint venture between Irish and English Catholics, but one in which the parties had different expectations. To the English Catholics, the paper would address itself to their joint catholicity. However, their faith, no less than that of their Irish counterparts, was intimately connected to their nationality. The shy and austere religious practice of the English Catholics was intended allay the hostility and suspicion of their countrymen, and to demonstrate to them their harmlessness: their professions of loyalty to Crown and country, their patriotism. They were not Roman Catholics but English Catholics. One thing they would never be, was Irish Catholics. To the Irish supporters of the *Universal News*, champing at the injustices which were their daily lot and, within the Catholic community numerically superior, the paper was to be their defender, their voice.

Having failed in an effort at co-operation with their English co-religionists and having established the *Universal News* as an Irish Catholic paper, a *modus vivendi* still had to be worked out with the clergy. In the burgeoning separatist politics propagated by the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick in the open and the IRB behind the scenes, this was not easy to achieve. It became clear that the church, which was the dominant voice within the Irish community, would not tolerate any chal-

⁶³ McDonnell, M Op.cit. p6

⁶⁴ *Irish Builder* 1/5/1885 p127

lenge to what it saw as legally and morally constituted authority and the *Universal News* could either compromise its nationalism and maintain the support of the church or face a precarious existence in the wilderness outside of the fold. In the first half of the decade, the paper followed the former course, but after the arrests of 1865 and the abortive rising of 1867, such compromise was no longer possible. Some of those who had been denied access to the paper in 1863 now took it over and the battle-lines of faith on one side and fatherland on the other were drawn.



Part Three. Uncompromising-The Irish Liberator 1863-4: Rebels at Heart and Revolutionists in Purpose

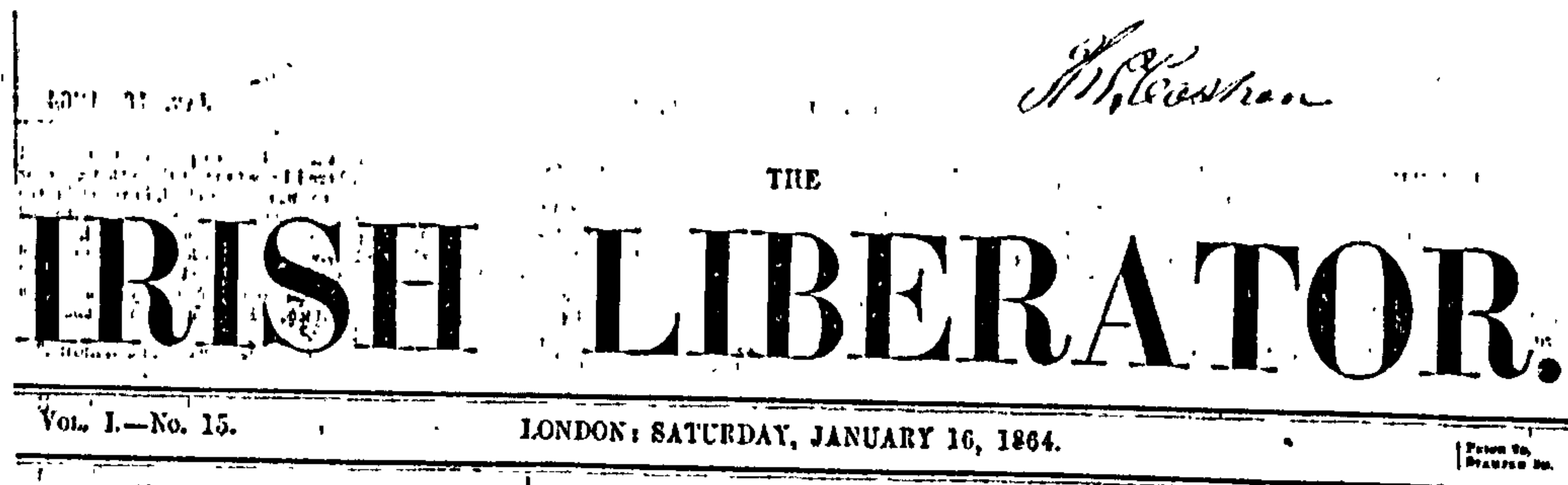


Fig. 28 Mast head of the *Irish Liberator*—from the last surviving edition 16/1/1864

3.0 Rebels without a Newspaper

The *Irish Liberator* is a paper whose short life-span belies its significance. It began in October 1863, and was the organ of the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick in Britain. Its sister paper, the Dublin *United Irishman and Galway American*, had preceded it by some three months. Its career was brief, beset with both internal and external difficulties, some political, some financial, others more to do with the personalities of those who conducted it. It became the National Liberator in March 1864, to avoid debts incurred under its original title, but under this guise it still only managed to stagger on until July of the same year when it folded amid recrimination and intrigue and vanished from the scene. Only seven issues have survived in the British Museum, and none after the change of title. That having been said, the *Irish Liberator* achieved in the short term a large degree of influence among the Irish in Britain. It was sold very widely throughout England, Scotland and Ireland, and should be viewed as one in a series of papers which though individually short-lived, together promoted a militant nationalist line throughout the period of the 1860s and beyond.

As an object of study, moreover, it has certain attractions. A historian has to

deal with the material available, both primary and secondary sources. Some newspapers offer more to the researcher than others-thus the 'official' journal of the Fenians, the Dublin *Irish People* has left behind it not only the hard copy of the issues held in libraries, but also the memoirs of its leading lights, the transcripts of their trials, and business records and correspondence that would normally have perished, but was preserved by virtue of the fact of its usefulness to the Crown as evidence. With the *Irish Liberator*, we are not so fortunate, the historical record is not so rich-those who conducted it were not the chief conspirators, as in the case of the *Irish People*, but conspirators they were, and traces of their activities remain. The names, addresses and occupations of the shareholders are available in the Public Record Office, as the paper was owned by a limited liability company and it is possible from this starting point to attempt to reconstruct something of their lives. The *Irish Liberator* also has the rare distinction of having been written about,¹ though it has to be said not always entirely accurately. Other writers have seemed unaware of its precise relationship with the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick.² The other fragments, for that is what they are-a few documents; some private letters, articles and letters in the *Irish Liberator* and other journals; snippets from contemporary memoirs, do offer a rare insight into the internal workings both of a radical immigrant Irish newspaper and a revolutionary political underground.

The *Irish Liberator* was doomed even before its first issue was printed. In the reasons for its foundation in the summer and autumn of 1863, lay the seeds of its destruction. In short, by this time the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick had come under the increasingly critical scrutiny of the clergy, in Ireland and in Britain, and the newspapers which had reported its meetings and offered it their support had now begun to reconsider their position. Like the *United Irishman and Galway American*, the *Liberator* was launched because of the subsequent dissatisfaction of the Brotherhood with the coverage they were getting from the press at large. It was therefore, in contrast to the *Universal News*, which, at various stages of its career

¹ Edwards, OD and Storey, P J (1985) deal with it in their 'The Irish Press in Victorian Britain' in R Swift & S Gilley, *The Irish In the Victorian City*. London:Croom Helm. Based solely on the PRO documents and the copies on file at Colindale, there are numerous inaccuracies. Greater detail is to be found in T Bell's (a descendant) 'The Reverend David Bell' in the Clogher Record 1968.

² Both RV Comerford (1985) *The Fenians in Context* p97&p116 and Moran, G (1999) *The National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick in Lancashire* in Swift R & Gilley S (eds) *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension*. Dublin: Four Courts p213 assert that the only paper the NBSP had a direct relationship with was the *United Irishman and Galway American*.

enjoyed the support of the clergy, entirely outside the pale of the church, from the beginning, with all that meant in terms of distribution difficulties. The bone of contention, it will be remembered, was whether or not the NBSP was a secret, oath-bound organisation and the precise relationship between it and the underground Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, (IRB). The IRB had predated the NBSP by some three years, being founded by James Stephens on St Patrick's day in 1858, in Peter Langan's wood yard in Dublin. Whether or not the National Brotherhood was constituted and promoted as a front for the IRB, or was infiltrated and ultimately taken over by it, whether this was done willingly or against the wishes of the members, is not of prime concern here. What can be said is that of those closely involved with the *Irish Liberator*, several were members of both organisations simultaneously, and that those significant in the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, were also leading figures in the IRB, either at the time or subsequently. The *Irish Liberator* then becomes a centre for the overt cultural/political work of the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick and of the secret conspiracies of the IRB.

By the spring of 1862, that something clandestine was being organised in Ireland was increasingly apparent, and the Brotherhood, as the visible part of the iceberg of sedition was being condemned as a secret society by the clergy. Taking the lead among the Brotherhood's detractors was Dean O'Brien of Limerick who was the president of the Catholic Young Men's Society. Archbishop Cullen weighed in too, and then AM Sullivan of the leading 'moderate' newspaper, the *Nation*, who had been privately opposed to the National Brotherhood all along, wrote that a 'too-confiding' people, had been mislead into joining the Brotherhood, while its leaders were themselves being duped by the leaders of the 'Secret Society' who were using them as tools.³

So the National Brotherhood was now faced by an openly critical clergy and the leading constitutional nationalist paper. A further blow occurred when Denis Holland, owner/editor of the Dublin *Irishman* was forced to sell his paper owing to financial difficulties. Holland had been one of the founders of the National Brotherhood

³ *Nation* 5/4/1862 quoted from Moloney J, 'The National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick and the Rise of Dublin Fenianism, 1858-1865' MA Thesis, University College Galway 1976, p62

and though he appears to have taken no further role in it, he was not on the central council, for example, the *Irishman* had been sympathetic to advanced nationalists from its inception, and gladly carried the reports of the various branches of the Brotherhood. What precipitated Holland into parting with his paper was a dispute with AM Sullivan of the *Nation*. The origin of the dispute was AM Sullivan's alleged role in the Phoenix controversy. The Phoenix Society had been organised by O'Donovan Rossa in Cork in 1856 as a literary-come-political group. By 1858 they had been enrolled into the IRB and their activities took on a more military aspect. Not much passed by the clergy anywhere in Ireland and they were soon being condemned by Bishop Moriarty of Kerry and by a local parish priest, an Archdeacon O'Sullivan. The controversy was discussed in AM Sullivan's papers and subsequently there were a number of arrests. The authorities used the services of an informer, a local man by the name of O'Sullivan Ghoula ⁴ (no relation), to secure convictions against the young men involved. The role played by AM Sullivan, editor of the Dublin *Nation* in this episode led to him being stigmatised as a felon-setter and dubbed thereafter by Fenians 'the ghoul.' The accusation against him, which he denied, was that he had precipitated the authorities' actions against Rossa and his comrades by writing about them.

The affair resurfaced. Holland printed an open letter from O'Donovan Rossa to Sullivan in the *Irishman*, reiterating the accusations against him. O'Sullivan sued. The outcome of the case, was "virtually a tie," in honours, with Sullivan the victor but only being awarded 6d damages. If Holland saw this as a kind of moral victory, it was certainly a pyrrhic one, as he had to pay the costs of both parties. He was already under financial pressure owing to a previous, unrelated case of libel and was eventually forced to sell to PJ Smyth.⁵ The Brotherhood tried to buy the paper but could not raise the funds in time. Smyth, the new owner was not nearly as well-disposed to advanced nationalism as Holland had been. The Brotherhood then decided to found their own paper, as the following circular, dated 1st April 1863 states,

⁴ The local concentration of surnames in Ireland, O'Sullivan being popular in Cork, led to the necessity of nicknames such as Ghoul or Rossa.

⁵ Comerford RV (1985) *The Fenians in Context* pp 95-6

Gentlemen, the Committee of the "Central Association" of the National Brotherhood of St Patrick wish to apprise you that the *Irishman* newspaper this day (April 1st) changed "proprietors and editors" and we cannot "rely" upon it a single issue. The policy of the new proprietors (sic) to "crush" the Brotherhood out gradually and fall in upon a course of parliamentary and corporation agitation. We intended to have purchased the *Irishman* and saved it to the cause but the sum subscribed by you in shares did not reach the sufficient amt. as no time would be given. Therefore there is nothing for you but to pay the amount already subscribed in shares for the establishment of an "organ" which will be under your control both "commercially and politically.

A directory, (composed entirely of fenians) was to be established to carry the project through.⁶

They persuaded James Roche, proprietor/editor of the *Galway American* to transfer his paper to Dublin where it was renamed the *United Irishman and Galway American*. A further circular⁷ from the Central Committee in Dublin, dated 7/7/63 was issued to publicise the venture and gives as it does so a good idea of the intentions of those proposing it. After first discussing the Church's support for Poland's independence struggles, it then goes on to discuss the influence of class on political leadership in Ireland - "The National Brotherhood has removed to a great extent the fallacious notion that none but the "higher classes" could think for Ireland. They can think and only await the opportunity to act." It goes on, "There is no National journal...the *Irishman* has fallen back. Its first step under the management of its present proprietor, was to suppress the General Maxim appended to our Rules: (which was the less than cryptic "A member of the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick by learning the use of arms does not forego any of his Social Rights") its second to mutilate and suppress the reports, and lastly to fail in publishing the Rules fearing they might be a barrier to the "hobby" mounted by the editor of the *Irishman* (PJ Smyth) and the 'goulah' (AM Sullivan) late of the 'News' who express their belief co-jointly in what they term "Higher Class Movements".

Sullivan had been attempting to establish a new national movement for some time, based on the National Petition but had been thwarted by the National Brother-

⁶ Irish National Archives Fenian Briefs no 6 quoted from Moloney Op.cit. p74

⁷ Irish National Archives Fenian no6 Papers found at 15 Stafford St 1866, Carton 6 Envelope 24

hood. Both he and clerical critics of the Brotherhood had cited as cause for concern the lack of 'men of known position and commanding talents, whose past career would be a security for their future integrity and success'.⁸

The first issue was on 25/7/63, with James Roche & Thos O'Neil Russel in charge. The paper's motto was "Faith, Fortitude, Fatherland". Readers were assured it

...was not started as a mere newspaper, its projectors and conductors have a higher object in view - to make the journal a proper guardian of Irish nationality and to fearlessly speak out truths in everything without fear or favour. This is their mission.

The first address was from Christopher Clinton Hoey of the Central Committee, "To the Trades Bodies in Ireland". He emphasised the working class nature of the Brotherhood, calling himself a 'man of no property' and a 'pleb.' Class again became an issue, this time in England, in September, amid clerical and lay criticism of the Brotherhood. The *United Irishman* of the 5/9/63 carried a letter critical of an article which had appeared in the London *Universal News*. The letter writer found the article in question extraordinary, condemning the NBSP as having no one of any (class) distinction involved and of amongst other things, of holding meetings in pubs. He had attended Mass in a pub, was that also wrong? The same issue carried a notice from the Mitchell branch of the Brotherhood in England saying the members had decided to exclude another London Catholic paper, the *Universe*. Shortly afterwards, Thomas Cashen, Secretary of the No1 branch in London wrote saying they had decided to exclude the *Universal News*.⁹ The *Universal News* had previously been well-disposed towards the Brotherhood and had publicised its doings from its inception in 1861, but by 1863 like its counterparts in the Catholic press in Ireland, was having second thoughts. The previous year it had carried the criticism of the Brotherhood from the Reverend O'Brien of Limerick, but had attempted to present both sides of the argument. As clerical condemnation mounted, this became an increasingly uncomfortable position to take. The Dublin hierarchy formally condemned the NBSP in September 1863, as a secret, oath-bound society. This was duly carried by

⁸ *Universal News* 1/3/1862 p10 in a letter from Rev O'Brien on the NBSP.

⁹ *United Irishman* 17/10/1863

3.1 Thomas Hayes and a Tale of Two Editors



Fig. 30 Thomas Hayes, prisoner 7139 in Mountjoy prison, Dublin in December 1865 ¹

¹ I am greatly indebted to Mr Walter McGrath, of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, who sent me the photograph in response to a request for information on Hayes.

Photographs both answer and pose questions. Here is an old photograph. Looking more carefully, we can see that this is a photograph of a photograph. The original has been stuck into an album or a scrapbook, both image and page show signs of ageing, and now the corners are turning up. It is of a man in his middle years. Although his eyes are in shadow, we can see he looking straight ahead at the camera. His hair is cut short and he is unshaven. He is wearing a coat or jacket of some rough material, under it a shirt. At his throat a scarf. Around his neck is hung a placard, and we can see his name, Thomas Hayes, and he has also acquired a number. The number is 7139. He is clearly a prisoner.

This is the bare information imparted to us by the image. It provokes questions however, for both image and man have a history, a history to which no picture could do more than hint. Who is Thomas Hayes, number 7139? Where is he? How did he get there? Why was this image preserved? Where?

To us his status as prisoner is clear: the mug-shot is as familiar as cops-and-robbers, Little Caesar and Elliot Ness, seen a thousand times in newspapers, on television and on film. Not so to his contemporaries, for alongside the latest-fashion drawing-room portraits of Victorian familial respectability, was this startling new phenomenon. Not for him the depiction of the prospering middle class patriarch, basking in the adoration of his family, and the glory of his possessions. "Oil painting," John Berger has written, "was a celebration of private property. As an art form, it derived from the principle that you are what you have."² So it was to be with the photograph—a new social class, based on manufacturing and trade was proclaiming its arrival at the centre of English society. One of the ways it did this—as the landowners and merchants had done before—was by display—by the portrait, and photography offered the new bourgeoisie a relatively inexpensive way of immortalising themselves. The proprietorial poses in the grounds of stately mansions and Dutch interiors had given way to formal arrangements of starched collars, whalebone corsets and serried ranks of obedient, silent children. The new techniques had wider possibilities though, and Thomas Hayes, number 7139, was among the first of a new breed of enemies of the state, captured, in every sense, on film—stripped of home, family and

² John Berger. *Ways of Seeing* (London: Pelican, 1972) p139.

possessions; hair shorn; wearing the sackcloth of those who have numbers not names, mute and solitary in the awful silence of the Victorian prison. Detection was becoming science, and the photograph heralded the true age of the panopticon. As the physical and animal world had been mapped and tamed, so too with the human. Those who transgressed would in future be tracked, pinned down, labelled and displayed, like the carefully preserved exhibits filling the cases of the burgeoning museums of empire.

Since the 1850s, some prison governors with a penchant for new-fangled hobbies had also taken up photography and had begun to document the prisoners in their charge. It was not until 1870 that the Prevention of Crimes Act made it compulsory, but Ireland, was as usual ahead of the game in all things coercive. A contemporary commentator cheerfully wrote that Ireland even in the midst of her troubles and disturbances, had bestowed many benefits on the UK "believing that good on the whole has come out of them, that an Irish famine repealed the corn laws, that Irish outrage gave us a regularly organised police."³ The government response to the Fenian threat also gave birth to the Special (Irish) Branch, the mugshot and the use of forensic evidence.

Thomas Hayes was a wheelwright, aged 38, at the time of his arrest, originally from Cork. He had lived in London for some eighteen years, his address was 24, Little Coram Street, Russell Square. The photograph itself, was one of a series taken in Mountjoy Prison in Dublin in December 1865, of prisoners arrested under the 1848 Treason Felony Act, a catch-all, introduced when the previous catch-alls had been deemed not wide enough. The image, along with hundreds of others, is preserved in the records of the regime.⁴

³ Goldwin Smith (1861) *Irish History and Irish Character*: Oxford, as reviewed in the *Tablet* 22/1/1881 p131.

⁴ The pictures (overleaf), of Casey and Kenealy feature in Thomas Keneally. *The Great Shame* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998). He calls them 'pioneers of the mug-shot'. P435. Casey wrote for the Irish People. Kenealy was the leading Fenian in Cork, (and an ancestor of Thomas). He was imprisoned with Hayes, and they were tried on the same day, later serving time in Dartmoor together, but Hayes does not feature in Thomas Keneally's work, which is based upon John Keneally's 1908 memoir, published privately. I am grateful to Thomas Keneally and another member of the clan, Pat Keneally of New York, for tracking down and kindly supplying me with a copy. As Thomas K pointed out to me, Kenealy and Hayes would have been in contact as Kenealy (See the memoir pp15-16) combined his Fenian activities with his job as a buyer, and was often in England. It too, would have been wise of both men to disclaim all knowledge of each other once arrested.

Hayes then, was a Fenian. He had been arrested at his home in London on December 19th 1865, transferred first to Dublin and then to Cork, where he was convicted on January 1st 1866 of being the Head Centre, or leading, Fenian in London, sentenced to ten years' penal servitude and transferred back to England to serve his sentence in Dartmoor. His arrest, conviction and his place in this, earliest of rogue's galleries was assured by his connection to two newspapers, one in Dublin, the other in London.



Fig. 31 Three Fenians—note the consecutive numbers 7138, 7139, 7140

The Dublin paper was the *Irish People*, the journal of the Dublin Fenians, seized in September 1865. One letter from Hayes to the editor was found in the raid, a second, was found in subsequent raids. Together, they formed the basis for his prosecution. Both concerned the London paper the *Irish Liberator*, for Thomas Hayes, wheelwright and Fenian, was also its proprietor. One of the two fateful letters,⁵ from Hayes to the *Irish People's* business manager, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, illustrates something of the nature of both paper and man.

24, Little Coram Street

London July 16th

Dear Sir,-The Liberator is come into my hands agane-now I want to have your opining as A friend and A fellow worker in the cawse whether it would be Advisable for me to let it drop or continue it or would it be worth while for you to send some person to London to

⁵ Found in the office of an associate of the *Irish People*, called Downing, and reproduced in the account of Hayes' trial given in the *Constitution: or Cork Daily Advertiser*, 2/1/1866. The trial was reported in other papers, Irish and English, but in less detail than in the *Advertiser*.

conduct it and I would give it up to you to carry out the cawse we are working for you know that I am A bankrupt at present and I must not make it know the paper is mine-our tryal came off on the 29 of Last month and one of our creditors had the Irish Peaple at the cort-He prodused Mr Bell's letter charging us with selling the paper and the Judge put Back our tryal until the 3th of Augus to inquire about it If ye published the Letter I send to Dubling to Mr. Bell we would be in Anise fix at our next tryal I said in that Letter we were getting £10 from Mr. Boland and that convict us Mr Kelly can tell you that what I say is true. If you think the Irish Peaple is Anofe say the word and very Likely the Liberator will not apere next I have writing to you in confidence I reques Answer in Like manner and as quick as posipel

Yours truly,

T Hayes

Hayes, 'Honest' Tom Hayes as he was called, was evidently not a literary man. Other letters which have survived were like the above, full of grammatical and spelling errors.⁶ He also seems less than enthusiastic about his paper, asking whether it would be "advisable for me to let it drop," if not he would "give it up" for Rossa to run as he saw fit. There has clearly been some internal wrangling, with a man named Bell, and the paper, along with Hayes himself is in financial straits.

Hayes had been listed among the directors of the Irish Liberator Newspaper Company in the share offer and prospectus carried in the *United Irishman* of the 15th August 1863, and he, together with Thomas Cashen ⁷ secretary to the company, and Nicholas English, who had earlier bought shares in the *Universal News*, were the main movers behind the enterprise. Though not one of the original committee of the Brotherhood in London,⁸ by August 1863 ⁹ he was elected President of the No.1 branch, with Cashen as secretary. By profession, he was a wheelwright. Hayes, however was an artisan with a difference.

⁶ They were addressed to JP McDonnell Secretary of the National Brotherhood of St Patrick, seized by the police in 1866 after Hayes was already in prison. They are held in the National Archives of Ireland and are in very poor condition, in some places illegible.

⁷ Of Cashen I have been able to discover nothing. Dudley Edwards & Storey Op.cit. p166 have speculated that the names given by the conductors of the Irish Liberator were false. This is not the case with the rest, but it may be of Cashen.

⁸ *Universal News* 30/3/1861 p.10 "A meeting of the provisional committee of the Brotherhood formed on the 16th Inst took place at the Masonic Hall Fetter Lane". People prominent were: - L P O'Reilly, voted to the chair, Mr D O'Connell- Secretary . A Mr Michael Lynch was also prominent, as was an A Knox, Mr O Flanagan, McCarthy, Wiley, Hickey J O'Riley, B Comerford.

⁹ *United Irishman* 1/8/1863 p3

As well as his conventional occupation, and his 'open' political work in the Brotherhood of St Patrick, Hayes was a senior Fenian, acknowledged as such by TC Luby,¹⁰ and, according to the Crown at his trial in 1866, was the Head Centre for London. This would have put him at the head of upwards of 800 men, possibly as many as two thousand.¹¹ He was at the very centre of the revolutionary underground in England. As such, his was a life of secret assignments, of signs and passwords, plots, the smuggling of arms, the manufacture of 'fenian fire',¹² all the time under threat of betrayal and capture. In the swirling mist and smog of the London of the 1860s, the IRB and the forces of the state played out a game of cat and mouse. The IRB infiltrated the army, the prison service and other public offices. It in turn was plagued with police agents and informers. The entire leadership in Dublin were arrested on the information of Pierce Nagle, who worked in the Irish People offices. The authorities, while they perhaps never knew the full extent of Fenianism, especially in the army, had nevertheless a constant stream of information at their disposal- they knew of the attempted raid on the Chester arsenal in advance, as they did of the attempted prison break at Clerkenwell. To JIC Clarke, a London Fenian centre ¹³the ordinary policeman in plain clothes were easy to spot, but informers were a constant threat. Some, as we have seen, were defectors from the ranks of the Fenians themselves. Nicholas English, for example, who was one of the directors and shareholders of the Liberator, ("an insolent tailor" according to the gentlemanly Luby), turned Queen's evidence when he was informed against, in order to save his neck in the aftermath of the Clerkenwell explosion in 1867. Others did it for money. What it meant was that no one knew whom they could trust. It is not surprising perhaps that Hayes saw treason everywhere.

Some Fenians wrote memoirs full of derring-do. Clarke, and Maurice Sarsfield Walsh, the sub-editor and director of the Liberator had been part of a literary circle who "wrote poems and brief essays...We hired a hall where we sang Irish songs from the 'Spirit of the Nation' and had amateur theatricals"¹⁴ in aid of the poor back at home in Ireland. Later they turned to more military pursuits. Clarke wrote in his

¹⁰ National Library of Ireland MS 332 Luby to J O'Leary. He writes of trips to England in 1865 24/3-14/4 and those prominent in the organisation there, Hayes among them.

¹¹ Clarke, JIC p43

¹² IRB men called it 'Greek fire'-phosphorus.

¹³ Clarke JIC, (1926) My Life and Memories. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co. p43

¹⁴ Clarke Ibid. p37

memoirs of disguises and coded messages. "We used three kinds of ink for mail correspondence. We had a cryptic alphabet for specially important communications." On one occasion, a group of centres, disturbed at a meeting, faced down a party of policemen, and disappeared, revolvers in hand, into the gloom of the London night.¹⁵



Fig. 32 Fenian Centres in 1867: Standing left to right, JIC Clarke; James Clancey; Seated, London Head Centre and later nationalist MP JJ O'Kelly; Maurice Sarsfield Walsh, sub editor and director of the *Irish* ¹⁶

¹⁵ Clarke Ibid. pages 44 & 48-9
¹⁶ Plate from Clarke Op.cit.

Clarke was a young man in his early twenties at the time and perhaps more resilient to the strains of such a life, though he writes of the toll this double life took on his health. Hayes, though by no means old, was not as young, at the time of his conviction in 1866 he was thirty eight. Luby in his letters to John O'Leary, refers to Hayes as a "queer codger", "Old Hayes" or that "old shaver Hayes", which, as he himself was in fact older in years, may be taken as a comment on his character as much as his age. Hayes, a plain man, perhaps saw things in black and white terms- his was a manichaeian world, inhabited solely by those who could be trusted and those who would betray.

Hayes introduced Denis Holland, the prospective editor of the upcoming *Liberator* on visits to the branches, in order to drum up support. Holland, a well-known and respected nationalist journalist who had owned the *Irishman*, was welcomed with generous praise, as a "a true and devoted patriot," and a " tried and talented friend."¹⁷ Holland had come to London following the sale of his paper and now he was induced to take the helm of this new venture. Perhaps still smarting from his encounter with Sullivan, Holland told the no3 branch that "he had intended to remain quiet in London...but not now." Whether he meant he had intended to steer clear of Irish nationalist politics altogether, Holland certainly broke his resolution because he also became the London correspondent of the IRB's 'house' paper the *Irish People*, when it commenced in November 1863. All appeared well with the Irish Liberator but by early November, the day after the first issue had appeared,¹⁸ Hayes was writing to JP McDonnell, secretary to the Central Council in Dublin,

...we are not satisfied with our editor I don't think he will suit us... he is not our man now. I want you and Mr Doran and Mr Hoey to be in readiness to have another editor for fear anything might happen that we may want one. Mr Holland is not the man that we thought he was.¹⁹

¹⁷ *United Irishman* 15/8/1863 p3 Reports from J McCarthy, Sec no 3 branch and from Wolfe Tone Division.

¹⁸ Only copies 7 to 15 survive. No 7 is dated 3/11/1863, working back gives a date of 4/10/1863 as the commencement date, one week later than originally proposed.

¹⁹ Fenian Briefs C6 Env 20 n69 letter dated 4/11/1863. According to T Bell, the central problems of the Liberator were finances and the choice of editor ('The Reverend David Bell' *Clogher Record*, 1968 vol 6 no 2 p261)

What had happened in the interim? What kind of man did Hayes now think Holland was? So, after he and Holland fell out and the latter had left the *Liberator*, we find Hayes writing to McDonnell²⁰

Mr Holland is a bad turncoat he attended the anti nation dinner held by the universal news company on St Patrick's night the first toast was the health of the queen..

Hayes continued that Holland was the London correspondent of the *Irish People*, which he wondered at. Around the same time in an undated letter he informed McDonnell of the non-appearance of the paper, due to interference from various parties"...I think Dr O'Brinnan and Mr Holland in this plot against us never mind we will find out some day or other" In the same letter he made accusations against other members of the Brotherhood. Hawthorne, Secretary of the central council in London and others "are not Irishmen and the best of my belief is that they are in the pay of the government...Mr Bell, (who had replaced Holland as editor and was also to take Holland's position on the *Irish People*), will tell you all when he go to Irland".

David Bell would also fall foul of Hayes, and after he had left the *Liberator* in his turn amid even greater recriminations, Hayes wrote²¹ to warn McDonnell, "If Mr bell is in Ireland you must keep clear of him, he is all right with the *People* but he will betray them if he can." He went on "He was not seen in London this length of time. I think he is looking for a government position. Beware of him." He wrote a further letter to the *Irish People* which they printed in part, full of his spelling and grammatical errors in order to mock him, where he accused Bell of attempting to betray the new proprietor, a Mr Boland,

the present proprietor is A good Irishman and he is ready to assist in the cause of his country Mr. Bell tries to bring this man under the notice of the government or otherwise become a felon setter.²²

Cashen the secretary, was also not averse to pointing the finger at perceived transgressors, he caused uproar at a London meeting by repeating Hayes' accusations

²⁰ NAI C6 E22 N9 -Thomas Hayes to JPMcDonnell dated 29/3/1863 but it must be 1864

²¹ C6 E20 N17 - Hayes to JPMcD 24/9/64

²² *Irish People* 25/6/1864 p492

against Hawthorne and co. Hawthorne wrote to the long-suffering McDonnell that he could not turn in a report of the meeting to the *Liberator* as was customary, as it would bring the organisation into disrepute.²³

What comes across from Hayes is less a sense of the excitement and romance of secret conspiracy, or of a congenial social activity, than a powerful feeling of the paranoia engendered by such a lifestyle. There is an immediacy in his letters, which give them a ring of authenticity. They are not memoirs written in comfortable retirement, but the record of the uncertain present beset with hidden dangers.

The reasons for the row with Holland are not manifestly apparent, though they are in part political. What is clear, however, is that personality played a role in it. Hayes may have lacked formal education but he was no fool and he was dedicated to the cause. His patriotism was according to one of the many friends who supported his wife and children during his imprisonment, "of the purest kind." He was a man of some status amid the immigrant Irish in London, something of a local 'oracle,' someone who could give advice and find employment for newcomers. A Rev. J Vaughan of Ennis described Hayes as, "One of the most energetic and noble-hearted Irishmen in London," and of the *Liberator* he had this to say,

I can conceive of nothing nobler-more worthy of admiration-than the bold, unprecedented move of the reading working-men of London to get up a press able, bold, incorruptible, and racy, of Irish Nationality in the land of the Saxon and the stranger.²⁴

He was resourceful in his attempts to keep the *Liberator* alive and the painfully penned missals to McDonnell which have survived are small testament to the work he did on behalf of both Brotherhoods open and secret. He spent not only his time but also his hard-earned money, "his little fortune in order to establish here a national Irish journal for spreading the seed of Irish nationality."²⁵ He was one of the larger shareholders, with forty shares at 5/- each and by his own account lost nearly £200 on the *Liberator* in total. He was serious-minded, suspicious, hard-working and

²³ NAI Fenian Briefs C6 E20 N18 - undated from C Hawthorne to JP McDonnell Discussing May 17th meeting. Again note the lack of punctuation.

²⁴ *Irish Liberator*, 14/11/1863 p99 letter dated 9/11/1863

²⁵ Letter from Anti-Stag to the Irishman 26/12/68. Also claimed Campbell's evidence against Hayes was false as Hayes would not have been taken in by him.

teetotal all his adult life. Teetotal, Holland was not. According to Clarke,²⁶ he was

a cheerful Bohemian of London training with a fine head, flowing brown beard, small delicate white hands and excellent manners, was Irish through and through, a facile writer and scholar of the easy way of living and imbibing of the time, but without any depth of thought or purpose.

Clarke himself, though he was less than impressed with Holland's gravitas, came at least from a similar social milieu, being a civil servant, and with Walsh and his literary circle, was able to appreciate Holland's "charm of manner and skill as a raconteur" which "claimed our best regard." Qualities, apart from the Irishness of course, unlikely to inspire affection or respect in the hard-headed, horny-handed son of toil. When Hayes complained to McDonnell of Holland, he asked him to look out for an "honest sober man"²⁷ to replace him. Holland for his part, did give space in the paper to the London Catholic Teetotal Union, and on the occasion of the publication of a biography of Father Matthew the temperance champion, he gave his own views on the subject. He had seen the great man as a child in his native Cork, and venerated his memory and his cause. However, teetotalism "-that perfect abstinence from intoxicating drinks which was his ideal-has not become universal" Holland noted, and pleaded instead for moderation-in either indulgence or abstinence, depending on your view, for "...Temperance, that is the abstinence from over-indulgence in alcoholic drinks-is vastly on the increase." This was especially important for Irishmen in England where "They are strangers, as it were, in this land-exiles, and, (as not a few deem them) intruders. Every act of theirs is watched and severely, cruelly criticised. "²⁸ So while Hayes may have wished everyone to take the pledge, Holland merely advised them to hold their liquor.

It was though, more than any disagreements over the uses and abuses of alcohol, the literary character of Holland's patriotism that such as Hayes did not trust, or rather, it was their suspicion that this was the extent of it. In an anonymous letter to JP McDonnell dated 13/4/1864, a brother in England wrote

²⁶ Clarke, JIC, (1926) , p25 & 38

²⁷ Hayes to McDonnell 4/11/1863 Fenian briefs C6 E20 N69

²⁸ *Irish Liberator* 21/11/1863 p120- the biography of Fr Matthew was by JF Maguire MP

But I would be particularly cautious in letting into my confidence any political literary adventurer....Such writers as Holland and Brennan should by all means be exposed and put down. These are specimens of 'Literary Nationalists.'²⁹

Holland's nationalism, literary or otherwise was of long duration. He was born in 1826 in Cork and had studied with the *Irish People* editor John O'Leary at the Queen's College, (now University College) Cork. He then worked on the *Cork Examiner* and the *Southern Reporter*, before moving north to Ulster where he was editor of the *Northern Whig* in 1852. He wrote in a variety of genres under many noms de plume- he chose, for example, *Allua* (which he took from Callanan's *Gougane Barra*) or *Lamhdearg* when writing political stories; *Abhomor* for prose fiction; Otho, *Le Reveur* and H when writing verse; DH in his column for the *Irishman*, The *Irishman* in London.³⁰ Richard Pigott, who published the *Irishman* and eventually bought it from Smyth, thought Holland "a facile and graceful, rather than powerful writer, and a sincere and ardent patriot."³¹

While in Belfast, Holland founded and became first secretary of the Belfast Catholic Institute, "which provided cultural and recreational facilities for Catholic workmen."³² Though criticised by militant Fenians of the 1860s for a supposed lukewarm attitude to physical force, and it is as a cultural (in a broader sense than just 'literary') nationalist which he should be viewed, Holland was not opposed to the use of force per se. In Ulster he became embroiled in the inter-communal strife provoked by Orange Order demonstrations.³³ In the summer of 1857, various outrages occurred, including the unprovoked shooting of a sixteen year old Catholic mill girl. In response, and in order to arm Catholics for the following year, a meeting was held to set up a gun club for Catholics, the arms for which were to be paid for by subscription and awarded by lottery. Holland attended and publicised the idea in the *Ulsterman* of which he was editor and which he co-owned with John McLaughlin. He

²⁹ NAI C6 E22 N62

³⁰ *The Irish Monthly* 1890 pp 609-615

³¹ Pigott R Op.cit. p 79

³² de Burca [Bourke]M (1968) 'Denis Holland 1826-1872', in *Our Games* 1968 Annual of the GAA, p41.

³³ The authorities had in successive pieces of legislation banned processions and the public display of regalia associated with them such as 'Orange arches,' but the laws were never strictly enforced and did not prevent violence occurring, especially around the 12th of July.

wrote the next day

The authorities have been guilty of the grossest neglect of duty. I have seen gangs of Orange wreckers parading the streets of Belfast, with firearms, attacking their fellow-citizens. I have warned the authorities about this, but my warnings have not been heeded.³⁴

Collecting arms was not to be an easy task even when the will to do so existed. According to Andrew Boyd, the authorities prevailed upon the gunsmith whom the Catholic Gun Club had contracted to supply the weapons to break the contract and that weeks after the meeting, they had money but no arms.³⁵ It appears, however that eventually some arms were obtained, but again the authorities intervened. A contemporary source has it that, when there was indeed trouble, the affected area was 'declared' and the police empowered to confiscate any arms. Being Orangemen themselves, or at least sympathising with them, they only took possession of Catholics' weapons.³⁶

Holland changed the name of his journal to the *Irishman* in 1858, which he launched on July 17th and the following year moved it to Dublin. The *Irishman* occupies a significant, if sometimes overlooked place in the history of Irish nationalist journalism. Both during the period of Holland's ownership, which preceded, and that of the paper's third owner, Richard Pigott, which succeeded the foundation of the Irish People, the *Irishman* was the main organ of militant Irish nationalism. Holland printed historical articles and nationalist poetry, much of it his own. Main contributors were the Young Irelander JE Pigot³⁷, and Michael James Whitty, a long-time resident of England, who owned and edited the *Liverpool Daily Post*, and had been on the literary scene in Ireland and in England as far back as the 1820s.³⁸

Holland wrote novels of Irish country life, and was, according to the historian of the Gaelic Athletic Association, Marcus Bourke, a visionary who recognised the po-

³⁴ Boyd, A (1969) *Holy War In Belfast*. Dublin: Anvil Books, p35-6

³⁵ *Ibid* p36

³⁶ *Universal News*, 19/10/1861 pp 8-9

³⁷ At whose bidding the paper moved south, *The Irish Monthly* 1890 loc cit.

³⁸ He edited the *London And Dublin Magazine* (1823); also *Captain Rock In London* (1825); was proprietor and editor of the *Liverpool Courier* (1829); also of the *Liverpool Journal* (1855); *Liverpool Daily News* (same year) He had also enjoyed a spell as chief constable of Liverpool in the 1840s, and gave evidence to the Parliamentary Commission on Newspaper Stamps.

litical significance of the national language and of sports far in advance of other nationalists. *The Irishman* published articles and poetry in Irish, and Holland advocated the organisation of Gaelic sports on a national scale more than a quarter of a century before those ideas were taken up. Gaelic games had declined in popularity as a result of the Famine. This was not only due to the haemorrhaging population due to deaths and emigration in the Gaelic-speaking areas of the West. Holland added government policies and the negative attitudes of the clergy as further causes[a4]. Landowners too, were introducing the game of cricket into areas where it had been previously unknown. This had consequences far beyond the sports-field. "The nation which has lost its relish for its athletics is incapable of winning or maintaining its independence"³⁹ Holland wrote, foreshadowing the de-anglicisation policies advocated by Douglas Hyde in the 1890s.

Gaelic games had been condemned by those in authority, clerical and lay as creating disorder, and in his proposals for the organisation of sport on a parish level, with the parish priest or his curate as president of each branch, Holland attempted to avoid this. He also proposed enlisting the support of local gentry. Holland's ideas published in the *Irishman* in October 1858 bear striking similarities to the eventual organisation of the GAA. He believed, like those who eventually founded the GAA, that sport was not an end in itself, but part of a national revival in terms of politics and culture as well, it was a means of motivating and preparing the youth of the country for the independence struggle which would eventually have to be fought.⁴⁰ In the meantime, his paper promoted the Irish language, and carried reports of Gaelic sports from as far abroad as Canada and Australia. Holland was an obvious choice for editor of the NBSP's paper. He and militant nationalism went a long way together, but whereas he was advocating a sporting and cultural revival to engender a military one at some remote point in the future, they were preparing for war. His overtures to the gentry and clergy were at variance with the attitude of militant Fenianism, intent on confronting the three centres of power in Ireland— Castle, church and landlords, not enlisting their aid. His replacement, David Bell was very much a Fenian, and a very different man.

³⁹ De Burca op.cit. p42

⁴⁰ Ibid

Bell was from Antrim in Ulster and had been ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1839. In an overwhelmingly Orange and Tory district, his congregation of Derry-valley, Ballybay had a reputation for radicalism. This Bell shared enthusiastically. Like many others of his generation, he was further radicalised by the scenes he witnessed in the years of the Great Hunger. He was a powerful orator, as pastor to his congregation, and on the platform in the cause of Tenant Right, arguing for the three Fs-fair rents, fixity of tenure and free sale, and "his name became a household word"⁴¹ in the country. By all accounts he cut an impressive figure, according to a police description he was a "very tall stoutly built man with black eyes and hair."⁴² JIC Clarke, who met Bell in America, some twenty years later where they worked on the same newspaper, gives his impression of Bell's somewhat serious, forbidding character.

There were two other editors, one, David Bell, formerly a North of Ireland Presbyterian clergyman, whose views on Ireland cost him his snug living. He was perhaps over fifty, tall, austere, grey-headed with a deep, passionate nature, hard to stir to demonstration, but terrible when aroused. He wrote with skill and impersonality. He, too, received me kindly, with a sort of sigh. His thought may have been "another uprooted," and a doubt as to the issue of it. He never explained. I never asked. ⁴³

At one meeting of tenant farmers in Belfast in 1850, Bell, speaking in a style which clearly had been honed in the pulpit, outlined the choices faced by a tenant farmer-ruinous rents or starvation,

Is it, is it true to say, is it not a wicked and cruel mockery to call such a man a free agent, when, under these circumstances, he consents to such exorbitant terms? Are the garrisons of a beleaguered city free agents when they capitulate on whatever terms the victorious tyrant may please to offer them? Is the hunted negro, who sinks beneath the scimitars of the ruffian pirates of the slave-ships a free agent when he passively permits the iron collar to be riveted upon his neck and himself borne off, a helpless chained captive to slavery and death?...Or is the helpless traveller who prefers yielding his purse to receiving a bullet through his brains a free agent? I say fearlessly that in all these cases the principal is identical... Take almost any district in the peaceful North. Let from

⁴¹ *Irish People* 30/4/1864 p361

⁴² T Bell Op.cit p257

⁴³ Clarke, Op.cit p82

200 to 400 notices of eviction be served on all the farmers in it. Let them know what the fate of their neighbour has already been on a property alongside them, as on that of Mr Quin when the very bailiffs were unable to stand the soul-harrowing scenes occasioned by levelling the homes and extinguishing the hearths of the wretched poor, and let them know what has been the fate of their neighbours on the other side, on the property of Mr Shirley of Carrickmacross where you could ascend a hill and count tens and fifties and hundreds of ruined homesteads whose blackened walls and silent desolation tell to God and man that the merciless destroyer has been there; where there are thirteen auxiliary workhouses and more sought for, as all are crammed to suffocation....and in the name of justice, in the name of humanity, in the name of mercy, in the awful name of God, I call upon Lord John Russell; I call upon the Government; I call upon the Imperial Legislature to render the poor man's property as sacred as that of the rich.⁴⁴

Bell's involvement in Tenant Right as the Tenant League was known in the North of Ireland, was an indication of the ecumenical spirit of the movement, and he often shared platforms with Catholic priests- a leader column in the *Irish People* recalled him giving a speech in the pouring rain while a catholic priest held an umbrella over him, oblivious to his own comfort.⁴⁵ Bell was always to denounce the evils of sectarianism—from whatever quarter. His efforts in support of the League in the 1852 election were not to bear fruit, as no Tenant League candidate was elected in the whole of Ulster, sectarian politics winning the day.

With forty MPs returned, this was nevertheless the League's high watermark, ahead lay the bitterness and splits following the defection of Sadleir and Keogh, the clergy's withdrawal and the gradual disintegration of the independent opposition. Bell himself was to lose his position as pastor in 1853 because of his political work.⁴⁶ He next surfaced in London, ten years later, speaking on behalf of the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick.

⁴⁴ *Northern Standard* 22/6/1850 quoted from T Bell (1968) Op.cit.pp 256-7

⁴⁵ *Irish People* 30/4/1864 p361

⁴⁶ See T Bell Op.cit. p255 David Bell claimed he left because of state endowments, there is however evidence that he was forced to by sections of his congregation.



Fig. 33 The Ejectment, from the *Illustrated London News* 16/12/1848, a paper which was sympathetic to the plight of the wretched Irish peasantry. The accompanying text, which it gleaned from an Irish paper the *Tipperary Vindicator* is reproduced in part:

...the fearful system of wholesale ejectment, of which we daily hear, and which we daily behold, is a mockery of the eternal laws of God-- a flagrant outrage on the principles of nature. Whole districts are cleared. Not a roof-tree is to be seen where the happy cottage of the labourer or the snug homestead of the farmer at no distant day cheered the landscape.

As we have seen, by the time of the paper's launch, Hayes was unhappy with Holland and looking for another editor. By early December, though he was not yet in place, Bell was making his presence felt among the exiles. According to Rutherford,⁴⁷ he was "specially recommended to the IRB in London" by James Stephens. The *Liberator* of the 5th December carried a long report of "A Great Aggregate Meeting of the Irish Nationalists in London," with Bell in the chair. On the platform with Bell were M Sarsfield Walsh, Hayes, Cashen, Maurice O'Connell, JJ Irons and others. Bell gave a stirring speech amid much applause, stressing the potential power of the Irish around the world,

⁴⁷ Rutherford, J (1877) *The Secret History of the Fenian Conspiracy: Its Origin, Objects and Ramifications*. London C Kegan & Paul. This is an often-quoted book but Patrick Quinlivan in an essay (*Hunting the Fenians*, see bibliography) on the pitfalls of research into this area has criticised its accuracy, as did contemporaries who said it was full of falsehoods. Rutherford gives the start-date of the *Liberator* as "towards the end of 1864" and not 1863 as is the case.

We have all heard of that oft-vaunted boast that the sun never sets on the flags of England; but Irishmen have a higher and prouder cause for congratulation, for they can point out to the mockers of their country and its wrongs that the sun never sets upon the Irish race. They are scattered broadcast over the world. In whatever part of the universe the sun sheds his golden light, it falls upon the remnants of the Celtic or Irish race, a race second to none other on God's earth in bodily organisation or mental powers, intelligence and virtue. Is then, I ask, ladies and gentlemen, this great race to remain a rope of sand forever, to be broken at any moment by the tyrant and oppressor; or should it not be manufactured into and become a mighty girdle of glittering steel to protect the children, and announce to them that the hour for redress of their wrongs is near at hand?⁴⁸

Speaking of the Irish in London, he said,

It seems that here, here in this London in the very heart of England, there is an Irish population of half a million—a larger number than the population of Dublin, Belfast and Cork together. Now I would like this to be known; let it go forth to the Nationalists that there are half a million of Irishmen or Irishmen's children, in the very citadel of the enemy. They are not idle, good-for-nothing, straggling men, but men of stout frame, brave hearts and generous impulse, fit for anything and everything requiring intelligence, labour, energy or determination to create or perfect.

He then went on to note that even allowing for differences of opinion, (and differences of opinion there certainly were, as he was about to find out), they ought to be able to recruit into the National Brotherhood 50,000 in the capital alone. In a final flourish which would have pleased the more military minded and set any detectives present scribbling in their notebooks,

And lastly a combined organisation such as you united would form would enable you to create means whereby you could defend yourselves. In this age and particularly on these dark nights when life and property are so insecure and when garrottings and burglaries are so rife a good rifle is very necessary; and in passing through the streets or turning the corners if one does not want to be choked a six-barrelled revolver should be in his pockets (cheers). Well, it is not every man that can afford to buy a rifle or a revolver, but by uniting together the thing is of easy accomplishment. And then again if

⁴⁸ *Irish Liberator* 5/12/1863

war or an invasion should come we could defend ourselves and Ah! What a splendid garrison we would form (cheers) And then again we know that our countrymen in America will do their duty; and if we had 400,000 volunteers with rifles in their hands what then was to hinder them from proclaiming like the volunteers of old that no power on earth save the Queen, Lords and Commons of Ireland has or ought to have power to make laws for Ireland? (loud cheering) Then our country would rise from the ashes of her desolation, with the diadem of freedom on her brow and the sceptre of sovereignty in her hand, a kingdom and a nation free and independent.

The reporter ended by saying that the cheering and applause was so loud they were unable to hear the stanza from one of Moore's Melodies with which Bell ended.

Curiously, Holland does not appear to have been on the platform, but was called up to speak. When he did so he said that he had not intended to play an active part in the proceedings but would do so as requested. It is perhaps an indication of his position on the paper at that time, as could be the fact that in his speech he compared himself to Bell, a Presbyterian, and he a Catholic. Reports from the branches in the succeeding weeks show Bell doing the rounds, addressing meetings.⁴⁹ The first date he is credited as the editor is on January 9th 1864. He finally left the paper on 3rd June 1864. Two things precipitated Bell's departure from the *Liberator*—a row with Hayes over money and the fallout from a dispute with AM Sullivan of the *Nation*.

⁴⁹ *Irish Liberator*, 19/12/1863 p180 Bell told Soho no 5 branch he would speak to them whenever they wanted him to. He also visited no 3 branch and briefly spoke.

3.2 'No Sordid Money Speculation'—the Liberator and Filthy Lucre

The *Irish Liberator* was started with a capital of £2,000 divided into 8,000 five shilling shares. As with other similar ventures, this was a purely theoretical amount, as purchasers of shares were not required to pay the full amount at once, only a proportion, the rest to be called for as needed by the proprietors.

The Irish Liberator Newspaper Co. Ltd.

Capital £2,000 in 8,000 shares of five shillings each. First issue 2,000 shares. Deposit 1/- per share on application and 1/6d on allotment. The holders of such shares will have the preference pro rata in all future issues. The other 2/6d per share will be called up as required.

Nor did subscribers normally pay in advance—only when they first subscribed, with the result that papers often found themselves further down the road sending out free copies to people on the list, who had not paid. To add insult to injury the paper paid for the postage. By the seventh issue, November 14th 1863, the *Liberator* was in trouble and asked all shareholders to forward the balance due in full. They also launched an "Appeal to Irish Nationalists." The paper, the address said had "been brought out hastily and under immense disadvantages." It is not difficult to guess what those disadvantages were." The *Universal News*, which had been launched some years previously, had a (theoretical) start up capital of £10,000, and it was still in trouble after six months. The News Newspaper Co. under which it was set up had been registered over a year before the launch of the paper in 1860, in which time the projectors sought investors and subscribers. The Irish Liberator Newspaper Co. on the other hand was registered on September 19th 1863, a month before the launch date.

Financial considerations were not uppermost in the minds of the projectors of the paper, whose concerns were more ideological. As the Appeal reminded readers, "This is no sordid money speculation-no enterprise for personal gain; it is a great venture in the cause of Ireland." A similar spirit pervaded the *Irish People* which followed the *Liberator* into print in Dublin in November of the same year. It has often

been said that James Stephens intended the *Irish People* to be money-spinner. He may well have dreamed so, but his business manager Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa was under no such illusions. He displayed not a lack of but a disdain for conventional business acumen, as the following example makes clear. One of Rossa's subordinates removed the names of some national schoolteachers from the list of people to whom the paper was sent directly, as, he thought, for sound business reasons, when he saw they did not pay. When this was drawn to his attention, Rossa had them reinstated on the list with the words "To the devil with your business reasons. The organisation can't be run on business principles, we must push it in every way we can, put them back on the list".¹ It was more important to him that they were in contact with young people, whom the paper wanted to reach. Thomas Hayes, though a great deal of his correspondence bewailed the amount of money he was losing by the *Liberator*, nevertheless was not prepared to take just anybody's money. He wrote to McDonnell on 4/11/1863, that some person or persons had offered to subscribe to the paper but they had refused the money "We would (rather) let the paper fall than have anything to do with parliamentary humbug."²

Sentiments reinforced in the *Liberator* the following week—of the *Liberator* and the *United Irishman* it said

-when all the other journals shut their columns against the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, and every kind of opposition was brought to bear against it-the two leading national journals, sprang into existence through the energy and labour of the members of the National Brotherhood..." which "...have been established for no pecuniary objects, no personal motives.." members were urged to stand by the Brotherhood and "...give your support to nothing that is capital, whiggish or parliamentary."³

CC Hoey of the governing council in Dublin was reported thus on 21/11/1863

He exhorted the Irish nationalists those who loved the cause and cherished the hopes of a liberated Ireland, to support those journals which put forward the honest expression of sentiment upon which the advancement of the cause depends. He was aware of the

¹ Devoy John (1969) reprint *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*. Shannon. Irish University Press. p42-3

² Fenian briefs C6 E20 N69 The condition is poor, in places illegible -my suggestion in brackets

³ *Irish Liberator* 14/11/1863 p99

great aid given to a movement by promulgating its principles through the press, and was also aware of the evils arising from its suppression. He need not enter into detail to prove to them the accuracy of his remarks; but he referred them to the position in which they were placed previous to the *United Irishman* being started, and which proved to them how necessary it was to have a means by which they might give expression to their feelings, without submitting them to "modification", "curtailment", and "exclusion", when unsuited to the political tastes of trading journalists. Earnestness and perseverance not only allowed them to establish that journal but also through its columns to advocate their rights and overcome the slanders which unscrupulous men endeavoured to heap upon them.⁴

A long address from Thomas Cashen in January furnished proof, he wrote for any who doubted the need for a paper which the Brotherhood could control themselves,⁵

To Irishmen in England Ireland Scotland and elsewhere. Brothers, brother sufferers and brother exiles..." "About the 14th of March last some friends in Ireland seeing the calamity which threatened the remnant of our race in several parts of the country, suggested to us the necessity of being prepared to alleviate, as far as lay in our power, the impending misery. With this view, we formed ourselves into a committee; and as we could do nothing without the assistance of the press, we applied to a Catholic editor- sure of his support-but he could not do much, unless we made him the centre, and said nothing about the Brotherhood of St Patrick although he believed them to be the best and honestest men in existence. He afterwards promised to report our proceedings, but only did so on two or three occasions, as he thought the subject rather too Irish for flunky tastes. We employed another of the hypocrites, and were forced to pay him 3/- per week for leave to beg a bit for his starving fellow countrymen and women, who were suffering through alien misgovernment. This is a type of cockney journalist's⁶ patriotism. Again, I am sure you cannot forget another example of how you were advocated not very long ago. The much-stressed Fenians were coming; and though it is universally acknowledged you are the most persecuted people on earth, were you not told, if you should ever dare to fight for the independence of your country, you would do so with "the curse of the priests on your heads, and the chance of a dog's death into the bargain.

⁴ *Irish Liberator* 21/11/1863 p 116

⁵ *Irish Liberator* 9/1/1864 p206

⁶ Usually Denny Lane of the *Universe*. The first editor mentioned would be JE O'Cavanagh of the *Universal News*, who was to set up his own scheme for relief of distress in Ireland in May of that year.

Newspapers, however, no more than the people who run them, do not live by ideology alone, and a lack of business acumen was bound to damage the paper's prospects. There is nothing from what we know of the proprietors to suggest that any of them had the knowledge or qualities, (even if they had the interest) to run the business side of the enterprise. Holland was a journalist and proprietor of long standing, and it might be supposed that he would have been able to bring his experience to bear on matters. Unfortunately the opposite would appear to have been the case. The money for his papers, the *Ulsterman* and the *Irishman* had been advanced to him by his father in law. They were in constant financial trouble and he was forced to part with the *Irishman*. The vagaries and injustices of the laws of libel aside, looking after the pennies and the pounds does not seem to have been one of Holland's priorities, indeed, he "was one of the most careless businessmen imaginable, and seemed to have no knowledge of the value of money. He did erratic, and as many people would say, stupid things." Worse, "he possessed the instincts of a gentleman. He was honest himself and suspected no one." This led him to trust Richard Pigott, the eventual third owner of the *Irishman*, who was employed at this point in his accounts department. If it is to be credited,⁷ Pigott embezzled money from the paper and then ingratiated himself into Holland's favour by giving the impecunious editor personal loans out of the proceeds. This lack of business professionalism plagued the *Liberator* throughout its existence.

Cashen's Appeal urged nationalists to do their duty and support the paper. "A few have made great sacrifices to produce this National journal," it said, "We call upon the many (and their united help will cost them no sacrifice at all) to hasten to our aid." A subscription list was started and among others are the names of Hayes, Cashen, the two Walshes, Nicholas English and co., the few still putting their hands in their pockets. That the fund-raising was not going smoothly is indicated by an announcement concerning the raffle of a 'magnificent gold watch.' The raffle had had to be postponed for the second time, because people had not returned the tickets. The attempt at gathering in the balance of the share money was similarly difficult

⁷ This comes from Dick Donovan's (1904) *The Crime of the Century: Being the Life Story of Richard Pigott*, pp 27-8. It is a deeply partisan book, reading like a work of fiction, but the person in Donovan's sights is Pigott and his remarks on Holland's attitude to business seem consistent with, for example, Clarke's remarks on his easy-going nature.

and in January 1864,⁸ in a long address, Cashen the secretary outlined a revised plan. The sub-editor Maurice Sarsfield Walsh was to go on a tour of the country, making speeches and appointing collectors

who will go to their countrymen and women too and will not take no for an answer; that the collectors also be empowered to receive money for shares which can be paid at a minimum of 4d per week until the full amount be paid, the collector to pay over weekly to the secretary the amount collected.

Further schemes were mooted such as offering shares in the company by lottery. The poverty of their readers was a constant problem, exacerbated in some instances by unscrupulous agents adding to their slice of the pie by overcharging, several adding a halfpenny to the twopenny cover price⁹. It was a brake too, on the growth of the Brotherhood. Membership was expensive, though it varied from branch to branch.¹⁰

Distribution as ever, was a further source of difficulty. The *Liberator* was very widely distributed, as were the branches of the Brotherhood. The Corresponding secretary of the Spennymoor branch wrote in that his members would play their part in the work of the Brotherhood "although almost out of the world here."¹¹ This could be taken as an indication of strength, of the spread throughout the British Isles of Irish Nationalism.¹² This was indeed the perception in the height of the Fenian scares of 1865-70, when it appeared groups of malcontented Irishmen were to be found everywhere. The *Liberator* listed, in London alone, wholesale agents in Liverpool Street, Little Britain, Commercial Rd, Cross St in Ratcliff, Seething lane in the city, Whitechapel, Bath St and City Rd, Blackfriars Rd, Bermondsey Sq., Great Suffolk St., Harcourt St in Marylebone, Edgware Rd, Paddington St in Marylebone, Compton St. Soho, Old High St Westminster, Shoe Lane off Fleet St (2), Smiths in Kings Cross, Euston Rd and Wandsworth. People from the trade could also pick it up at Jenkinsons in Shoe Lane, at 25 more places countrywide, 7 in Scotland and

⁸ *Irish Liberator* 9/1/1864 p216

⁹ *Irish Liberator* 14/11/1863 p104

¹⁰ Moran G (1999) 'The National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick in Lancashire' in R Swift & S Gilley *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

¹¹ *Irish Liberator*, 14/11/1863 p100

¹² Bell, T (1968) *Op.cit.* p264

56 in Ireland. ¹³ But a list of agents gives no indication of the number of copies sold by each one, and there is no evidence of circulation figures. Apart from the great centres like London, Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow, the Irish were to be found in small groups, isolated, suspected and to varying degrees despised. The achievement of the press was to encourage a sense of solidarity, of combined power. The object was always to weld the scattered and leaderless tens and hundreds into unified thousands and tens of thousands. However, distribution was expensive. A letter illustrating this came from a James McLaughlin Jun. in Derry. He wrote,

For example I understand that the reason for the non-appearance of the Irish Liberator in the city is that it is not supported as it should be; and that by sending papers there the cost overcomes the profit. And not only here but in several other cities in Ireland. ¹⁴

Papers could be transmitted through the post, of course, but this meant that the reader had to pay for the stamp, which many were reluctant or unable to do. Economic difficulties were not the only ones to contend with. Those whose political views were unpopular, found it difficult to get their papers distributed as this report which appeared in the same issue, from the Nottingham Harp and Shamrock branch makes clear. The Hon Sec Charles O'Conna wrote,

We have been very much pleased with the Irish Liberator, but sorry to say we did not get half the copies. Our vice-chairman Mr J Downey is a newsagent, and he changed his wholesale agent twice, thinking something was wrong twelve months back; not one Irish paper was to be had in this town. When Mr PJ Smith requested him to appoint an agent here for the Irishman, none would expose the bills; so Mr Downey, who is well-known in Manchester, commenced the business himself and has succeeded. ¹⁵

So a determined agent could withstand opposition. That opposition especially in the shape of the local Catholic clergy could be formidable, and it took considerable determination to withstand the criticism which the agents of the *Irish People* in Ballyporeen and Newcastle West had to contend with. The 'contemptible' behaviour of the Reverend Burke PP at Ballyporeen was relayed in a letter,

¹³ *Irish Liberator* 21/11/1863 p127

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 9/1/1864 p212

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 9/1/1864 p212

On Sunday last the peaceable inhabitants of Ballyporeen were thrown into consternation by the appearance of their parish priest, an old man, his face flushed with anger, as he hurried through the street to tear down the placard of your honest journal. Not satisfied with that he entered the agent's house and told him that If he continued selling it longer he would denounce him from the altar.¹⁶

The paper was glad to note he had resisted, and continued as before. Darby O'Grady, the agent for Newcastle West in Limerick told his own story. Two letters from him to O'Donovan Rossa were preserved in the seized documents of the paper. In the first, dated 2/9/1865 he complains of the non-arrival of his papers,

...after all the abuse and scandal I received for the sake of establishing the sale of the paper it is rather annoying to me to give my enemies a chance to upbraid me with cowardice by saying and reporting that it was thro fear I gave them up and that I had to knock under to Archdeacon O'Brien.¹⁷

Why his 'enemies' should feel able to castigate him so is made clear in a second letter written four days later, this time complaining of the late arrival of his papers. He had been afraid that he would not be able to sell them because of the delay, but "exerted himself" and managed to sell them all but 15. One lady bought 12 copies from him in order to help him out.

I could have sold more than 8 dozen had I them on Saturday. Many persons were disappointed in the town and surrounding villages and could not be persuaded that I did not give up the sale of the paper as Revd (name unclear) announced at first Mass that I had done so. Other parties cursed and abused me and any amount of reasoning I could adduce would not make them believe but I had to knock under. I was very much annoyed more than if the Archdeacon spoke about me for a week together.¹⁸

The *Irish People* leapt to his defence, as it clearly needed to, a leading article entitled "Priests in Politics," referring to the affair, said, "When an Archdeacon O'Brien tears down the placards of the *Irish People* and denounces the man who

¹⁶ *Irish People* 1/11/1864

¹⁷ Irish National Archives Fenian Briefs 1865-9 Carton 5 Envelope 17 2/9/1865

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 6/9/1865

sells it as Antichrist, we see no reason why such conduct should not be publicly condemned."¹⁹ Neither the agent for Ballyporeen nor O'Grady was cowed down, indeed the latter was more concerned that people should think he was, but many others must have been tempted to "knock under." The picture was the same in England, as the history of the *Universal News* in its later years and the *Irish News* attest. The *Irish Liberator* was in a precarious condition from the start. As the basis of its support was the Brotherhood, then it could be guaranteed sales to all of the branches, probably several copies to each for their reading rooms. However, as a supporter of the *Universal News*²⁰ had pointed out to the Brotherhood some time earlier when it was in financial trouble, the taking in of a few copies into the Brotherhood's reading rooms did not amount to much. The apparent reluctance shown in Nottingham above to distribute any Irish papers at all could only be reinforced by the hostility of the clergy and less advanced nationalists.

However, the Brotherhood did not just 'knock under' itself in the face of denunciation, indeed in November 1863, some branches reported increased numbers. Thomas Cashen reported from No1 branch reported that one of his members had introduced seven prospective members at the last meeting making a total of one hundred introductions for him alone. The Meagher branch in Newcastle reported that since the condemnation numbers had increased to the extent that they had had to find larger premises. 200 persons were present at first meeting in the new building, including 30 new members. In Lancashire, the denunciation of 1863 does not appear to have had the same effect as that of 1862 when 'moderate' members left the organisation.²¹

From the Turk's Head Ratcliff Cross, J Ryan wrote in, to indicate there had been some defections but "We feel proud in saying that sterling and true patriots are filling in our branch, the places left vacant by the lukewarm Irishmen whom the "advice" of pretended friends had such effect upon," whose 'petty tyranny' he deplored.²²

¹⁹ Fenian Briefs 1865-9 Carton 5 Env 17 Business letters Jan-Sept 1865 & some undated Consists mainly of letters from subscribers and newsagents usually addressed to O'Donovan Rossa; *Irish People* 16/9/65.

²⁰ 'Garryowen', a shareholder of the *Universal News* writing 1/2/1862

²¹ Moran G Op.cit.p233

²² *Irish Liberator* 21/11/1863 p117

Financial problems continued to dog the *Liberator*. Hayes wrote to McDonnell in March 1864

The Liberator is struggling on. I have lost very near 300 pounds with it and unless we get some help I don't know what will become of it. All the weight is left on me. There were three writs out against it at once. The company had to wind up. I had nothing to do but register another paper in my name called the National Liberator and let the Irish Liberator fall. That week the brokers came in with their order to seize to seize on the Irish Liberator. "National" was instead of "Irish" and they could not smell at it.

There was a further court case involving debts upcoming, the outcome of which was uncertain.²³ He wrote again the following week,

We are sold, the printer was bribed and he would not print the paper this week. When Mr Bell went to see the proof-sheets there was not even one line set up

How he knows the printer was bribed he does not say, he does however have an idea as to who was responsible,

.... the universal news people and the priests have done it. I think the printer must have received about £50 or £60 for selling us.

An obligation amounting to £50 was the subject of the impending court case, so the printer may have been susceptible to offers of that amount. Equally, he may have just decided it was not worth his while to continue printing the paper under such circumstances. We know the paper and the Brotherhood both were opposed by the clergy, whether or not they would resort to bribery is another matter. They may have considered it a matter of paying an honest artisan the debts owed him by 'unscrupulous adventurers' to use a phrase current at the time. What the significance of the involvement of the '*Universal News* people' might have been is hard to say, (if, of course any of it was more than paranoia- he also implicated former editor Denis Holland and editor of the *Connaught Patriot* Martin A O'Brennan in the plot). What can be said is that the *Universal News* was certainly a rival, commercial and political. The possible connections between the eventual proprietor of the Liberator

²³ Hayes to McDonnell, 29/3/1864 quoted from T Bell, Op.cit.p263

and the *Universal News* are outlined below (See p228-30.) Hayes said that in future they would print for themselves and were looking for type.²⁴ David Bell wrote the following week ,

We have this week bought our own type and will in future print for ourselves. So I expect we shall get on in spite of the devil and all his emissaries.²⁵

The type would represent a further investment of money by the paper's backers, in all likelihood Hayes, Bell and English themselves, representing considerable sacrifices on their part and adding to the fraught atmosphere at the paper. Bell undertook an extensive speaking tour of Britain and Ireland beginning in Bristol on April 10th in order to raise funds for the *Liberator*. The meagre results of the tour were to become a bone of contention between Bell and Hayes, exacerbated by a row with AM Sullivan's *Nation*, in which sectarian tensions were to play a part.

²⁴ Hayes to McDonnell, 7/4/1864 Fenian Briefs C6 E22 N69

²⁵ Bell to McDonnell 9/4/1864 Fenian Briefs C6 E24 N38

3.3 Hounding Down the Priests

The origin of the dispute with the *Nation* lay in an article in the *Irish Liberator*, in late February, critical, as one comes to expect, of the role of the clergy in politics. There was constant sparring over this subject between papers like the *Liberator* in England, the *Irish People* in Ireland and their constitutional nationalist and Catholic opponents in the press. A letter to the *Universe* typified the opinions of the latter group, "It would be folly," wrote G MacDonald on 22/8/1863 on the controversies between nationalists and the clergy,

to send children to school under the express stipulation that the teachers were to be subjugated to the rule of their pupils, who were not only to remain in subjection to their guides but who were also to dictate to them what they should teach and how they should not.

While the conductors of the *Liberator* were happy to accept support from the occasional cleric who dared to do so, they rejected criticism with increasing vehemence.

Throughout 1864, the exchanges between the advanced nationalists and the church became sharper, hints became outright accusations. AM Sullivan's morning paper the *Morning News* had first criticised the article on March 12th, also reproduced in the *Nation*, along with the offending piece from the *Liberator*. The *Nation* of the 19th March carried a letter of complaint Bell had written and his own reply. The article from the *National Liberator*, was written in response to condemnations of the Fenians in America by the bishops there. In it the writer condemned the bishops in America in their turn. Some "gigantic influence," it said had clearly been brought to bear upon them, because the Irish in America had long been known for their independence from clerical interference in political affairs and the clergy there had never previously had the temerity to condemn Irish political movements as they had just done. The reason for the change was "clear to us as the sun at noonday....British gold is at the bottom of all this business." The Vatican, the paper said, was in daily hopes that the aristocratic class in England would return to the Catholic fold. Numerous conversions led them to expect it, "The Queen's mother died a Catholic, and the tendency to Catholicism is very strong amongst the upper ten thousand, and the

English High Church is only a little removed from Rome." The English government for its part had been watching events in Ireland and America with great alarm. Putting two and two together, and making some kind of a figure, the paper arrived at the conclusion that "there is a very explicit understanding between the courts of St James and Rome," The English had promised the Vatican great things in return for aid in squashing fenianism on both sides of the Atlantic, and the Pope and Cardinals were prepared to "sacrifice a few millions of penniless Irishmen for the sake of catching a score or two of English nobles, whose revenues are greater than that of half of Italy." The article concluded,

We have been bought by British gold, and those who formerly were our best friends have been turned into our deadliest enemies. One English aristocrat is worth more than a million of us; nay, the whole Irish people are as dust in the balance when the Catholic hierarchy weigh them against a score of British nobles, and the enormous wealth of the British government. The matter is settled. All is made plain. Our eyes are opened.¹

Naturally enough, this sort of thing, though it would have delighted many of the readers of the *Liberator*, enraged the Church and its supporters in the press in England as well as Ireland. The article as it appeared in the *Liberator* had been entitled 'The Bishops and the Brotherhoods,' O'Sullivan re-named it 'Hounding Down the Priests.' The introduction highlighted Bell's religious denomination, as did a post-script. "The following attack on the Catholic Clergy is from the *Irish Liberator* of London, a pro-Fenian organ, edited by a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. David Bell, MA." While O'Sullivan was not enamoured of any of the sentiments expressed in the article, like many Catholics he was horrified, he highlighted the following sentence, accusing Bell of dishonesty,

But the faith to which we clung, has been, within the last week or two rudely thrust from our minds and the incontrovertible, terrible truth now stares us steadily in the face-the ministers and the hierarchy of the Church of our fathers are the sternest enemies of the independence of Ireland!

A footnote read,

¹ Reproduced in the *Nation* 12/3/1864 p452

The Catholic priests and bishops are here meant, of course, for 'the church of the *Liberator* editor's fathers' repudiates priests and bishops altogether. This phrase is a nice pretence that the *Liberator* editor is a Catholic; he being all the time a Protestant Minister.²

Bell criticised Sullivan on three counts- firstly that he had not written nor even read the article prior to its being printed and had in fact been hundreds of miles away at the time. He stated that he had

never written nor dictated, directly nor indirectly, a single sentence in the *Liberator* reflecting on the conduct of the Catholic clergy, nor on any portion of them.³

This would be in keeping with the policy of the *Irish People*, the great bulk of whose anti-clerical articles were written by CJ Kickham, a devout Catholic. To have allowed agnostic O'Leary, or Protestant Luby to criticise the Catholic clergy would merely have been giving ammunition to their opponents. It is highly likely Bell did the same, he declined to talk on the subject while on his lecture tour, but it was unrealistic for him to deny responsibility for articles which appeared in a paper of which he was editor. He was caught on a hook, a hook that was ultimately sectarian, the implication being that no journal edited by a non-Catholic had the right to criticise the political pronouncements of the Catholic clergy. The implication of this was that no non-Catholic could play a leading part in any organisation which was likely to come into conflict with the hierarchy. Bell was very clear as to the sectarian antagonism behind the prominent naming of him a Presbyterian minister when it was known he had not acted in that capacity for over ten years. "Everyone understands the motives of such miserable tactics as these," he wrote,

and appreciates them accordingly. But, let me tell you, times are changed since every unscrupulous politician could in a moment blow the slumbering embers of religious strife into such a flame as would promote his own sinful and selfish purposes.⁴

² Ibid.

³ Bell's letter (dated 14/3/1864) and AM Sullivan's reply was published in the *Nation* 19/3/1864 p473

⁴ Ibid.

In the light of subsequent events, Bell may well have come to view as over-optimistic his description of the sophistication of Irish political life, but that was to come and he continued that the Irish people now knew the best course to take and "trading tricksters of every description" would be exposed.

Hayes was not the only one who saw informers around every corner. Bell, who had just been sworn into the IRB by O'Donovan Rossa in Manchester in the spring of 1864, was sensitive to being publicly named as the editor of a pro-Fenian paper and accused Sullivan of being an "Informer-General," of putting him in danger of arrest by doing so. Privately, Bell wrote to McDonnell, who himself had been an IRB member since before he left university in Dublin in 1862, ⁵ that Sullivan was in receipt of secret service payments, alluding to a notorious case of some years previously when an unscrupulous Dublin editor, Birch, had sued Lord Clarendon over secret subsidies he claimed were owed to him.⁶ The purpose of Sullivan's actions, was, he told McDonnell, to prepare the public "for certain arrests which are contemplated and which may take place at any moment."

Sullivan scoffed at Bell's remonstrations, disingenuously claiming to be unaware as a Catholic, that resignation was possible for a minister, and (with justification) that in any case Bell was commonly called the Rev David Bell, even in his own paper. In the *Nation*, Sullivan continued to refer to Bell as Rev David Bell, Presbyterian Minister' and to himself as a 'Catholic' journalist. The *Nation* of the 2nd April ⁷ returned to the offensive, gleefully noticing the *Liberator's* change of name, "cotemporaneously with an unpaid printer's bill," further criticising Bell for not printing Sullivan's rebuttal and once again introducing the matter of religious difference. The article which followed this attack, named 'An Ally of the Soupers,' after the proselytising Protestants of the Famine years, clearly had Bell's religion firmly in its sights. It again reproduced an anti-clerical extract from the *National Liberator*, a "paltry little sheet" which was "striving to do the work of the Fenians among our countrymen in London," from the "Answers to Correspondents" column, which it said

⁵ Bell to McDonnell 5/4/1864 quoted in T Bell Op.cit. p264 "I see Birch's successor is employed as usual in earning his wages....Still it would be as well for Sandy (Sullivan) to get the 'cash down on the nail'..."

⁶ He was successful, he received £3,700 an enormous sum for the time. See Aspinal, A (1973 ed) Politics and the Press. London Harvester Press, pp 375-8

⁷ *Nation* 2/4/1864 p505

"are always editorial matter." The language of the extract was inflammatory, if on the usual theme, opining that though the faith was infallible (not the Pope, this was not to be until 1870!), the guardians of it were not. The faith came from the "Best of Beings," the guardians on the other hand were "too often emissaries of the Worst." This was an 'atrocious' to the *Nation*, in a league with "Gavazzi, Garibaldi and the Baron de Camin." However, the association which the writer wanted to remain in the minds of the readers was not so much that with continental revolutionaries, but the 'souters' of the headline. The object was not to free Ireland but to destroy Catholicism. Those who were responsible for such matter were more devoted to Exeter Hall than Ireland. "We are happy, however" it continued, "to know that the Irish Catholics of London, with very few exceptions, regard it exactly as they do the blasphemous tracts and placards of the proselytising societies."

The *Irish People* defended Bell, "Certain trading journalists," said a leading article entitled 'North and South,' "...have been of late endeavouring to re-kindle the almost extinguished embers of religious bigotry among the Catholics of Ireland." This was done at the behest of the hierarchy, which the "mercenaries of the press" were only too happy to comply with.

A stranger to Ireland and to the character of these persons would be led to suppose from their writings that Presbyterians ought to be shunned and repelled from the ranks of Nationalists whenever they approach them. They do not say this in so many words—that would be going too far—but they certainly imply it. Their repeating over and over again that certain public men are Presbyterians is evidently intended to convey that there is something preposterous in the idea of a Presbyterian being a patriot.

It went on to condemn as 'claptrap' and 'pharisaical balderdash,' the constant references to Bell's former status as a minister, which were intended not only to excite prejudice against him as a Presbyterian but also as one who had left his calling.⁸

Events in Ireland at this time led to the parting of the ways for the Brotherhood and their Dublin paper the *United Irishman* and *Galway American*. The Brotherhood,

⁸ *Irish People* 30/4/1864 p361

as it owned the *Liberator*, was able to determine editorial policy, and remove the editor if he did not satisfy. James Roche was the principal in the *United Irishman*, with whom the Brotherhood merely had an arrangement, not control. In March 1864, a meeting held in the Rotundo to protest at the decision by Dublin Corporation to erect a statue of Prince Albert was broken up by Dublin Fenians, on the orders of James Stephens. Some of the speakers had to flee the stage, among them AM Sullivan, who of course was the object of much of the abuse. The affray was condemned as an attack on free speech, not only by Sullivan's papers, but also by Roche in the *United Irishman*. The identity of purpose between the IRB and the Brotherhood is demonstrated by the subsequent decision of the Brotherhood to sever their connection with Roche and his paper.

G Moran has it that the Rotundo affair as it was known, precipitated the sudden demise of the Brotherhood which he says suddenly ceased to exist in March 1864, as branches went over to the Fenians. As evidence of lack of activity, he notes that reports of branch meetings stopped appearing in the papers. In the case of the *United Irishman* they certainly did. The secretary of the Callan reading room wrote to the *Irish People*⁹ and *Irish Liberator* that at their last meeting they had decided to exclude the *Nation*, *Morning News* and *United Irishman*. It was further resolved that, "all numbers of the above papers at present in the room be consigned to the flames." P. Geraghty of Preston had earlier written to CC Hoey, congratulating the Governing Council on ending their association with the *United Irishman* and on the decision to communicate with branches by circular rather than through the papers as before, as being "more businesslike."¹⁰ It was also, of course more conducive to secrecy. Another writer from England, this time to McDonnell, in discussing the row touched on the personal consequences such affairs could have for journalists who mixed politics with career, as well as the difficulties the Brotherhood had encountered in obtaining an organ of its own in Ireland. Hoey, he wrote, who was on an organising tour in England, would not hurry back as he would no longer get any employment from the *United Irishman*. This would equally apply to McDonnell, as he had been one of the editors of the paper, contributing also to the *Irish People*¹¹. The

⁹ James Cody *Irish People* 2/4/1862 p302

¹⁰ C6 E24 N47 From P Geraghty in Preston to CC Hoey 22/3/64

¹¹ Biography of JP McDonnell dictated by his widow in 1908, part of the JP McDonnell archive Micro 515, P82-5031 to: Library ILL, State Historical Society of Wisconsin,

writer went on,

But how do you manage with regard to your weekly reports? You know that we were always greatly apprehensive for the progress and stability of the Brotherhood if destitute of a National organ in Dublin to represent us. Of course I am aware that the 'Liberator' to a degree supplies the defect. The Brotherhood has been rather unlucky in the instance of choosing papers to represent it. Experience is rather a hard master to learn from, the lessons are very expensive and severe.

He went on to caution McDonnell against being tempted into taking into his confidence any "political literary adventurer." Roche, he wrote, was a scoundrel, O Neil Russell made money from his 'adventure' on the *United Irishman*.¹²

All the while these twin controversies was raging, Bell was on his speaking tour. The results were not encouraging. He was only able to send small amounts back to Hayes in London. McDonnell, Luby and others at the *Irish People* tried to help, publicising his tour. Luby arranged for Bell to give a speech at the Mechanics Institute, Lower Abbey Street, the proceeds of which were to support him personally, but were to lead to bitter disagreement with Hayes in London, who accused Bell of misappropriating funds meant for the *Liberator*. Years later Luby wrote to O'Leary,

You will remember likewise, the lecture, which after our listening to his lecture on Robert Emmet, under the Saint Patrick's Brotherhood patronage of Fitzachary and McDonnell in a small hall over a stable, I think, in a lane off Henrietta St; and after his lectures down in Limerick and elsewhere had failed-I got up for him, partly to serve him, and partly in order to prove to him the strength of our organisation, (Rossa, I think it was, who had sworn him in over in England; anyway he had joined us. You will, finally, recall how I felt dismayed at the wet aspect of the evening, as we walked down to the hall of the Mechanics Institute; how I even apologised to Bell for the anticipated thin audience; then my delight, when I peeped into the hall and saw it densely packed with steaming humanity...¹³

The National Brotherhood were unsure of the *Liberator* by May 1864. Hoey on an organising tour in Britain wrote to McDonnell of the possibility of Keane of the

¹² C6 E22 n62 Dated 13/4/64 to JP McDonnell,

¹³ NLI Luby Mss 333 pp10-11

Glasgow Free Press publishing for them in future, and that he had arranged for its sale in London, appointing two agencies for this purpose. He said the *Liberator* had been sold to an Irishman called Boland who had promised to give them "all reasonable space" in return for their support. Hoey expressed the opinion that it would have been better if the *Liberator* had never existed.¹⁴ The following week he wrote again "I have just heard that this will be the last week of Mr Bell's editorship - that a new man a Mr Eugene O'Cavanagh is coming in on it." Boland had asked Hoey to write something in support of the paper and he had done so.

The change may be for the better - the paper heretofore has been woefully mismanaged. There never has been a proper [unclear] man connected with it from the commencement," and again in the same vein the next day, "Bell is leaving this week. Boland is getting Cavanagh to edit it. I have doubt if the paper can live if it is not better circulated and its business management better attended to.

Bell, in his capacity as London correspondent of the *Irish People* gave his version of events, in which sectarian differences were to the fore. After a sideswipe at the other two 'professedly' Irish papers in London, the *Universal News* and the *Universe* of which it was "needless to speak," he praised his own journal the *National Liberator* which had given up to the present,

no half-hearted support to the cause of Ireland's independence. Your readers, therefore, will learn with regret that not only has the paper last named fallen into new hands, but the cry-raised by knaves who live by pandering to the prejudices of bigots-against its Editor of having formerly been a 'Presbyterian Minister,' has at length accomplished its object, and Mr. Bell has been forced to make way for a more 'orthodox' successor.¹⁵

He wrote a letter to James Quigley of Sheffield which appeared in the *Irish People* the following week. "It would be impossible" he wrote to give all the details which led to his resignation but "...owing to the difficulties in which the proprietors had become involved, two of them were induced to dispose of the paper." He did not blame them, but nor did he approve, his own interest in the paper, "which amounted to £130 (every farthing of which I have lost) was disposed , without either leave or

¹⁴ C6 E24 N19 CCH to JPMcD 31/5/64; 2/6/1864; 3/6/1864.

¹⁵ *Irish People* 11/6/1864 p459

license on my part." Thomas Cashen had invited him back to London, (he was in Ireland at the time) to take up his duties as editor again. He did so on the understanding that everything would be as before, and he would have complete editorial freedom.

Such was the agreement made with me; but it was not kept-no, not for a single week. I found that anything like control over the paper was taken summarily out of my hands, and that communications were either inserted or rejected, not as I approved or disapproved, but according to the opinion and influence of others.

The others being Hayes and the new proprietor Boland.¹⁶ He was further disturbed to learn that the said Boland was not a member of the brotherhood and was in fact "an official of the English government."

You are well aware that for a length of time past, an outcry has been raised against me because at a former period of my life, I had been a 'Presbyterian Minister,' which has been largely and loudly echoed by the League ¹⁷ papers, throughout all the regions of bigotry and traitorism.

He found out that he was to be replaced "In order to conciliate the prejudices of those who are so bitterly and causelessly opposed to me," and his successor had in fact already been appointed. Deciding to jump before he was pushed, he had resigned. Although Bell's last sentence would imply that those "causelessy" opposed to him were from the ranks of his friends, he places ultimate responsibility elsewhere, and though he does not spell it out, they are clearly to be found in the Bishop's palaces of Ireland and Britain.

There are, connected with this transaction, parties behind the scenes, who through the agency of the tools they have employed, have at last succeeded in getting into their hands , a journal whose honest teachings they feared and hated. They are far more dangerous to the cause of Irish nationality than the poor puppets whom they have set to dance around the purlieus of Bell yard. I happened to be impervious to all their arts, neither a coward to be coerced by dull denunciations, nor a fool to be coaxed into treason to my country, by "saintly" solicitations. Therefore I must be got rid of. And this is the key that unlocks the entire riddle Do not imagine that this is a mere personal squabble. It

¹⁶ A letter from Hayes to the *Irish People*, part of which they printed 25/6/1864 confirms this.

¹⁷ Bell is referring to the non-Fenian nationalist press, Sullivan's papers included.

is nothing of the sort. A GREAT PRINCIPLE is involved in the transaction, one which lies at the very root of Ireland's independence. Are men of all creeds to be attracted to the national ranks, or are men of all creeds but one to be driven away? That is the question. It is for the Irish people to answer it. And let them not deceive themselves, on their answer depends their country's rise or ruin. My poor concerns are nothing, but this is everything.¹⁸

There was a great deal of bitterness at the sale of the paper to Boland and the ousting of Bell as editor. The *Liberator* was owned by shareholders and some of the branches wrote to the *Irish People* complaining that their interest had been sold without their permission and that they were therefore having nothing more to do with it, would not support it by raising funds, nor would they take it into their reading rooms.¹⁹ Accusation led to counter-accusation-an anonymous letter appeared in the *Liberator* of 22/6/1864 accusing Bell of calling the members of the Governing Council in Dublin 'men of the lowest grade, which Bell indignantly denied to McDonnell, blaming Hayes, "I never used such an expression nor anything in any sense equivalent to it since I had existence." Hayes, he said, believed he had misappropriated the money from his Mechanics Institute lecture, "which was got up for me" and offered to repay it if the sponsors said differently. Clearly exasperated, he went on to accuse 'honest Thomas Hayes' of gaining the prize of the gold watch by forgery²⁰ A few days later he wrote again, having recovered his composure. He again puts the dispute down to sectarianism

The moment the ugly devil of sectarian animosity is introduced, that moment the principle of true nationality perishes...One fact stands out and stares you in the face. From the editorship of the paper, which is the acknowledged organ of your Brotherhood, one gentleman was removed because he was not a Catholic and another was put in his place because he was a member of that communion. (Bell's underlining) He complained that the governing council have either not said a word in his defence or else actively encouraged his maligners.²¹

¹⁸ *Irish People* 11/6/1864 p459

¹⁹ *Irish People* 25/6/1864 p492, from Bolton and Sheffield branches. *Irish People* 18/6/1864 p 476 James Quigley from Sheffield sent in a letter from Bell written on 8/6/1864, giving Bell's account.

²⁰ Bell to McDonnell 1/7/1864 quoted from T Bell O-p.cit. p269.

²¹ C6 E24 N 38 David Bell letters to JP McDonnell 7/7/1864

Hawthorne, the London Brother who had fallen out with Hayes and Cashen in May had written at the time²²

but if you only knew the ill-feeling that the managers of the '*Liberator*' have created in the Brotherhood in London you would be surprised before the paper was started we were all unanimity ever since we have been dissension and the only end I can see is the '*Liberator*' passing in to other hands or else its extinction.

The first part of his prediction came about just after he uttered it, the second was to follow. In July, Thomas O'Neil Russell, London Fenian and member of the Governing Council of the NBSP, wrote to McDonnell that although there had been faults on both sides, Bell had been unfairly deprived of the editorship and, "The *Liberator* is paying dearly for the indiscretion of its proprietors, for I fear its circulation has fallen greatly away."²³

The bitter disagreements which marked the paper's existence, continued long after it had ceased to function, and it is here, in a series of articles in the *Irishman* in the winter of 1868-9 that we find the explanation of the final disappearance of the *Liberator*. JF O'Donnell, writing in the *Irishman* as the 'Irishman in London' (a post he had taken over from Denis Holland when the latter had gone to America in 1867) became embroiled in an argument with the supporters of Thomas Hayes over some remarks he had written on the occasion of Hayes' release from prison. In the course of the dispute, in which he was accused of being no friend to a man who had sacrificed much for his country, and had "staked his little fortune in order to establish here a national Irish journal for spreading the seed of Irish nationality" which had ultimately failed, "but not before it left its mark."²⁴ O'Donnell replied that people other than Hayes had made sacrifices for the Irish *Liberator*, including the case of Mr-, who was a government employee, but a patriot nonetheless and had "all but beggared himself...to keep the paper alive." He claimed that

²² C6 E20 N18 undated from C Hawthorne to JP McDonnell Discussing May 17th meeting.

²³ Thos O'Neil Russell to JP McDonnell 2/7/1864 quoted from T Bell Op.cit p269

²⁴ *Irishman* 26/12/1868 p409

a scoundrel, who is never done raving of the good old cause, and conventional nonsense of that sort, cut out the strongest passages of the newspaper, forwarded them to the Head of the department in which M was engaged, with a letter in which the said Head was asked whether it was decent or politic to allow a purveyor of such seditious teaching to serve the Queen.²⁵

Mr.- was given the alternative of job or paper and as he was elderly and expecting a pension, chose the former, cut his losses and gave up his association with the *Liberator*. In keeping with the common practice of not naming names, O'Donnell does not say who either victim or scoundrel was.²⁶ However, we can assert that Boland was the former. Part of the objection to him it will be remembered, was that he was a government official. So, it would seem someone connected with the *Liberator*, and who was still prominent in nationalist circles, had forced Boland to cease his proprietorship by such underhand means. Hayes had alleged in the midst of his row with Bell that he was engaged in something similar, at Boland's expense, "Mr Bell tries to bring this man under the notice of the government or otherwise to become felon-setter."²⁷ Bell was already in America in 1869, and JF O'Donnell was writing in the present tense, so that would exclude him. It is very unlikely he would involve himself in something like that in any case. Hayes was probably referring to the letter Bell had written to James Quigley which had appeared in the same paper the previous week, in which Bell had said Boland was "an official of the English Government."

The plot, if possible, thickens still further- at one point Hayes, it will be remembered, wrote to McDonnell that the printer had been bribed by the priests and the *Universal News* people. Hoey wrote to McDonnell that Boland was bringing in Eugene O'Cavanagh to edit the *Liberator*.²⁸ A man named Patrick Boland, who worked for the GPO was a director of the *Universal News*, and John Eugene O'Cavanagh was company secretary, editor and one of the founders of the paper. If the Boland and O'Cavanagh of the *Liberator* were the same people as those connected to the *Universal News*, and it seems reasonable to assume they were, are

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Irishman* 2/1/1869 p428

²⁷ *Irish People* 25/6/1864 p492

²⁸ 2/6/64 CCH to JPMcDonnell Fenian Briefs C6 E24 N19

we to believe Bell that Boland's acquisition of the paper represented a victory for its enemies, enemies moreover, who were acting at the behest of some unknown clerics? Hayes and Hoey of the Governing Council, both Fenians, neither of whom displayed an undue attachment to the Church certainly did not think so. Boland became the lessee for a short time in 1866-7,²⁹ during which period CC Hoey became editor. If the paper was taken over as part of a plot hatched by those at the *Universal News*, further irony is added some years later in 1867-8, when Christopher Clinton Hoey became the editor of the *Universal News*. In any case, as we have seen, the *Universal News* was not a paper like the *Universe* which had consistently followed the dictates of its religious rather than its political conscience. Its repudiation of the NBSP could be seen as driven by pragmatism rather than ideology or religious belief. Not all of those connected with the paper may have been happy it had chosen to follow the prevailing winds, and Boland and O'Cavanagh may have been of this mind. Bell had come on the scene after the split with the NBSP, and perhaps saw the *Universal News* and those connected with it simply as enemies, which was not the case.

The coup de grace was administered by Hayes himself. In his letter to O'Donovan Rossa in July 1864 (printed in full on p 218), he wrote that he was once more, following the forced exit of the hapless Boland, in charge. He asks for advice,

-now I want to have your opining as A friend and A fellow worker in the cawse whether it would be Advisable for me to let it drop or continue it or would it be worth while for you to send some person to London to conduct it and I would give it up to you to carry out the cawse we are working for

He himself, according to another letter he had written to the *Irish People* and which was one of those the Crown used against him, had no means to support the paper.

the cort has maid a bankrupt of me and Mr. English the cort of bankruptsy sold our furniture all the means we had is gone³⁰

²⁹ 29/10/1866-20/7/1867. JF O'Donnell who had been editor for a short time in 1866 had left by the beginning of 1867, and though there is no evidence of Hoey's connection to the *Universal News* until 21/9/1867, it is in all likelihood he who took over.

³⁰ Dated 20/6/1864 found in the offices of the *Irish People*, in the report of Hayes' trial in the *Constitution or Cork Advertiser*, 2/1/1866

However, if advised to carry on, presumably he would have done. At this stage, the *Irish People* had, in the words of AM Sullivan, "swept all before it amongst the Irish in England and in Scotland", "almost annihilating" the *Nation* in Britain in the process,³¹ and Hayes was probably advised to let the paper fall. Its usefulness, like that of the organisation of which it was the mouthpiece was over.

³¹ Sullivan AM Opcit. p249

3.4 Working Men in Their Sunday Suits

Those closely involved with the *Irish Liberator*, would appear to be typical of those who joined the National Brotherhood of St Patrick and the IRB generally. We have already seen references to the 'lower class' nature of the members and the leadership. A glance at the list of subscribers in the Memorandum of Association,¹ shows a preponderance of artisans and small dealers. They were not the bottom of the heap, but not far from it, occupations such as tailoring were sweated trades with terrible conditions and pay. This is the only such evidence that exists, there is no list of shareholders in the files at the PRO, as there is for the *Universal News*, presumably because the conductors of the paper never produced one. To read anything into that omission is probably speculation but two reasons spring to mind. The *Liberator* was not run along the same business lines as the *Universal News*. It had no solicitors, bankers, etc., and those who ran it may not have been fully aware of, or interested in the legal requirements involved. Alternatively, some of those happy to support the paper may not have been so happy to have given their names and addresses to the authorities. Both papers were set up, in theory at least, by groups of like-minded people, but whereas the aims of the *Universal News*—the twin goals of furthering Catholic and Irish ambitions, were rather broad in scope, they were at least legal. To many, even within the Catholic community in England, those involved with the *Irish Liberator* were not even respectable.

Though the subscribers to the *Irish Liberator* and the *Universal News* were from very similar social backgrounds, Nicholas English, for example, held shares in both, there are differences. There are no 'gentlemen' in the list of supporters of the *Liberator*, no solicitors, no architects. Middle class Catholics had followed the advice of the clergy and either shunned the NBSP and its London journal completely, or kept their support covert. The IRB, in whose ranks were to be found many of those closely involved in the paper, had also to a large extent, shunned the middle classes. Michael Davitt, a Fenian gunrunner and founder of the Land League, wrote that this was deliberate policy on the part of the first leader of the IRB James Stephens. In this, he was influenced by his experiences of the 'sorry business' that

¹ PRO BT 31 823 646c

JIC Clarke in his autobiography gives us a rare personal description of a meeting of the Brotherhood in London.

One Sunday evening in 1861, after many hesitations, Clancey and I walked some four miles across to the East End where the Irishman said a branch of Saint Patrick's Brotherhood held its meetings. We found there some twenty men, evidently working men in their Sunday best, listening to an inflamed speaker, named O'Donovan, with a flat as though broken nose. We two boys were received with something like amused deference, that we had found the place, that we had come so far, that we had come at all. O'Donovan, we learned was a shoemaker. The rest were mostly tailors; one rather fashionably dressed with a nonchalant, knowing air was a 'cutter,' something great among tailors. They harked back to '48 and the 'cutter,' commenting on the Society, hinted that there was something else, 'something real' to be had, and he could soon lay his hands on it. That was all. On our way home we tried to tell ourselves that we liked it. We even attended several of the Sunday meetings, even going to other parts of London-but it was not inspiring. The men were specimens of an outworn idea. The knowledge that the Old Cause was stirring in its grave was the best it gave us.³

The description is interesting in a number of ways. First of all, the 'inflamed' shoemaker O'Donovan with the broken nose. On the list of shareholders, is one John O'Donovan, bootmaker and leather dealer, who, it was reported in the *Liberator* of 21/11/1863 was to give a speech at the next meeting of the Slievenamon branch of the Brotherhood in Tottenham Court Road. The speaker could well be him. Was the 'fashionable cutter,' who hinted he could get 'something real,' merely bragging, or was he the IRB wolf among the innocent lambs of Saint Patrick? The class composition of the Brotherhood is confirmed in this instance, and we can also see a certain condescension in Clarke's attitude—he was a lawyer's son and a civil servant with literary ambitions, the 'amused deference', the discomfort of the humble at the appearance of two young 'gentlemen.' Clarke later joined the IRB, which though it was also composed mainly of artisans and labourers, shop boys etc., it was led, initially, at least, Stephens' thoughts on such matters notwithstanding, by men—TC Luby, John O'Leary, Charles J Kickham—who were "in the technical sense" gentlemen. Their nationalist politics meant that though they did not ally themselves with their class, and were in this respect viewed as outcast in some circles, their new associa-

³ Clarke JIC (1926) *My Life and Memories*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co. p25-6

tions were not unproblematical. Luby later reminded O'Leary, the most 'aristocratic' Fenian of all, that the social mix of the movement was not always to his liking.⁴

Those at the meeting were "working men in their Sunday best," the respectable working classes, who attended lectures, read and discussed the newspapers and tried to improve themselves. G Moran has written of the various clubs, debating societies and language classes which the Brotherhood set up in Lancashire. Branches met in pubs but there was a strong teetotal element both in fenianism in general and in the Brotherhood in particular. The *Liberator* carried an article from D Corrigan of the London Catholic Teetotal Union, who were evidently not concerned that an association with such a paper would lead them to being contaminated by revolutionary ideas. Quite the reverse-temperance could alter the destiny of the nation-in the same issue was an article on 'Temperance: An Aid to the Achievement of Irish Nationality.' Patrick Kelly, Corresponding Secretary of the Bolton (Emmet) Branch - an active branch by the sound of it, informed the rest of the Brotherhood that though they met at the Stork tavern, they had resolved to find premises unconnected to a public house. He also urged on members the study of history and to that end announced a series of lectures and various other notices, amongst which was the opening of a library and an Historical reading and Mutual Improvement class.⁵ This was, as Moran⁶ has noted, exactly the same type of activity, and aimed at exactly the same kind of people, as the Catholic Young Men's Society, founded by the Brotherhood's tormentor in chief, the Rev Richard B O'Brien of Newcastle West, Limerick. The CYMS aimed "to extend the spirit of religion and brotherly love through public lectures, private classes, a library and a reading room, " the NBSP, though the means were the same, had other objects in mind.

The kind of thing O'Brien wanted to keep from 'respectable' Irishmen, was the *Liberator's* stock in trade, like the following letter from Myles Gerald Ronan, entitled, 'Our Outposts, Our Allies, and Ourselves,' which contained a mixture of nationalist

⁴ Comerford RV (1981) pp 239-40 quotes Luby that O'Leary once expressed regret that those in the movement "belonged so much to the riff raff"; (1985) pp 166-7 on changes in the social makeup of the later leadership which was drawn more from those educated in the National schools.

⁵ *Irish Liberator*, 28/11/1863 p132

⁶ Moran, G Op.cit. p218, p229

rhetoric, class antagonism and hints of rebellion—political agitation and constitutional politics, were criticised as "Aristocratic ambitions" which had "dwindled into shadows....'Reserved seats' and exclusive—trading have been tried." Ireland, he wrote, "to be enfranchised must become nationalised." What was needed for this to be brought into effect was "a close and puissant union of the representative power of the people." The Brotherhood had survived through adversity, and they now knew their friends from their enemies.

Support external, as well as internal, the National Brotherhood have, notwithstanding the wanton warfare waged against it. Though it counts its numbers by thousands, a contingent nigh as strong as itself, if not stronger exists among Irishmen throughout the United Kingdom; allies, brave and true; supporters, stern and strong; auxiliaries able and useful; allies who are not mere enthusiasts but proved and practical sympathisers. There is not a young Irishman of national feeling within the four seas, between the ages of sixteen or thirty five, but whose principles are not those of the National Brotherhood, and who is not a rebel at heart and a revolutionist in purpose, and would be in effect did opportunity offer.⁷

⁷ *Irish Liberator* 21/11/1863 p124-5

3.5 Rebels at heart and revolutionists in purpose

Who were these 'allies brave and true', poised for the call which would impel them into action in support of the NBSP? In very many instances, they were the Brotherhood's own members, only wearing different hats, for apart from their humble station in life, what distinguishes those connected with the *Liberator* is their close involvement in IRB. It is not possible to say they all, or even a majority if they were Fenians, simply because the evidence does not exist. However, out of twelve shareholders, four were, or were to become, not just members of the IRB, but Centres. They were Thomas Hayes, Nicholas English, John Michael Blake and Maurice S Walsh. Bell the editor was a very senior IRB man, appointed to the IRB provisional council in 1865 as was JP McDonnell, who was described in 1866 at the time of his arrest as Stephens' "sheet anchor."¹ Hoey too, was a Fenian. Hayes and English were both centres and presidents of their respective branches of the Brotherhood, whether simultaneously or consecutively it is not clear. The two Brotherhoods were intricately entwined then, how, only the initiated knew. Hoey, who was, and did, at one point wrote of Bell, "Bell is not inclined to do much for the Nominal Brotherhood."²

By 1864 both Fenian and NBSP were being used synonymously. The paper itself, though it was officially the organ of the NBSP, was from the beginning often identified, at least by its detractors as being the Fenian journal in London. Bell and McDonnell both wrote for the *Irish People*, and it was supportive of the *Liberator*, until the row with Bell. The *Liberator* therefore was at the centre of the two organisations open and secret. It has even been speculated that the reports of the branches as they appeared in the newspapers were coded messages. One from the O'Connell branch in Stallybridge, detailing a dispute between the local Brotherhood and clergy-the Brothers wanted to hold a fund-raising tea party, the fathers wanted to stop them, "could be a cunning announcement of secret recruiting and rallying-cry to Fenians against repressive clerics, or it could be the noisy rust of a parish pump."³

¹ Bell T Op.cit. p270 ; McDonnell M, Op.cit. pp 2-3

² C6 E24 19 From CC Hoey to JP McDonnell, undated but mid 1864, after the paper was sold to Boland.

³ Edwards & Storey, Op.cit.p164

The only obvious connection by profession with literature or the newspaper business was the sub-editor Maurice S Walsh, who was also a compositor. A Thomas Walsh a boot-maker of the same address was also a shareholder. Maurice had attended St Patrick's,⁴ a Christian Brothers School in London and was a Fenian centre. He toured England for the paper, and was a firebrand speaker, which caused some opposition to his presence in some quarters. A correspondent from Sheffield (No2) branch wrote 16/1/1864

The announcing of a lecture to be delivered by Mr. Maurice Sarsfield Walsh of London... has caused some agitation among the different classes of Irishmen in this town for the last two days. The wolf has got among the lambs which causes them to be running hither and thither in search of the right fold, we had one of these lambs in our fold last night (Sunday) and by his manner and behaviour I think that their shepherd is neglecting his duty.

Long after the demise of the *Liberator*, in the spring of 1865, the *Universal News* wrote in an article about the young Irishmen living in London,

We have no political 'organisation.' The word cannot be conscientiously applied to all or any of the fragments or knots of societies which a year or two ago were to be heard in every London district. Today they do not exist or they have withdrawn from the glare of publicity.⁵

Some of the individuals connected to the *Liberator*, who had formed the fragments and knots were soon to find themselves painfully exposed to scrutiny. In the meantime they formed a core of dedicated nationalists, promoting the cause.

Nicholas English, shareholder and president of No 5 Soho branch was arrested on the word of an informer called James Mullany. Mullany made a number of statements in January and February of that year, in the aftermath of the Clerkenwell explosion, which claimed nine civilian lives. Mullany was a tailor, and had once employed English. Mullany implicated English deeply in the conspiracy to free Ricard O'Sullivan Burke from Clerkenwell gaol, saying he was a Centre responsible for rais-

⁴ Clarke, JIC, Op.cit. p17, picture p44

⁵ *Universal News* 1/4/1865 p9

ing funds for arms, and that he stored and manufactured 'Greek fire' at his home, though he said that because he was lame, English was not the one who wheeled the barrel of gunpowder to the prison wall. Faced with the prospect of the hangman's noose, English broke and in his turn made statements to the police. Not all his statements are present in the files at the PRO but those which are show a man who while attempting to save his own neck, was perhaps trying to limit the extent of his betrayal, naming people whom he knew had escaped. In the event, his evidence was not used in the eventual trial of Michael Barrett, the Fenian convicted of the Clerkenwell blast, who suffered the unhappy distinction of being the last person to be publicly hanged.⁶ Only one other shareholder, John Michael Blake, was what we would now call a white collar worker. He was also implicated in Fenianism in 1868 by Mullany the informer, who said,

There is another centre named Blake, a clerk, I think, in the City. He used to write for the "Nation" paper in 1848, he is a thin, small man, sallow complexion about 5 foot 5 1/2 in height. I don't know his residence.⁷

Blake was arrested, but later released for lack of evidence.

All this time, Thomas Hayes was in Dartmoor, having been found guilty of treason felony in Cork in January 1866, condemned by the letters he wrote concerning the *Liberator*, long after it had ceased to be. Seized in the offices of the *Irish People*, in 1865, they were used against him in his trial. As was the testimony of an informer. A pike-maker from Cork called Timothy Hegarty was produced to swear that he had attended numerous meetings with the Hayes in London, after he had fled there on the discovery of pikes at his forge. Hayes had told him the Fenians were very strong in London, "they were ready to go to Ireland to fight at any moment." They had met "at Trafalgar Square and I was with him also at a meeting in Threadneedle Street... This meeting took place in the street..." Hayes had tried to find work for him and had given him money. A detective in plain clothes, WH Campbell, also testified that Hayes had confided to him that he had on one occasion refused to give the names of his Bs to a man called Meagher from Dublin who had claimed to be one of a

⁶ PRO MEPO 3/1788, 13/1/1868, 3/2/1868.

⁷ PRO MEPO 3/1788 statement by James Mullany 18/1/1868

council of three because the man did not have his token with him and that the "Captain" (Stephens) had told him never to do so in any case "and he for one would abide by the captain's orders." He also spoke of a meeting in London at the Thirteen Cantons public house in Silver Street at which Stephens was expected but when he had arrived there he had spotted policemen in "coloured clothes" and he and another man had waited at either end of the street to warn the captain and any others of the danger.

His connection with the *Irish Liberator* was also mentioned at his trial, Campbell testified that Hayes told him he had lost £200 by it. Also that "he had as fine a circle of Bs as were in London," and that they were ready to act at any time they were called on.⁸ Hayes' lawyer, Isaac Butt argued at his trial that the sole evidence of the Crown were the letters. He was arrested, Butt maintained because a letter he sent to the *Irish People* dealing with his dispute with the editor of the *Liberator*, David Bell, was discovered in the raid. All that it and other letters proved was that he was a member of the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, which was a legal organisation. The *Irish People* which they all knew was the Fenian's paper, took Bell's side against Hayes. The rest of the evidence was fabricated, especially that of the policeman Campbell, and in any case should not be relied upon without documentary evidence to support it. He further argued that the case should have been tried in London.⁹ To no avail-the purpose for the Crown of moving Hayes to Ireland for trial was to better secure a conviction.

Hayes was, said Judge Keogh, with the near-irresistible assumption of the bourgeois that one of lesser degree could not possibly know his own mind,

a melancholy example of the worst evils of this conspiracy. In his own person he constituted an instance of the value of the Constitution and of the connection under which we live. He was a mechanic...belonging to an art which would have given him ample remuneration in the capital of the empire...instead of applying his mind to the honest pursuit of the craft he understood, he allowed himself to be duped into the starting of a newspa-

⁸ Extracts from Hayes' trial as quoted here appeared in the London *Times* of Wednesday 6/1/1866 p6. Curiously, the informer Hegarty gave Hayes' London address as 32, Little Coram St which is where he claimed to have met him. Hayes' address was 24 Little Coram St. This could be a misprint in the *Times*, or a discrepancy nobody noticed at the time.

⁹ Butt's arguments are taken from the report of the trial as it appeared in the *Irishman*, 6/1/1866 p436

per to inculcate doctrines subversive of every right principle, of all law and religious and moral obligations and of peace authority and good order, and chalked out a course which had led to his disgrace and ruin...He was, indeed, duped by those who led him to believe in the most absurd and impossible ideas, to rush madly into contact with the mighty power of Britain.

The "insulted majesty of justice" gave him ten years' penal servitude.

Hayes served three years in Portland and in Dartmoor, where the Fenian prisoners worked on the Farm, described by one inmate thus,

Here they were set to work on the marsh, digging deep drains, and carrying the wet peat in their arms, stacking it near the roadways for removal. For months they toiled in the drains, which were only two feet wide, and sunk ten feet in the morass. It was a labour too hard for brutes, the half-starved men, weakened by long confinement, standing water from a foot to two feet deep, and spading the heavy peat out of the narrow cutting over their heads.¹⁰

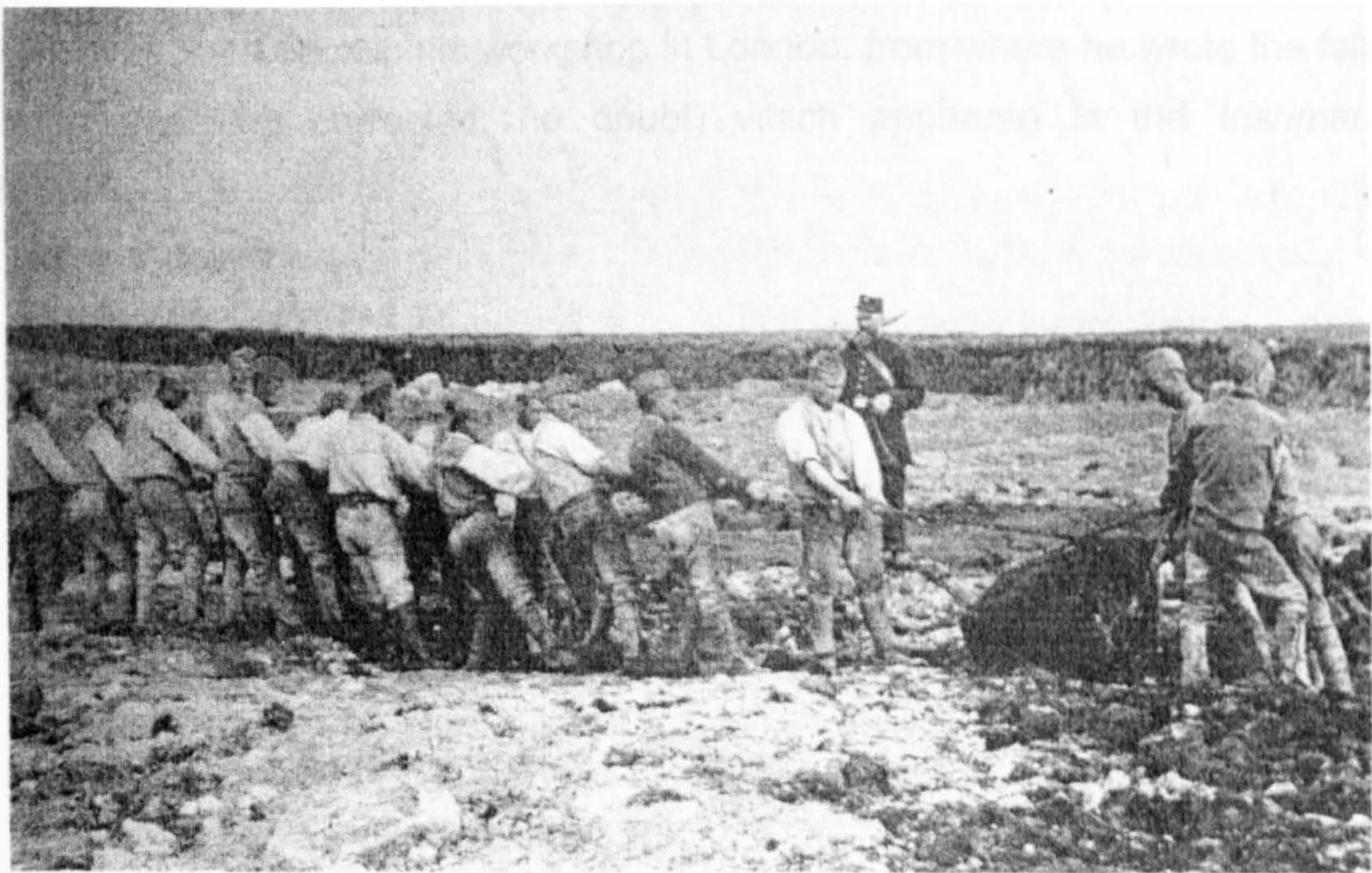


Fig. 36 Convicts reclaiming land on the Farm, Dartmoor in the 1890s.

¹⁰ John Boyle O'Reilly, Fenian soldier, transported to Australia, escaped and eventually became the editor of the *Boston Pilot*, quoted from James Jeffrey Roche *Life of John Boyle O'Reilly: His Life, Poems and Speeches* (Philadelphia PA: John McVey, 1891), p 56

Hayes survived imprisonment. His life as a wheelwright served him well—he was used to hard labour, his prior occupation would have inured him to some of the hardships of a system which broke the health of many.

Mutual support had long been an integral part of Irish peasant life and was incorporated into their responses to their new conditions in the cities of Britain and America. Other groups, journalists, trades unionists, political activists, could count on the support of their fellows when they fell foul of the law. Hayes was one of many to benefit from this. JP McDonnell, who had himself been imprisoned in 1865-6, to be released for lack of evidence, campaigned to raise funds for JM Blake's defence when he was arrested.¹¹ Blake, in his turn is found in the chair of a fundraising meeting held in 1868¹² to help Thomas Hayes get back on his feet, following his release from prison. Both the *Irishman* in Dublin and the *Universal News* in London, (now that it was controlled by Hayes' old ally CC Hoey), helped to raise money for him. He was released under licence in December 1868. Some prisoners were released on the condition that they left the United Kingdom, but Hayes was allowed to remain. He was soon back in his workshop in London, from where he wrote the following letter, (spelling corrected, no doubt) which appeared in the *Irishman* of 2/1/1869,

Honest Thomas Hayes

To the Ladies Committee

24, Little Coram Street

24/12/1868

I wish to return thanks to you the friends
in general and the public at large for the
support they gave my wife and children
during my imprisonment. I have started
work, and have every prospect, with God's
help to be soon as well off as ever I was—
I remain with the most profound respect,
Thomas Hayes.

The last we hear of him is an advert in the *Universal News* for his business, Thomas Hayes 24, Wilstead Ct., Euston Road Coach & Velocipede wheelwright.

¹¹ *Universal News* 18/7/68 p10-11

¹² *Irishman* 26/12/1868 p409

3.6 Interpreting the Liberator—Cobdenites Masquerading as Fenians

So the *Liberator* failed in the midst of the most unfraternal in-fighting and intrigue. Its detractors would certainly have seen this as moral lesson—those who live by conspiracy, die by conspiracy. Those involved with the paper clearly thought it worth fighting for. However messily it turned out, the Brotherhood obviously had high hopes of their own journal. What might they have wanted from it? First of all, it was a question of control. Those papers such as the *Nation* in Ireland, or English Catholic papers such as the *Weekly Register* that were in the hands of political opponents could not be expected to publicise their objectives. Nor could papers like the *Universe* and the *Northern Press*, which although aimed at Irish readers, wrote to their catholicity more than their nationality. Papers were susceptible to outside pressure, namely from the church. In England, where the distribution of Irish papers was of a clerical nature, clerical pressure was easy to apply and keenly felt. In Ireland, where there inevitably would have been a greater concentration of readers for whatever political creed, and thus less susceptibility, clerical pressure not to handle some papers was also evident.

To the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, the *Irish Liberator* was an essential, perhaps the most essential part of their organisation in Britain. A leading article¹ set out what the Brotherhood saw as the role of their new journal. It was first of all, to be a vehicle of political instruction. Those directing the Brotherhood had to ensure that "No branch-provincial or metropolitan should be without a thorough knowledge of the 'situation' as it is called." For this,

a thorough acquaintance with, and a watchful vigilance over, every incident of political moment taking place in Ireland is requisite. The state of the country, and the tendency of foreign politics to influence the existing state of things, both as regards English administration, commercial depression, industrial decay, and popular demoralisation, through Castle or Viceregal influence within the limits of the Fatherland, should never be lost sight of; and all information, such as concerns these subjects, should be made known to every member of the Brotherhood throughout the three kingdoms.²

¹ *Irish Liberator* 14/11/1863 p104-5

² *Ibid.*

The *Liberator* was also to have an organisational role. The first duty of the Central Committee in Dublin was to ensure the establishment of branches of the movement all over the country, which given the numbers and spread of Irish present in Britain was of easy accomplishment. "The Irish element is a mighty one in England and in Scotland. In our large cities and towns, in little counties, it decides contested elections, and municipal battles for civic honours." The writer continued, unable to resist the temptation at taking a swipe at opponents even while praising them,

It beats down bigotry and supports the church in all the might of her spotless grandeur (though, God knows for that it often gets but a scurvy return); and surely an element so powerful to accomplish these things, can and ought to be strong enough to support our grand association of nationalists.

Even while it is praising the 'spotless grandeur' of the church it can't avoid a dig. This 'grand Association of Nationalists,' "can only exist by means of local and parochial tributaries, all flowing harmoniously together and meeting together at a common source" which was the Central Committee.

And now we come to the main question as to how or through what sources the accumulated body of information, instruction and thought is to be sent forth to the Brotherhood at large, in all the diversified parts of its organic combination. The answer to this is as clear as common sense or experience could make it. It can only be done by means of a public organ or journal properly conducted, vigorously written, scrupulously truthful, and enjoying the confidence of the entire Brotherhood. Without the existence of such a journal, let each brother remember, there exists not a particle of a chance of success.³

A third role was that of an organ of political propaganda, refuting the arguments of its opponents and publicising its own. No one, the article said, would have heard of the Polish people's struggles without a press, no one would have heard of their sufferings, of the atrocities committed against them by the Russians. The following week, another article returned to the same theme, of the role of the *Liberator*,

³ Ibid.

Take for instance the present. Without its existence, how could we make known one of our meetings, one of our thoughts? Could we defend one of our principles, or support one of our movements? No! The enemy has closed all his journals against us. He hoped to crush us by that means, but he has failed. So long as the Irish Liberator lives, so long—despite calumny, slander, malignity and persecution so long shall the Brotherhood prosper; but let the Irish Liberator go "to the tomb of the Capulets" and then, in anticipation of the death of the Brotherhood we may write of it 'Requiescat in pace!'⁴

Of the short run of the paper, only seven issues remain to give us an idea of its character. A great deal of its effort was, as we have seen, directed at justifying its own existence and sparring with the church and its journalistic allies, which, as with the Fenian movement in general must have been much to the satisfaction of the government. This aside, it was a radical paper, in both Irish and English terms.

The land question was of prime importance, and it was argued in "international, historical and vehement terms," under both Holland and Bell. 'Landlordism' was condemned in both editorial articles and in fiction, the Famine and its aftermath being the focus of both. In both too, is the image of America, the Great Republic of the West, the young giant that provided refuge for the Famine Irish and would challenge England's pre-eminence in the world. Bell's journey to Fenianism was through the land issue, not through a romantic love of an idealised, literary nationality but by way of concern for the poor, by a desire to alleviate the conditions they had to endure and outrage at the havoc that had been visited upon them in the years of starvation. RV Comerford has written, "The dominant feeling left behind by the famine in Ireland was not a desire for self-government but a sense of embarrassment and inadequacy."⁵ True, people felt ashamed at their own degradation, a spectacle of filth, disease and helplessness which had been paraded before the world, but what the Famine deaths and immigration also left, was a deep-seated anger and a determination to do something about it. The young men and women of the 1860s had been born in the Famine years, those slightly older remembered it. Bell, Hayes, Holland, Hoey,⁶ O'Brennan and others who wrote or were connected

⁴ *Irish Liberator* 21/11/1863 p121-2

⁵ Comerford, RV (1985) *The Fenians in Context*. Dublin: Wolfhound p21

⁶ Christopher Clinton Hoey wrote for many papers and was last editor of the *Universal News*; Martin A O'Brennan owned and edited the *Connaught Patriot* and made two attempts at founding a paper in London called the *Irish News* in 1866 and 1867.

with the Irish press in England had lived through the horrors of those years. They had stared, if not fallen into the abyss and their lived experience rather than any desire for social acceptance or to while away long evenings in convivial company impelled them to follow the path they did. It was the unjust distribution of land, the great signifier of which had been the Famine which was the cause of political instability in Ireland, and which provided much of the subject-matter of the nationalist press and the motivation of those who wrote for it. More than this, it was the principle cause of Fenianism. This was recognised at the time. Bell, though he is not named, is the clergyman in question in the following quotation from a very able English Catholic newspaper.

A study of the popular press in America as well as in Ireland, will show how much the many abortive efforts to deal with the land question have caused confidence in the good intentions of the Legislature to give place to despair, and even to suspicion of an irreconcilable hostility. Expectations have been raised only to be disappointed; and thus it has come to pass that a Presbyterian clergyman, prominent in the agitation for tenant-right, has become one of the Executive Council of the 'Irish Republic.' Hope deferred makes a nation desperate.⁷

What else but memories of the stench of rotting potatoes during the blight underlies the following from the *Irish Liberator*, on the political disillusion in Ireland through the decade of the 1850s?

In the physical world there are terms of time when all operations of life are, as it were, checked, when the creative power of nature seems exhausted, and temporary putrefaction and decay set in. At these times the husbandman knows there is nothing for him to do but stand still until the hidden chemical processes of the earth and the changes of season bring round the time when he can go to work with safety, and with confidence that his labours will be rewarded with success...."A process of moral decomposition and change analogous to the alterations of the chemical world, has been going on in the country and the people. We have been powerless to check it or alter its course. All that good men could do was stand by like the husbandman and watch; and when the season of rottenness and putrefaction is past-when the moral world begins to feel the young dawning of a new spring-honest and patriotic men then find the time is come when they may labour hopefully for the country, and, with confidence in the future, lay the seeds of a bountiful harvest.⁸

⁷ *The Chronicle* 30/3/1867. p7

⁸ *Irish Liberator* 21/11/1863 p121

On the same page, an article entitled "The Blight They Call Prosperity," a bitter attack on the supposed benefits political economy was bringing to Ireland, focused on the price that had and was still being paid for it in the famine dead and in emigration. Taking the province of Ulster, "happy, comfortable, 'Protestant' manufacturing Ulster" as an example of the least affected region of the country, it surveyed the cost in human life and suffering of the previous fifteen years. Armagh had lost 50,000 out of 230,00 people, Monaghan 60,000 out of 200,000. Of Cavan,

some fifteen years gone by, there lived and toiled, and wept, and rejoiced, as the world went with them, three hundred and forty three thousand men, women and children; when the famine had passed over, and 1851 came around, it was discovered that of that mass of human beings, half had been swept away. There is a story to tell-there is a road to travel over to get to prosperity! Half of the people who lived in that county fifteen years ago were, by the combined agency of Irish landlordism and English legislation, blasted as with a deadly blight.⁹



Fig. 37 After the Ejectment, *Illustrated London News*, 16/12/1848. The text ran:
 "The ditch side, the dripping rain, and the cold sleet are the covering of the wretched outcast the moment the cabin is tumbled over him; for who dare give him shelter or protection from 'the pelting of the pitiless storm?' Who has the temerity to afford him the ordinary rites of hospitality, when the warrant has been signed for his extinction?"

⁹ Ibid.

Under Bell, the paper called for the union of the workers of Ireland and England, praised Cobden and Bright, supported the North in the US civil war, and condemned John Mitchel for his support of slavery. Mitchel, 1848 veteran, was transported to Australia, escaped to America, supported the South. As one of the leading Irish nationalist figures, he was guaranteed a hearing in any Irish publication but Bell took pains to expose the hypocrisy of advocating freedom for oneself and slavery for another. The *Liberator* of 9/1/1864 carried a long article from Mitchell extolling the position of the Confederacy, and warning those Irish who fought for the Union that they would be cast aside like the negroes after they had served their purpose. On the next page Bell replied at length, in an article entitled, "Irish Patriots and Southern Slaveholders." He said of the war,

It is truly a conflict of powers that are invested with herculean proportions. The number of men that are enlisted, the enormous sums expended, the sacrifice of life"... The interests at stake were of the highest, "involving as they do, not only as they do the liberty of the coloured race, but the rights of labour, and the cause of freedom, and the power and prestige of the great republic of the west.¹⁰

Those Irish who fight for the North, unlike those Irishmen who in the past like Sarsfield, fought abroad and regretted their blood was not shed for Ireland, are fighting for Ireland, for freedom and for justice. Mitchell wanted the British government to ban any more emigration from Ireland in order to stop Irishmen from swelling the ranks of the Northern army. But it was a fight against slavery, of which he had to say

Anything more monstrous and abominable the world has rarely had the fortune to witness. If these negroes are human beings;- if almighty God has given to them the same rights of life and liberty to the fruits of labour and the pursuit of happiness that he has given to us;- if they have been born under the flag of freedom, which the hands of Washington unfurled, and which never ought to have waved over the head of a slave, then under what pretext—for he will not prostitute the word reason in such an unhallowed cause—under what pretext dare any man, who professes a patriot's creed, connive at their continued oppression? It is true they are ignorant and unarmed, that all soul and spirit have been well nigh trampled out of them, that they are weak and helpless in the hands of those who have hitherto done with them according to their pleasure. But if

¹⁰ *Irish Liberator* 9/1/1864 p216-7

such arguments as these are to be deemed sufficient to justify us in continuing to inflict upon them the deepest and deadliest wrong which men can do to each other, and to make them the everlasting victims of the worst and vilest of all possible tyrannies, then it is time to declare that such principles will cut considerably still further than some people seem to have calculated on, and will sanction and sanctify the perpetual enslavement of other people whose skin is less dusky than that of the children of Africa.¹¹

The following week, he wrote of the unity of purpose of Irishmen and their counterparts in England. English people, he said were waking up and discussing topics which had not been aired since the days of Fergus O'Connor and the Chartists. This was largely down to Cobden teaching some lessons to the 'toadying' editor of the *Times*. Irishmen, he urged, should support the small minority of Englishmen in their struggle to overcome the unjust laws, land and otherwise of England. Irishmen and Englishmen were intermingled and of Irish claims,

these immortal desires have at last raised for us the sympathy of a large class of the British people. They would take our part even here in the very stronghold of the enemy.¹²

The diaspora meant not only the possibility of union with Englishmen, but the voices calling for Irish freedom came from across the globe,

Ireland's battleground is no longer confined to a little island, but stretches north, south, east and west-over mighty seas and across vast continents, and has the widest area that ever a political or national strife since the world began.¹³

The editorial policy of the *Irish/National Liberator* has been characterised thus,

fierce, if vague calls for Irish Revolution and vociferous support for Richard Cobden, in terms which almost seemed a romantic idealisation of true English radicalism...the Irish Liberator...was showing at its demise every sign of being a Cobdenite weekly in Irish revolutionary clothing.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. 16/1/1864 p233

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Edwards and Storey, Op.cit. p 166

The support for Cobden is posited as a possible reason for the death of the paper, as is the criticism of slavery and John Mitchel. There are a number of problems with this interpretation—some of fact—the *Liberator* did not as the writers assumed, fold on the 16th January 1864, but some six months later in July; Thomas Cashen was not the editor, at this time, David Bell was. Others are of interpretation. To suggest support for English radicals should have damaged a Fenian paper (to the extent of speculating that the article in question may not have been inserted with the editor's say so) does not bear examination. Patrick Quinlivan has written that

An active Fenian might believe in universal suffrage, in one-man-one-vote, in votes for women, in paid Members of Parliament, in secret ballot, in the abolition of patronage, in competitive examinations for the Civil Service, and other such equalitarian notions thought to be radical and fenian in 1860, though within two generations such dangerous ideas would be accepted in England and proclaimed part of British democracy.¹⁵

We have already discussed JP McDonnell's links with the International. John Newsinger has written extensively on the links between Fenians and British radicals, including the Reform League.¹⁶ Again one might ask what was 'a romantic idealisation of true *English* [my italics] radicalism', when some of the most radical members of recent working class organisations, the Chartists, for example had been Irish? Slavery had been condemned by Irish nationalists since the days of O'Connell, and though many Irish were undoubtedly in possession of ideas on race that many now would find objectionable, they fought overwhelmingly and bravely, for the North. Of course, different writers interpret the same 'facts' differently. The question then becomes why? The following extract comes from the same article,

The Fenians were notable for working for recruits through public houses, the drink increasing the potential recruits, and literary fenianism was also often more concerned with public audience than real private commitment. Local agents wanted to spread revolution. Other local agents wished to divert moneys collected to their own private use. In Britain all of these factors obtained, as with the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick and its supporting London weekly the *Irish Liberator*.¹⁷

¹⁵ Quinlivan P, 1994 Op.cit. p138.

¹⁶ Newsinger, J (1994) Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain. Lodon: Pluto Press, and in numerous articles. He and RV Comerford cross swords in *Saothar, Journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, 17-19 1992-1994

¹⁷ Edwards and Storey, Op.cit. p163

Fenian recruits and drink is a perennial, in keeping with the 'Fenianism as pastime' thesis of RV Comerford. The recruits in question, were largely soldiers in the British army. One 'Pagan' O'Leary, teetotal himself, is most often associated with this. Comerford says

Indeed most fenian business, especially recruitment and the initiation of new members, appears to have been conducted in public houses. The pub provided excellent cover, but to see fenian recourse to the pub as a merely accidental matter of convenience would be to miss the point: public house conviviality was part of the very fabric of fenianism.¹⁸

Public houses were the focal point of working class life—a place to get drunk, yes, but also to read the newspapers and discuss important events, as well as to relax from the daily grind and escape the privations of the slum housing most had to endure. Mass was said in public houses. To this day pubs are the chosen meeting place of innumerable societies of all kinds, without implying that the members are not serious. It is a question of interpretation. Curran and Seaton¹⁹ in their work on the history of the British media note that English radical papers were read aloud and discussed in taverns without drawing the conclusion that the Chartists were hopeless drunks. The only place where one could be sure of meeting soldiers, apart from the parade ground, was the pub. It is not valid to then infer that going to the pub was the prime objective after all. Similar inferences have been drawn from the Fenian practice of disguising the drilling of men for military service under the guise of sporting activities. Both in America and in Ireland, young men who had been active in 'patriotic' cultural pursuits, for example the learning, or re-learning of the Irish language, which could incur no legal penalties, abandoned them for more martial activities which most certainly did, in the 1860s.²⁰ For JIC Clarke and his comrades, among them, it will be remembered MS Walsh of the *Liberator*, literature, amateur

¹⁸ Comerford, RV ;'Patriotism as pastime: the appeal of fenianism in the mid-1860s' Irish Historical Studies (22) 1980-81, p247

¹⁹ Curran,J & Seaton J (1991ed) Power Without Responsibility. London Routledge. p21

²⁰ John Devoy in his Recollections of an Irish Rebel (1969) reprint p264 said that Martin O'Brennan, in the early 1860s gave Gaelic lessons to a group of enthusiasts in Middle Abbey St whose thought was to begin a movement but became more attracted to more active affairs in Fenianism and in the end lost numbers and were unable to keep up the rent on their premises. Philo-Celtic clubs in the USA suffered the same fate and language learning was soon put aside for drilling. Brown Thomas N (1976) 'The Origins and Character of Irish American Nationalism' in LJ McCaffrey Irish Nationalism and the American Contribution. Arno Press pp334-5

dramatics, the conviviality of evenings spent in the company of like-minded young men, declaiming poetry and the love of Ireland, was not an end in itself, but can be seen instead as a point of entry into the revolutionary movement.

As for literary fenianism being "often more concerned with public audience than real private commitment," some journalists, Holland notably in this case were suspected of just that, by Fenians themselves. However, Holland was not a Fenian, and of those that were—all the leading journalists on the *Irish People* were imprisoned, as was McDonnell, as was JM Blake, as was Hayes. Bell, along with many others, had to flee the country. They all could probably have led considerably more prosperous lives had they not become involved. This kind of journalism did not pay. As CC Hoey noted in the *Universal News*,

Irish journalism in this country is a trying ordeal, and happiness or contentment can never be won, no more than lucre, by those who eschew tuft-hunting and time-serving, and honestly advocate the rights of Ireland and Irishmen in this bigoted land.²¹

To launch a paper such as the *Irish Liberator* was to know that it would almost certainly fail. Had it survived into 1865, it is certain it would have been seized along with the *Irish People*.

The *Irish Liberator* was a paper leading a double if not treble life. It was, on the one hand a general newspaper, serving an immigrant community, defending their rights in their adopted home, keeping them in touch with the one they had left and with their countrymen elsewhere. It was also a focus for a kind of cultural nationalism and self-improvement. Alongside this it was a rallying-point and conduit for the revolutionary underground. The tensions engendered by this triple existence—the outside pressure and internal fissures, ultimately destroyed it, and in a sense, it collapsed under the weight of its own complicated nature.

Those who conducted the *Irish Liberator* lived in a world of shadows, where nothing was as it appeared. The Fenians in Dublin had their own newspaper, the

²¹ *Universal News* 4/1/1868 p9

Irish People, which purported to be an independent organ free of party affiliation, and which spent a great deal of its time denying the existence of the body (the IRB), which controlled it. The Fenians in London, had a newspaper, the *Irish Liberator*, which was openly attached to one organisation, the NBSP, but which was itself in fact a front for the same. Suspicion was in the air they breathed. Surrounded on all sides by enemies, open-the government, the Catholic church and the bulk of the Catholic press, and secret-the armies of police informers, detectives, traitors and spies, and not knowing who were their friends, Hayes, Bell and company came in the end to doubt each other.

Part 4 Compromised-Martin A O'Brennan and His Enemies

4.0 Martin A. O'Brennan and the Irish News



Fig. 38 Martin A O'Brennan—declaiming

One of the most notable characteristics of the Irish press in England was the short life-span of the majority of the papers. The *Universal News* survived longer than most-nine years-a feat accomplished by the alliances it formed and the accommodations it was able to reach, and only failed when this became possible no longer. The *Irish Liberator*, occupying a space where such negotiation was not feasible, but backed by a national organisation, lasted some ten months. The *Irish News*

was printed weekly in London between 16th March and the 13th April 1867, and lasted a total of five issues before it disappeared in a blaze of controversy, condemned by the church, and criticised by its peers. Both the journal and its editor, Martin A O'Brennan were accused by the Catholic press of being un-catholic, by the hierarchy of being pro-Fenian, heretical and anti-church, and by the Fenians of being the tools of private parliamentary interests. Hemmed in on all sides by hostile forces, it failed before it was able to establish itself.

What then might be learned from the study of such ephemera? The answer is that failure can be as instructive as success on the conditions under which newspapers operated. That the *Irish News* foundered so quickly in the face of what was principally ecclesiastic condemnation, clearly illustrates the importance of the Catholic church as an institution of social control amid the Irish in Britain. The paper was condemned by archbishop Manning in a pastoral which was read out at mass and printed in the Catholic press, and failed shortly afterwards. What was there about the *Irish News* that so provoked the hierarchy? To answer this question we must examine the history of the paper's editor, Martin A O'Brennan. In doing so, it will be seen that his relations with the church in Ireland prior to his attempt at establishing a London journal, were characterised by something more complex than blanket disapproval, illustrating that, Cardinal Cullen's legendary influence notwithstanding, when it came to politics, the Catholic church in Ireland did not speak with one voice.

O'Brennan was a prominent and colourful figure in mid Victorian Ireland. He was a lawyer, journalist, historian and lecturer. He was born in 1812, in Ballyhaunis, Mayo. Between 1855-67 he had produced five books on Irish History and language, and also translated catechisms and a prayer book into Irish. "...his obituary says that he had worked in the Repeal movement, served Fr. Matthew as 'Secretary for Ireland without pay', supported Young Ireland, and laboured for Tenant Right with pen, votes and purse."¹ He founded the *Connaught Patriot and Tuam Advertiser* in the west of Ireland in 1859. The paper had a stormy career spanning a decade until its demise in 1869, O'Brennan already having left for America the previous October. Throughout this period, he and his paper were held in less than high esteem by both

¹ Legg ML (1992) 'Newspapers and Nationalism: The Social and Political Influence of the Irish Provincial Press 1850-1892' PhD thesis, Birkbeck College, U of London p209

church and state, and he was imprisoned twice, escaping the same fate for a third time by agreeing to live in exile outside of Ireland.

The principle objection of both Church and state was his perceived support for Fenianism, but he was never a member of the IRB, and was indeed as we shall see, at odds with some of its leading lights. He was a man of undoubted learning and talents, one of them, unfortunately, an unerring ability to make enemies.

4.1 The Catholic Church in Ireland

Anyone writing in support of Fenianism in Ireland would have Cardinal Cullen to contend with. How much of a 'Castle' Catholic he was, has been the subject of some dispute, but it is clear his objections to it were in part at least based on religious grounds. By 1865, he was declaring it "a plot principally directed against the Catholic Church,"² as did Dr. Leahy, for whom the IRB was "directe et formaliter adversus Religionem Catholicam."³ Cullen believed that Fenianism, by its association (to his mind) with continental anti-clericalism, would, if successful lead to a diminution in the influence of the church in Ireland. He wrote in 1865,

If the Fenians will acquire influence among us religion will suffer, and the Mazzinian doctrines will achieve more than that which the Anglican heresy will ever be able to achieve.⁴

If Cullen therefore was "a unionist on ecclesiastical grounds" Moriarty of Kerry, on the other hand, was a unionist for political reasons⁵. The root of all of Ireland's problems was the matter of the religious disabilities of Catholics: once this was sorted out, all else would fall into place. Moriarty wrote to a Catholic MP in 1868 on the relations between the various sections of the Irish people, in terms with which James Stephens would have had no argument—the analysis of the two men was essentially the same—the ends and the means required to achieve them of course differed somewhat:

See what has happened—you have had the spirit of loyalty percolating downwards through the social scale according as you have raised the different classes to social and civil equality with their Protestant neighbours. The Catholic nobility, gentry, upper class, mercantile men, upper class professional men are all attached to the British connection; but when loyalty reaches as far as the Clergy there it stops, and they form the intermediate class between the gentry and the people.⁶

² Quoted in ER Norman(1965)The Catholic Church And Ireland In The Age Of Rebellion 1859-1873. London: Longmans. Note p91

³ Leahy to Barnabo in the Propaganda Rome, 10/8/1865, quoted in Norman ER Ibid. p91

⁴ To Barnabo, head of Propaganda quoted in Norman,ER Ibid note p86.

⁵ White JH 'Select Documents XVIII Bishop Moriarty on Disestablishment and the Union 1868' IHS vol X 1956-7 p194 Moriarty to Catholic Liberal MP Monsell 2/3/1868 found in Gladstone papers BM Add MS 44152 ff98-113 written from the Bishop's palace, Killarney

⁶ White Ibid. p197

Both Cullen and Moriarty were convinced of the dangers inherent in the nationalist press, which Cullen thought was infected by Mazzianism ⁷ and which was notoriously exemplified by O'Brennan's *Connaught Patriot*, described in 1864 by their Galway colleague Bishop McEvilly as,

a malicious Garibaldian rag, which is sometimes heretical, sometimes schismatical, and at all times personally offensive to the Head of the Church.⁸

Moriarty was able to boast in 1868, after the apparent defeat of the Fenian threat, journalistic and otherwise that,

The minds of the Irish people are in the hands of the Irish Priests. They have a platform where no other voice is heard. They have a press which supports their views. Their newspapers are extensively read, and the people read no other. The old aphorism, *qualis sacerdos talis populus*, has a political as well as a moral truth in Ireland.

But he knew that it was not that simple. In the same letter he wrote of these same priests,

The Clergy will preach against rebellion on account of the evils it will bring on the people, but I am sure their almost unanimous opinion is that if there was a fair chance of success it would be lawful nay dulce et decorum.⁹

So the church was not unanimous in its condemnation of the Fenians and their perceived supporters, and in Archbishop John MacHale of Tuam, within whose diocese he operated, O'Brennan found a powerful protector. Another clerical ally was the nationalist priest Father Patrick Lavelle, who also flourished under MacHale's protection, much to the annoyance of the authorities. Lavelle had participated in the burial of Terence Bellew MacManus against the wishes of Cullen,¹⁰ and by his outspoken advocacy of the Fenian cause was a serious problem to him. Both O'Brennan and Lavelle spoke all over Ireland and Britain in support of the NBSP (of which

⁷ Legg ML (1992) PhD p228.

⁸ ER Norman (1965) Op.cit. p102

⁹ White Op.cit. p105, p108

¹⁰ The first great Fenian public demonstration, organised by the National Brotherhood of St Patrick, of which Lavelle was a Vice President.

Lavelle was for a time vice-president). O'Brennan, a qualified lawyer acted as Lavelle's defending counsel when he was sued for libel over the Partry evictions.¹¹ Lavelle, as was his wont, supplied the *Connaught Patriot* and later the *Irish News*, with a plentiful supply of letters. MacHale exasperated Cullen with his support of Lavelle, and similarly supported the *Connaught Patriot*. According to Bishop McEvilly, it was the 'avowed organ of DrM.', and he expected the Tuam clergy to buy the paper when it first began, even writing a letter of support with his £3.00 subscription, 'declaring it to be the true organ of Catholicity in this part of the country.'¹² What was the relationship between O'Brennan, MacHale and Lavelle? To Legg,¹³ O'Brennan's paper, the *Connaught Patriot*, 'acted as his (Lavelle's) personal broadsheet.' Cullen, she says, 'believed it to be an instrument of war between himself and MacHale.'¹⁴ MacHale's hand in all this 'remains hidden', but she concludes the *Patriot* was a 'Catholic, nationalist propaganda sheet' for the two clerics rather than for O'Brennan himself.¹⁵ As such Cullen had two reasons for detesting O'Brennan and his paper—their supposed Fenianism and the aid they afforded two of his most troublesome clerics. MacHale certainly had very definite ideas on the efficacy of the press in the field of political action. According to an anonymous pamphlet published in 1866, Ireland's troubles were caused by the clergy, especially (inevitably) the Jesuits, who had amongst their innumerable crimes, educated Daniel O'Connell. The priests, while loudly condemning the Fenians on one hand, were on the other aiding and abetting them, and in any case were responsible for the atmosphere which produced the rebellion. Particularly reprehensible was the behaviour of MacHale,

It is not very long since Dr MacHale wrote a letter, which appeared in the Dublin papers, expressing his regret that political agitation is not now carried on in the same spirit-stirring manner as it was in the days of O'Connell. "The two great engines by which he achieved his triumphs," according to Dr MacHale, "were a popular press and popular meetings." By means of these, "he gave life, and vigour, and hope to the inhabitants of

¹¹ Thos Plunkett C of I bishop of Tuam, owned estates in Partry, Lavelle's parish, & was involved in an infamous case of evicting tenants

¹² Norman, (1965) Op.cit p102.

¹³ Legg (1992) Op.cit. p224

¹⁴ Legg (1997) Op.cit p.70

¹⁵ Legg (1992) Op.cit. p133.

Ireland," and "it is remarkable" says the old Repealer "that since the disuse of these two engines" popular meetings and a popular press, "the condition of the people is retrograding so as to be far worse than before this boasted Emancipation."¹⁶

MacHale was the most senior church figure noticeable for his support for, or perhaps lack of condemnation of militant nationalism. He was not the only senior cleric to hold such views. John Keneally, a leading Cork centre wrote in his memoirs of the relations between the church and the Fenians as he experienced them. It was, he said, no doubt as one who still thought of himself as a sincere and good Catholic, remembering the "rather angry discussions" that characterised some of the exchanges, "not a pleasant topic." An early protagonist was, as we have seen already, Dr O'Brien, founder of the CYMS, who warned young men away from secret societies. This was a surprise to some because the priest had been a well-known supporter of Young Ireland and was known for his patriotic views, and indeed alongside his condemnations of Fenians, the Reverend doctor never seems to have had a good word to say for England. Keneally wrote that several priests, sometimes using pseudonyms, debated the issue in the columns of the press, "with an occasional layman joining in just to show how much he knew about theology and ecclesiastical matters generally." O'Brennan we can be sure was an enthusiastic member of this tendency. Various clerics belonging to religious orders in his vicinity were supportive of the movement, one, "a Spartan Vincentian" declaring from a public platform that "the bastard sons of Cromwell's ruthless soldiers should not possess the land of our fathers". Secular priests had to follow the directions of their bishop, and Bishop Delaney of Cork enforced the 'no priests in politics rule strictly', even straying (in Keneally's opinion) over the line of non-involvement himself "which caused us a little inconvenience for a short time". However, the Bishop of Cloyne, Dr Keane took a different view and outdid in Keneally's opinion, even the lion of the fold of Judah, MacHale of Tuam.¹⁷

¹⁶ Irish Rebellion Pamphlet No. III The Fenians of 1866. London: Wm MacIntosh 2d 1866 p7

¹⁷ Keneally, J (1908) Recollections of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood. NY pp 9-10 Keane was to tell Kirby that Fenianism was both the result of the widespread feeling in the country among the poor, that the Church and the better-off Catholics no longer cared for their plight, and was "a conspiracy against a government that refused redress.". Quoted ER Norman (1965) Op.cit. p99

It was in MacHale's interests to have a vehicle for his views, as it was for Lavelle, but the advantages of the arrangement whatever shape it took, between the three men, were clearly not all one-sided. MacHale's patronage provided O'Brennan with prestige in the community, as well as a degree of financial stability. He was to an extent protected from those powerful elements in the church, like Cullen to whom his views were anathema. The *Connaught Patriot*, surrounded by enemies lasted for ten years. The necessity of such protection will be demonstrated by his subsequent short-lived career in London. What MacHale could not do, however, was to protect him from the state.

4.2 Dublin Castle

The government was very concerned at what it saw as sedition in sections of the Irish press, for example in 1869 the Fenian press was described as 'the fountain head of all sedition and treason in Ireland,'¹⁸ and as early as 1849, a Resident Magistrate wrote of the banning of the Young Irelander's *the Nation*, 'It is impossible to overestimate the injury inflicted on a mercurial people by these inflammatory essays.'¹⁹ So it was not only with Cullen that O'Brennan was in ill favour. His was one of a number of journals which had attracted the attention of the Castle. The solicitor general wrote to the Lord Lieutenant in the spring of 1865, that the question of sedition in the press "has reached a point at which the interference of the executive seems to me to be imperatively required". The blame for recent "riotous violence" he laid at the door of the press, and the concern as ever, was for the action of these papers on the minds of the impressionable poor.

Certain newspapers of an [unclear] seditious character, are published weekly and have a wide circulation. On every Sunday, the peasantry may be observed in groups listening to the reading of these publications. There are about six of these publications *The Nation*, *The Irishman*, *The Dundalk Democrat*, the *Tippereray Vindicator*, *The Connaught Patriot* etc-They openly teach disloyalty to the British Crown: that Ireland is kept in a state of slavery by England...²⁰

Earlier in the century, a similar scenes had been described of the Irish parts of Manchester,

The Irish are perpetually in a state of agitation. Often they assemble by hundreds at the corner of Oldham and Ancoats Street. One of their number reads in a loud voice the Irish news, the addresses of O'Connell, or the circulars of the Repeal Association; and afterwards, the whole is commented upon without end and with great clamour, by the closely pressed crowd. They are so strictly organised, that in the twinkling of an eye, one or two thousand can be collected at any given spot.²¹

¹⁸ Earl Spencer to HA Bruce 19/12/1869, quoted in Legg, ML (1992) *Newspapers and Nationalism: the Social and Political Influence of the Irish provincial Press 1850-1892* PhD thesis, Birkbeck College Uof London.

¹⁹ Quoted ML Legg *ibid* p122

²⁰ Larcom papers 7585 NLI Copy solicitor general to Lord Lieutenant Dublin Castle 23/3/65

²¹ Werly, John M 'The Irish in Manchester 1832-49' *IHS* v18 1972 p355. The author quotes from a French traveller in Britain, M Leon Faucher *Manchester in 1844; Its Present Condition and Future Prospects* writes of Little Ireland & Irishtown the two ghettos in Manchester.

This kind of group activity always heralded for those in authority the possibility of 'combinations', and were always viewed with the deepest of suspicion. Matters came to a head on the 12th October 1865, when O'Brennan and Nicholas Gallagher, his printer, were arrested. Gallagher was arrested at the offices of the Nation where he worked as a clerk and O'Brennan was immediately taken to Dublin, to join him to be arraigned the next day. The Crown accused O'Brennan as 'sole conductor and publisher' of the *Connaught Patriot*, of having published several seditious articles in his issue of 30/9/1865. One, which the Castle claimed 'was treasonable and intended to stir up foreigners to invade Ireland and "separate it from the United Kingdom," contained the words 'let the American Fenians Return'.²² It was couched in historical terms and

claimed that every Irishman who wishes well to Ireland was himself a Fenian, on the basis that Milesius came from a colony in Spain and that Fenius, as the ancestor of the Sythic colony settled in Spain, was therefore a remote progenitor of all genuine Irishmen and women.

Freedom would be effected 'by the strong arms of the haunted exiled Irish', who would one day return to claim their homeland ²³. To O'Brennan this was historical justification of present political conditions-to the Crown it was simply sedition.

This form of writing has been described as being part of a trend of cultural nationalism which invented a Gaelic nation "peopled by men and women descended from a race of heroes" and which was "sustained on two levels, by the scholarly re-discovery of legends and by the publication of tales of past deeds." By mid-century, Gaelic, history and language, largely through the actions of the provincial press, which popularised this knowledge, "began to be a force within nationalism."²⁴ To O'Brennan, Ireland's past was not only superior to its present but to England of any period. Those people who started papers after about 1860 did so with political objects in mind. "This was expressed, not just through their newspapers, but through their own presence at important events," like political meetings and election cam-

²² Savage, John, (1868) *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs*. Boston: Patrick Donahoe. p419

²³ Legg ML (1997) p70

²⁴ Legg ML (1999) p73

paings. O'Brennan, who had long been involved in public affairs, such as the temperance movement of Father Matthew, the Repeal and Land reform movements, may be seen as one of these.²⁵

Another article entitled, 'Alleged Fenianism in the Army' came in for severe censure. The Crown thought 'a more mischievous piece of treason could scarcely be circulated'. It was a comment on the reported arrest for Fenianism of a sergeant-major:

It is rumoured that Fenianism has extended itself widely amongst the soldiers of the line, the Constabulary, and Militia-that they understand the nature of their oath of allegiance to defend, but not an oath to consent to the permanent oppression of their plundered nation-that their oath binds them to a just monarch and a just government; but if the latter violate allegiance to the people-that the military and people are no longer under allegiance -Ed CP²⁶

If O'Brennan thought he could escape the attentions of the Castle by reporting 'rumoured' sedition, as opposed to the *Irish People's* outright advocacy of it, he was mistaken. At his committal, the prosecution were wise to his tricks,

Mr Barry: ...The article in question is decidedly treasonable, at the same time there is something in it intended to keep the writer and publisher within the law, while the meaning is to stir up the feelings of these misguided persons.²⁷

He was refused bail, committed for trial and ended up in the Bridewell along with Luby, O'Leary and the others. Not before he had his say, however. Ignoring the advice of his counsel to keep silent, he compared his actions in criticising the government to those of the opposition parties in parliament. He further protested at the treatment meted out to him,

but I must protest, when I find the Crown acting with so much virulence as to take me from my large family of nine or ten, and stick me up into no better than a water closet

²⁵ Ibid p72

²⁶ Savage p419

²⁷ Larcom 7676 Extract of committal from the *Mail* 6/10/65

last night, and keep me from three o'clock yesterday morning, without any refreshment. It would well become the Crown to say-how is this man treated; or why should such an aggression be made upon the right of the subject as has been made upon me. If it occurred elsewhere the Attorney General or Crown Solicitor would be the first to denounce it as barbarous and savage, and a portion of the tyranny that has been carried out in other countries; but here when it is exercised upon a subject of her Majesty, there is not one word at all against it.

His defiance did not impress the Magistrate, but it did earn him a place in John Savage's 1868 *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs*, from which this account is taken. Of course, his own paper leapt to his defence. The *Connaught Patriot* proclaimed the extent of his crimes,

he spoke out boldly some strong bitter truths since he came to Tuam to the Government and the landlords, and to the vile slaves who creep along in this land - the Shoneens and the minions of English power in Ireland. He spared not Whig nor place-hunter. On this account he is hunted down.²⁸

His paper also strongly protested his innocence of the taint of Fenianism while he was in prison, 'The fact is the Fenians, at least the Editor and Proprietor of the Irish People have been his bitterest foes.'²⁹ His arrest attracted some attention in the newspapers, and illustrates together with his paper's chosen line of defence of him, the somewhat anomalous position he occupied with regard to Fenianism-neither an insider nor an outsider, suspected by those at the centre of the conspiracy but tarred with the same brush by those opposed to it.

A personage quite respectable by comparison has been added to the list of Fenian prisoners. The editor of one of the 'National' journalsWe should be sorry indeed to prejudice the case of any man arraigned on an accusation so grave, but we may generally say that the *Connaught Patriot* is one of a class of Irish papers, the spawn of disaffection, that have their subsistence in ignorance and prejudice.³⁰

²⁸ Larcom 7676 Extract from CP appearing in the *Irish Times* 10/10/1865

²⁹ Legg (1992) p.232

³⁰ Larcom 7676 Extract from the *Express* 7/10/65, Larcom 7676

O'Brennan had friends though, and collections were taken to aid his defence and for the welfare of his family, in Ireland and in England. The nervousness of the times comes across in the following report of one of these fund-raising meetings, this one held in aid of the long-suffering Mrs O'Brennan.³¹

The chairman stated that, in responding to Mrs O'Brennan's appeal, they were wholly disconnected from the politics of her husband; he would only allude to Mr O'Brennan as a man whom he knew for 18 years and would testify that when employers attempted to infringe on the social rights of mechanics he always took their side. In the manufacture and temperance movements he had done good service, and as a scholar he was well known among the educated classes.

Speakers were warned that only philanthropic statements would be allowed.

An account of his trial is given in the *Universal News*, which had earlier collected money on his behalf. His counsel, Curran, answering the charge, said,

Under my advice, and at my suggestion this prisoner will submit to this indictment. I believe Mr. O'Brennan never intended to act contrary to the law or against the peace of the Queen. He altogether repudiates Fenianism and has always done so. The articles mentioned in the indictment were not written by him, but I am told he is liable as being the registered publisher. We regret they got into the paper and will take care that in future the same thing does not happen. On these grounds I expect the interference of the crown.

The plea was accepted by the Attorney General and recorded. O'Brennan was required to be of good behaviour and to promise to cease publishing seditious material, which he did. However, he could not refrain, as at his arraignment, from attempting to contribute - the account goes on,

Mr. O'Brennan was about to make an observation.

Mr. Justice Keogh: We cannot hear you, sir.

Mr. Curran: You promised me you would not say a word.

Mr. O'Brennan then entered into a recognisance of £500 to appear to receive sentence on getting the usual notice, and would be of good behaviour.³²

³¹ *Irishman* 16/12/1865 p400

³² *Universal News* 3/2/1866 p.13

Unlike his defiance at the earlier committal, this account did not make it into Savage's book.

O'Brennan did not enjoy freedom for very long, and was again arrested, after the suspension of Habeus Corpus in March 1866 at Claremorris railway station, for using seditious language. Eleven young men arrested for Fenianism had been put on board the Dublin train at Castlebar, surrounded by a large body of policemen. While waiting at Claremorris they were surrounded by a large crowd, sympathetic to the prisoners. The local press described what transpired next as follows:

We have been credibly informed and requested to state that, so far from Dr. O'Brennan having, as alleged, indulged in any seditious language on the occasion of his recent arrest at Claremorris, he, on the contrary, was loud and energetic in advising the people present (who were expressing sympathy and condolence with the Fenian prisoners then on their way from Castlebar Gaol to Dublin) to be guarded in what they said, and keep within the law, lest, in these times, when no man's liberty was secure, they should get themselves into trouble.³³

The man whose liberty was most insecure in this instance was the irrepressible Dr. O'Brennan himself, as the policemen, perhaps under pressure from the hostile crowd, misunderstood, or more likely understood too well what O'Brennan was saying, and he found himself once more behind bars. Fortunately, he did not have such a long wait before coming to trial. On his unconditional release, 'after being confined for nearly three weeks in "one of the coldest gaols in the British Isles", where he was compelled to pay 30s a week for his keep and 'was not allowed to follow his usual avocation', he wrote to the *Universal News* thanking those who had 'so nobly assisted him in his misfortune.'³⁴

The Castle was not finished with him yet. His original release had been conditional on his good behaviour and he could be called up for sentencing on the original charge if he further incurred the displeasure of the Crown. From a report in the *Universal News* in June of the same year, it is clear that just this happened. O'Brennan

³³ *Universal News* 24/3/1866, p6 taken from the *Castlebar Telegraph*

³⁴ *Universal News* 7/4/1866 p9

was called and failed to appear at the commission of Oyer and Terminer in Dublin. The Attorney General had deemed it necessary to adopt this course "... because several seditious articles had lately appeared in O'Brennan's paper". Called the next day he again did not appear but sent a letter, giving his side of the case. He claimed he had done nothing wrong to warrant this action on behalf of the Crown,

I have guarded and will guard the *Connaught Patriot* from containing all that could offend justice, morality or patriotism from the antecedents of the right hon the Attorney General I feel satisfied that he does not and will not require more. Please let me know at your earliest convenience whether under those circumstances it is the intention of the hon gentleman to act on this notice.

O'Brennan said that had he been warned that he was doing something wrong, he would have stopped whatever it was.

I fear that the private malice of some secret enemy seeks by this unworthy persecution to make the hon gentleman the unconscious instrument of completing my ruin and that of my helpless family. ³⁵

What happened next is not entirely clear but a warrant for his arrest was issued and by the middle of September he was in London, at the helm of the Irish News. The *Universal News* carried the following :

The London '*Irish News*' - We have read the first number of this new candidate for Irish patrons in England. It is edited by Martin A O'Brennan Esq. LLD. It advocates 'Liberty of Conscience. Its motto is "Our Native land". We wish Dr. O'Brennan and his new journal every success. We are sure our learned friend will be a fearless defender of Irish and Catholic rights in England. The new journal is well got up. Sat.3d and 2d.

It had a butterfly-like existence of only one issue, the following week ³⁶ it was announced that the 'Irish News, after the issue of its first number, has ceased to exist.' No copy of the paper survives, nor is there an entry in the British Newspaper library catalogue at Colindale for it, the only evidence of its existence are these two

³⁵ *Universal News* 23/6/1866 p 3

³⁶ *Ibid.* 15/9/1866 p15 & 22/9/1866

brief notes. In an obituary for O'Brennan which appeared in the *Galway Vindicator* some years later, it was stated that he was only released from prison on the condition that he resided outside of Ireland.³⁷ In another obituary in the *New York Irish World*, it stated that O'Brennan was one of the many 'suspects' of the period and that he was required to swear allegiance to the Queen as the price of his freedom to remain in Ireland, but he refused, declaring he would have his arm "burned off at the elbow before I'd take an oath of loyalty to her."³⁸

This was the kind of fighting talk which his readers loved, but did it go down as well amongst the men of action, now on the run or mouldering in the gaols of empire?

³⁷ *Galway Vindicator* 9/3/1878, quoted in Legg (1997) p71

³⁸ *Irish World* 2/3/1878

4.3 The IRB

To the state and the Catholic church, O'Brennan was a Fenian. To the Fenian leadership he was a fool, M.A. for Luby and O'Leary stood for Mary Ann. Legg writes of the treatment he received from the Fenian leadership, as a kind of betrayal. At the time of his arrest for sedition, she says "The Fenian movement might have been expected to support O'Brennan in his plight, but instead they abandoned him." The truth is rather closer to the opposite, for at this precise time, he abandoned them. It will be remembered his paper denied his involvement with the Fenians, especially those at the *Irish People* office, casting them instead as his opponents. His lawyer too, repudiated them on his behalf. Such a defence would not have endeared him to the likes of the *Irish People's* business manager Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, whose autobiographical account of his defiant conduct at his trial and in prison, was in marked contrast, and is now part of the cannon of Irish nationalism. A further insight into the reasons for the low esteem in which O'Brennan was held in some Fenian quarters is given in John Denieffe's memoirs of the period. He was arrested, he says some time soon after the *Irish People* was suppressed in the general round up of the paper and those deemed close to it. He was incarcerated, along with the rest in the Richmond Bridewell, which he describes thus:

The lower part or ground floor contained all the petty malefactors such as thieves and all that class. Amongst these Martin O'Brennan chose to be placed. We were surprised to see him there. We found afterwards he was afraid he would compromise himself if he came amongst us.³⁹

Denieffe goes on that whilst in gaol, he was offered a book on Irish ecclesiastical history to read by one of the warders. He accepted, but was irritated to find that the book had been written on extensively, half in English and half in Irish. It belonged to the chaplain, and when he came on a pastoral visit Denieffe had no wish to take the blame for damage of which he suspected the warder Lennon was the author. There had been a prior borrower, however, and when informed by Denieffe, the chaplain was already aware of the condition of his book and the culprit's identity - 'that old fool O'Brennan.'⁴⁰

³⁹. Denieffe, Joseph K (1969) *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood*. Introduced by Sean O'Luining. Shannon: Irish University Press p114

⁴⁰ Ibid., p 115

The Fenian leadership could not betray O'Brennan, nor he they, for the simple reason that he had never been one of them. His close association with Archbishop MacHale and Father Lavelle was not to the taste of secularists like Stephens and O'Leary. Nor was his involvement in election campaigns, which they viewed as at best pointless. Nor was his brand of romantic history, with its Sythians, nor his justifications of Fenianism based on the ancestry of Milesius, whose ancestor Fenius founded the sythian colony in Spain. The writers of the *Irish People* did not care about Celts and Saxons never mind their remote forebears, as an answer in the correspondents column of the paper makes clear. It discussed an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* -

Perhaps the queerest part of this article is the talk about Saxons and Celts. We need scarcely tell our readers that we know no difference between Saxons and Celts in Ireland. Many of us do not know whether we are Saxons or Celts and most of us do not know how much Saxon or Celtic blood may be in our veins. In fact we care nothing from what part of the world, or at what period of its history a man's ancestors came to Ireland.⁴¹

Luby famously rubbished O'Brennan's *Ancient Ireland and Saint Patrick*, which again has been viewed as treachery, but a fuller account of the incident reveals rather more humour and less malice on the part of Luby than might be supposed.⁴² He reminded O'Leary of the review years later, it was a "sort of humorous-ironical" review of a work of O'Brennan's which had appeared some years previously. The review had been written for the *Tribune* when Luby was connected with it in the mid 1850s contemporaneously with the book. It was never printed, and like a good journalist, (or academic), never wishing to waste a word that had flowed from his pen, he had stored it up until such time as it might be needed. Its time came,

partly because a week came round when we found ourselves short of articles for the literary page; but chiefly because the "*Connaught Patriot*" a journal of which the sage Doctor was editor, and, I believe, proprietor; and of which, by the way, I don't think I ever saw a copy-had lately most impudently asserted that the *Irish People* was in a moribund condition. My review then, was printed in order to open the Doctor's eyes to the fact that the *Irish People* so far from being moribund, was very much 'alive and kicking.

⁴¹ *Irish People* 16/9/65

⁴² *Irish People* 7/5/1864 p378

The rest of the episode, O'Brennan's visit to the *Irish People* offices, where he told Luby his review was "the stroke of an assassin!," to the subsequent visit of his friend Lavelle, indeed the whole saga between O'Brennan and the *Irish People* illustrate a feature of the Fenian movement, at least in the shape of its journalism which is often ignored. And that is the place of humour. Luby, O'Leary, Kickham and the other writers on the paper mocked their enemies, they laughed at the church, the police, elections to Westminster,⁴³ the British empire and held them up to scorn. The *Irish People* was an influential paper because it had writers of wit and ability. They were also a group of young people, committed, earnest, prepared to suffer, (as they did) and to inflict it too, if needs must, who were also having a ball. A stone's throw from the seat of British power in Ireland, they preached open sedition in their paper, and with Pagan O'Leary making bullets in the newspaper office, they set about creating a conspiracy on a massive scale. Their recklessness caused Gavan Duffy to ask "can they be matched anywhere?"⁴⁴

It was with something like affection and possibly a little guilt that Luby recalled his last meeting with O'Brennan, when they were both in prison awaiting trial,

I saw no more of him till I was a prisoner, in Richmond Bridewell waiting trial for IP; then, indeed, I got a glimpse of him, one day, from the window of Marcus's office, while he was exercising alone in the yard and reading some book (ancient classic no doubt) with grand theatrical emphasis and gesture. But the last morning, I spent in Richmond, I came face to face with him in the prison yard, at washing hour. The poor devil came up to me at once, thrust forth his hand, grasped mine and shook it (I feel certain) with genuine warmth. It is many years now since he departed this topsy-turvy life in Chicago.⁴⁵

So, reviled by Church, mocked by the Fenians and persecuted and finally exiled by the state, O'Brennan prepared for a second time in March 1867 to launch his new venture the *Irish News*. What kind of welcome could he, lately convicted of sedition, expect in the stronghold of the enemy?

⁴³ See NAI Fenian Papers Carton 2 Env 1 no11 for an acid account from Luby of O'Brennan's part in the election of Denis Rearden to Athlone.

⁴⁴ Duffy, G (1898) *My Life in Two Hemispheres*. 1969 reprint Shannon:IUP p278

⁴⁵ TC Luby papers NLI MS MS333 Letter to J O'Leary Weds 20th April 1892 41 Jackson Ave NJ N p18-19

4.4 Printers, the Universal News, the Weekly Register, the Westminster Gazette

O'Brennan stepped out into the London spring sunshine and, as with Chicken Licken, the sky promptly fell on his head. Which is not to say he did not come out fighting, because he did. The first article on the first page was a strident criticism of an old enemy, Moriarty of Kerry, entitled "More English than the English Themselves", in which he took Lavelle's line that there was no decree from the Vatican which could be taken as a denunciation of Fenianism. He turned Moriarty's famous denunciation of the Fenians around and asked was eternity not long enough nor hell hot enough to punish those English Catholic priests who defied 'the powers that were' in Elizabethan England when it was treason to be a Catholic priest. He went on to assert, somewhat illogically for someone with such a close identification with 'political' clerics, that the clergy should keep out of politics,

Religion and politics ought not to be mixed up in any country. The hemlock of sectarianism usually thrown by knavish "wierds" into the cauldron of secular associations in Ireland, has always proved the bane-the curse of our country.

As an illustration, he cited the case of Frederick Lucas, who had died of a broken heart, for which Cullen was responsible. In succeeding issues he continued the old feud, claiming that the opening article had encouraged other clergymen in England to become subscribers, and advertising testimonials to MacHale and Lavelle, the latter for having "boldly propagated the true doctrine of the church on the right of revolution. and he is, on that account, justly entitled to a testimonial." In another article, he observed,

What a noble contrast John of Tuam forms to the dignitary whose title will be forgotten or only recollected with shame when the name of archbishop MacHale will be remembered and revered.⁴⁶

O'Brennan had not chosen a propitious moment to launch such a paper, within weeks of the failed rebellion in Ireland, with both countries in an uproar, and the

⁴⁶ *Irish News* 30/3/1867p26

problems inherent in such a venture in such a tense atmosphere are illustrated by the problems he had with his printers.

Like many other small papers, the *Irish News* did not print for itself, but contracted the work out. From the history of the *Irish Liberator*, we have seen that this could be problematical, and it was to prove so in this case. People who would have considered themselves his friends, raising funds on his behalf in Ireland had been careful to distance themselves from his politics and now O'Brennan was to find that he was viewed as a dangerous person to be associated with in any way. By the third issue, the *Irish News* had had as many printers. O'Brennan had parted company from the first because he had refused to print the paper, causing a week's delay in publication. The second printer, had refused to publish the explanation of the first printer's misdeeds. Now, in issue number three,⁴⁷ all was explained. The printer had taken the proofs of the first issue to Scotland Yard to Sir Richard Mayne. This came to light when O'Brennan, in despair at getting his paper out on time after protracted delays had told the printer, guessing that he might be worried at the content, to excise any article he wished but to get the paper out as advertised. The printer, having previously fobbed him off with excuses, flatly refused. O'Brennan demanded the return of his proofs, only to be told they had been seized. On enquiring at Scotland Yard, O'Brennan was informed that they had not been seized, but had been brought there voluntarily by the printer, one Joseph Bruton and Job Cauldwell, the landlord of the publishing office at 335, The Strand. The police could find nothing blameworthy in the material and promptly returned it. O'Brennan, very conscious of his recent history had assured the printer "I know the law, and I have kept strictly within it and intend to do so," but it had been to no avail-the deadline was past and an 'immense outlay' had been lost.

Nervous printers aside, public criticism of the *Irish News* had also begun even before it appeared, and from an unexpected quarter. He would not have been surprised by criticism from newspapers close to the English hierarchy, he was, after all, accustomed to that in Ireland. He might however, have expected a warmer welcome from his London peer, the *Universal News*, which had, as we have seen been very supportive of him in his earlier troubles with the authorities in Ireland, and had also

⁴⁷ *Irish News* 30/3/1867 p24-5

been complementary on his first abortive London attempt the previous September. O'Brennan was loosely connected to the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, of which the editor of the *Universal News*, Christopher Clinton Hoey, had been a central committee member. Clinton Hoey had his own problems with both God and mammon and it might have been expected he would welcome an ally, who might at least draw some fire away from his own paper.

This was not the case, and in a piece entitled "Working the Oracle",⁴⁸ Hoey called O'Brennan's motives into question. It was supposed, it said, that literary patronage was a thing of the past, writers were these days independent. This may well have been the case with novels, but with newspapers, it was a very different case -

Journalists, i.e. editors - now as in the days of Pitt and Castlereagh deem it necessary to have a patron, and members of parliament, whether they represent a university, or a rotten borough, think it essential to their stability to have "an organ of their own.

The writer cited Disraeli, Bright, Whalley, and without naming them, one or two Scottish and two Irish members in this category. He then went on to discuss what a rumour mill the London journalistic scene was,

We seldom take notice of the idle tales which form the stock of the gossip of the perambulating quidnuncs who are living upon their wits in London, from one end of the year to another and who hale from sundry parts of her Majesty's dominions.

The gossip that Hoey immediately went on to discuss was that the member for Athlone had been attempting to purchase a London Catholic paper in order to 're ingratiate himself with his constituents'. The reason for the credence given to this particular morsel of tittle-tattle was that it had been 'ventilated' by one of the 'proprietors or conductors' of the paper in question, Hoey's would-be nemesis, the *Universal Express*. The interest shown by the MP had come too late, for the paper had folded.⁴⁹ There was a new twist to the story; namely that the aforementioned

⁴⁸*Universal News* 2/3/1867 p10

⁴⁹ Elsewhere in the same issue the following notice appeared, 'A paper entitled the *Universal Express*, which was started some five months since in opposition to the *Universal News* has ceased to exist'. *Universal News* 2/3/1867

MP was to provide 'the sinews of war' for O'Brennan's new venture. Hoey invited the 'erudite' editor to tell the public the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth of the affair,

so that a mischievous canard might be knocked on the head, and the political rectitude of the scholar and gentleman be vindicated.

O'Brennan was unimpressed by Hoey's concern for his reputation and fired off a letter to the *Universal News*, which was published the following week-

Dear Sir, -In the last number of your journal appeared an unworthy insinuation to the effect that the member for Athlone "is to supply the sinews of war" for the *Irish News*. I beg to say that the rumour is simply a lie, and that the person who ventilated the same rumour well knew that it was a lie. He must be either a fool or a knave. For the sake of charity I give him the benefit of the former alternative. So far from receiving the "sinews of war", directly or indirectly, or expecting any patronage, from the hon. Gentleman, I have neither met him nor exchanged a word with him since the day following his election. At the same time, I wish it to be understood that hitherto I have had no reason to be ashamed of the active part I took in securing his return. The *Irish News* is established not as the organ of any person, however influential or wealthy, nor of any State party, Whig or Tory, but as the unflinching and unpurchaseable advocate of the Irish people. As I do not busy myself in prying into the pecuniary matters of others, so should they restrain their prurient inquisitiveness about my affairs.

Yours Faithfully, Martin A. O'Brennan.⁵⁰

This did not satisfy Hoey, in a later correspondent's column, he wrote, disparagingly of the *Irish News* comparing it unfavourably with his own journal

We would be sorry indeed if there was not a wide difference between the journal of the people - the property of the people - and anything established for private ends and to puff frogs in Parliament.⁵¹

Clinton Hoey had been a slater before he became a journalist and was very proud of his humble beginnings. He saw himself as being of the people. His paper was funded by subscription and the issue of shares - 'the property of the people.'

⁵⁰ *Universal News* 9/3/1867 p7

⁵¹ *Universal News* 16/3/186 p8

Hence perhaps his suspicion of private finance. O'Brennan, was not the proprietor of the *Irish News* as he had been of the *Connaught Patriot*, that was a J MacDonagh.⁵² It is not possible to prove or disprove Clinton Hoey's claims, but it is interesting to note the accusation.

O'Brennan had referred to Bruton and Cauldwell as being part of a conspiracy to crush his paper and a correspondent, under the pseudonym Stylites continued in the same vein, hinting that the *Universal News* was part of it, and questioning its integrity in turn. In England and in Ireland that the people needed "such as sincere journal" as O'Brennan's, he wrote,

may best be learned from the transparent trash long foisted on the public by selfish traders and newspaper speculators, without a grain of political honesty in their entire composition.

The following week he returned to the subject, in terms which were strikingly similar to those used by John Eugene O'Cavanagh, of Francis Scannell, the *Universal News*' lessee, which precipitated his own dismissal. The writer speculated on what could influenced the reluctant printer, it could have been fear, or, more sinisterly "literary or trade jealousy".

Is there not a paper now being issued in London, ostensibly passing itself off as an 'organ' of the Irish people; and, taking a 'leader' of a few weeks back as an index of the animus permeating its pages, it is not difficult to see that no tricks are too base for a journal obtaining money under false pretences. What interest now have the original, well-meaning promoters of that paper, in seeing it issued, as at present, by a protestant 'company', from a shop having on its windows, 'Don't be blinded by your priests' and, sending forth to the world the vilest publications? Is this the journal which insinuated that the editor of the *Irish News*, would become the tool of any man while editing a paper for his countrymen in England, and in Ireland too where 'open and advised speaking' was gagged by the suspension of the habeus corpus act? Is this the journal that not long ago resorted to the low lottery 'dodge' to raise the wind, by giving tickets to its readers for chimerical prizes?⁵³

⁵² The MP for Athlone in 1867 was a Liberal DJ Rearden, elected in 1865 who voted against the suspension of the Habeus Corpus Act in 1866. He had taken the seat from the long time MP JJ Ennis who re-took the seat in 1868. O'Rearden retired from politics and worked as a surveyor in London until his death in 1885.

⁵³ *Irish News* 16/3/1867 p4 (not numbered) ; 23/3/1867 (not numbered) p4-5. The *Universal News* at this stage was published by the Newsagents Publishing Company which published many different kinds of journal, including *Boy Pirate*, *Divorce Court* and *The Life of Garibaldi*—and it is to these no doubt, that the writer refers.

All of the 'national' newspapers claimed to be the true representatives of the Irish public in some way or other. They spoke for the 'real' Ireland, in O'Brennan's case his paper was Ireland's 'unflinching and unpurchaseable advocate'. In its manifesto he stated that it would be:-

- 1 The consistent advocate of the rights of the people-the legitimate source of all power-against the unjust domination of a rampant oligarchy and a haughty aristocracy;
- 2 The vigilant sentinel on the watch-towers of our country, boldly denouncing State paupers, base renegades and shameless place-hunters;
- 3 The uncompromising vindicator of right against might, of justice against oppression, and of national freedom against alien tyranny;
- 4 The stern upholder of "liberty of conscience" to all mankind-thus scrupulously eschewing polemical controversies which might possibly jar with our chosen motto:-

"OUR NATIVE LAND"

- 5 The IRISH NEWS shall be the impartial observer of national proceedings all over the globe, as well as the intrepid assertor of Irish rights from English soil.⁵⁴

In between hunting out State paupers and base renegades, O'Brennan, not surprisingly outraged respectable Catholic opinion in England. The *Irish News* was soon being denounced in the Catholic press. The *Westminster Gazette* wrote that "Pity for the deluded victims of Fenianism is not incompatible with the greatest abhorrence of its principles and of its promoters," especially when, "like the impenitent thief, they turn around on their cross and rail against the church which condemns them...". For those, no one could feel anything but reprobation,

A new teacher of fenianism of the most rampant sort has been set up in London and has been rash enough to descant on Catholic and non Catholic teaching. It undertakes to school the bishops by name, to teach them theology...Has the audacity to declare that the bishops and priests have no authority outside the pulpit or beyond the altar; whence confining themselves to purely spiritual topics they may, uncriticised by laymen, preach to their flocks; but let them beware of trenching with their spiritual authority on the province of morals and ethics.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Irish News* 16/3/1867 p4

⁵⁵ *Westminster Gazette* 30/3/1867 p3

The article called the *Irish News* "un catholic", "a public enemy of faith and morals" and said that it had already been denounced "by the highest ecclesiastical authority." Stylites once more came to the paper's defence and criticised both the *Westminster Gazette*, given the nickname the Neophyte Gazette, (no doubt in honour of Cardinal Manning who was a convert) and the *Weekly Register*. As the *Universal News* was doing at the same time, Stylites argued along national lines,

The writers of those abusive remarks are probably English Catholics and-with very few honourable exceptions-English Catholics are more hostile than Protestants towards Irishmen. Why? Because they are brought more frequently into contact with Irishmen on account of professing the same religion, and as they cannot and will not understand our national aspirations to be yet a free nation, superior, as heretofore to England, they hate us for our inextinguishable patriotism.⁵⁶

It is clear it was not a question of whether Cardinal Manning would denounce O'Brennan and his paper, but when.

⁵⁶ *Irish News* 13/4/1867 pp57-8

4.5 Cardinal Manning

In the short history of the *Irish News*, there were numerous references to distribution problems. O'Brennan thanked the *Irish Times* for giving him free publicity when it claimed that the first issue of the paper had been seized in Ireland. He said that returns from agents indicated the papers got through despite the efforts of the authorities, but that the (wrong) information would surely do their circulation no harm at all.⁵⁷ In England there were problems of a different kind. Correspondents from Fulham & St. John's Wood, complained that copies were unobtainable from the vendors and wanted to know why. The answer was supplied the following week in a letter from an R.H. of Hackney, entitled "Catholic Suppression of The *Irish News*".

The news vendor at Hackney Catholic Church had been applied to for The *Irish News* on Sunday last and the previous Sunday but could not furnish it in consequence of the opposition of the Archbishop.

The vendor suggested to R.H. that the paper might arrange to have boys standing in the street close to the church & sell the paper that way. RH asked his fellow exiles whether they would defend the *Irish News* and its editor,

Will such a people allow, now, one of their own kindred and creed-an Irish scholar, learned in all the traditions, the history and the glory of their forefathers and imbued with the affections, the rich treasures and the loving language of their race to be struck down and crushed in the bud out of the land by strangers or tyrants. Surely not? Yes, from an Anglo-Saxon land where he came to instruct and entertain us from the ample stores of his Irish bosom with those historic subjects derived from the ancient literature of Ireland which the Saxon now, has nearly trodden out.⁵⁸

The Archbishop was of course Henry Manning, who was fully in agreement with Cullen on the subject of Fenianism. In the same correspondents column the editor promised the appearance of a new feature "unless of course, we incur 'seizure or suppression' which we shall try to avoid." A letter from the same R.H. in same issue urged the paper to be careful not to bring down the wrath of the Law

⁵⁷ *Irish News* 30/3/1867 p6

⁵⁸ *Irish News* 6/4/1867 p40;13/4/1867 p56

onto its head.

O'Brennan's fate was sealed. On the 7th April, a pastoral letter from Manning specifically addressing the Irish part of his congregation and dated the 17th March, was read out at mass and reprinted in the Catholic press the following Saturday. In it he condemned O'Brennan and his paper at length and in detail, though he did not actually name the paper. After praising the 'children of Saint Patrick' for reviving the faith in England and spreading it throughout the empire, and declaring that all the sympathy of his heart had always been with Ireland and 'its faithful, noble and martyred people', he outlined the official line on rebellion against English rule. 'England Scotland and Ireland were once three kingdoms: they are now one indivisible realm. What God has consolidated by ages of time no human hand can dissolve.' He went on to warn his flock against association with continental sedition and conspiracy, pointedly noting that conspiracy, once directed against the Pope was now turned against the English monarchy,

We have long ago warned those who praised, flattered, abetted, justified, glorified the revolutions of the Continent , and above all the revolution in Italy, to take heed lest their own principles should recoil upon themselves. They have recoiled upon us now. The same anti-social, anti-Christian principles which have been conspiring in the dark against the Government of the Sovereign Pontiff, have now conspired against the English monarchy. We have always condemned these principles everywhere, and equally, as intrinsically sinful.

He had consistently defended the temporal power of the Pope, and the British empire equally, because they rested on the same divine authority. At that very moment, he continued,

the principles of rebellion have been openly and systematically published among you. The first number of a paper has been sent to me, addressed especially to my flock in London, and intended as a means of uniting others in a common cause throughout England. It is my duty to declare to you the nature of that paper, and my judgement upon it.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Published in the Catholic press. The *Universal News* for example carried it on 13/4/1867 p1

Manning, an astute politician, was always aware of Irish sensibilities, and in condemning O'Brennan, he did not impugn his sincerity. "Whatever be the good intentions or patriotic virtues of its authors," he went on "I am bound not to suffer errors to enter among you without warning." He then argued point by point against O'Brennan—from whether or not priests should pronounce on ethical subjects to whether or not the Fenians had been specifically condemned by the church, (they could and they had respectively).

The following week, the last issue of the *Irish News*, which was unique in being the only Catholic paper which did not carry the Pastoral, appeared. O'Brennan went down fighting though, and unrepentant,

If between informers, pulpit denunciators and Fleet Street treachery, the *Irish News* be impeded in its progress, the editor shall have this consolation to himself that he is conscious of not having published one clause against the teaching of the Catholic church, and he has made a giant effort to supply his countrymen in England with a newspaper that has no partisan-best means for asserting that Ireland was for the Irish.⁶⁰

O'Brennan like other Irish radicals of the period rejected such accusations of apostasy: 'I am nothing of Mazzini,' he once wrote, 'I anathemise the Carbonari', but I bless the sword and the scythe of the Pole and I long for the freedom of my country.'⁶¹

The *Irish News*, O'Brennan wrote was "not established as a Catholic but as a political paper" but was edited by one who would as cheerfully defend the faith as anyone in the British isles, and who had already sacrificed much in doing so. It was bad therefore that it could be said that the Archbishop of London could have attempted to damage their property and doubted their catholicity, a faith in which they had a much longer history than he,

We are as Catholic as his Grace... without fear of the imputation of vanity we understand its principles-both dogmatic and moral-as well as others do, and why should we not, as we sucked them in.

⁶⁰ *Irish News* 13/4/1867 p56

⁶¹ Legg (1997) p.69.

O'Brennan, at this point had two strings to his bow and the *Connaught Patriot* added its voice to the controversy. The *Weekly Register*,⁶² reprinted part of an article from the *Connaught Patriot* describing a mass in London at which Manning denounced Fenianism and O'Brennan from the pulpit. According to the article, 'there was a manifest, though suppressed indignation on the part of most of the congregation,' and went on to urge Manning to similarly condemn English rule in Ireland. This suggestion of dissent outraged the *Register*.

Shame on the Catholic writer who could so calumniate his brethren for the sake of wounding through them their revered Archbishop! No true Catholic could possibly disagree with 'their own prelate, standing in full pontifical garb at the altar of God.

The archbishop's offence,

was that he told Catholics, in opposition to the dictum of certain obscure journals, lately started in London, and not quite unknown, we opine, at Tuam, that it is condemned in Catholic morals, in fact, a mortal sin to rebel against a civil government.

Alert for political unorthodoxy from whatever quarter, the *Weekly Register* is at odds shortly afterwards with the *Glasgow Free Press*, and O'Brennan and the *Irish News* are the cause of the rift. They reprinted an article from the *Free Press*, which they went on to criticise. The *Free Press* article went as follows,

The *Irish News*, started a month ago in London, has ceased to exist. The editor, Martin O'Brennan Esquire had the boldness to teach a few national truths and in consequence was hunted out of London. The chief pursuer of this distinguished scholar was, we are sorry to say, Archbishop Manning. The bishop issued a pastoral, calculated to crush the paper, and it did so most effectually, for the *Irish News* ceased to exist at the fourth number. Is it wise for bishops and archbishops to descend from their positions and labour to crush a national organ? We confess our blindness and inability to see the good that can arise from such persecutions....but for an archbishop to try to effect the downfall of a good paper, conducted by a good Catholic is to us utterly incomprehensible.⁶³

⁶² *Weekly Register* 30/31867 p25

⁶³ They were to find out , for the *Glasgow Free Press* suffered a similar fate

The *Weekly Register's* reply is redolent with the usual middle class concern about the Irish working class and their supposed susceptibility to seditious literature. The *Irish News* it opined had not been condemned for its Catholicism or its 'national' character, "but on account of the deliberate Fenianism—otherwise rebellion—which it preached and taught the poor Irish of the Archbishop's flock'. The article went on, "In issuing the pastoral ... Dr Manning merely did his duty; first as a bishop of Christ's Church; secondly as an Englishman and a loyal subject of Queen Victoria". Then, in a passage in which one can feel the glee with which the *Register* greets the fate of O'Brennan,

Martin O'Brennan may be what the *Free Press* calls a good Catholic, but if he was the editor of the paper which the archbishop spoke of in his Pastoral, he must have been somewhat irregular in his mode of showing his affection and duty to the Church, and we trust he has now seen the error of his ways. In these days of modern scepticism and infidelity, it is consoling to see that, even in a Protestant country the mitre and crozier of the episcopacy has the power to "crush a paper". Let Mr. Martin A O'Brennan start an orthodox Catholic print, quite free from the taint of rebellion or Fenianism, and no doubt the Archbishop will be among the first to recognise and praise his labours.⁶⁴

So, exiled from his homeland by the government, and prevented from working by the church, O'Brennan followed in the footsteps of so many before him and in the Autumn of the same year, went to the United States.

⁶⁴ *Weekly Register*, 4/5/1867

4.6 The City of Chicago

In America, O'Brennan lectured on Irish history, language and politics. Among many reports of his activities, is one from the *Universal News*⁶⁵ which had evidently forgiven him for whatever it was he had done to offend them (He was, "...frequently interrupted by bursts of applause", and had detailed with forcible eloquence the "glaring wrongs of the ruthless tyrants". He urged all of the audience to join the Fenians. Moral Force had failed. The British understood only that medicine offered by the Fenians "the pike and the sword." He cared not if they struck in Canada or in Ireland as long as they struck. "He wished it to be understood he spoke as a historian, as a jurist, as an independent Irishman, not as an internal member of either section of the Fenian Brotherhood". In America this kind of talk did not land you in jail, but we can see in his assertion of his own independence, he was carefully refusing to become embroiled in the internal controversies of the American Fenians.

The years in America were not successful ones for O'Brennan, "the latter years of his life were spent in a hard struggle for existence," divided between journalism and the practice of the law. For a time he edited the *Chicago Independent*, but gave it up in late 1869. His paper had been, as was the custom in the practice of swapping copies with the *Universal News* and they informed their readers of his decision, wishing him well. Never prone to understatement, especially when it came to his own contribution to events, O'Brennan outlined the reasons for his decision,

The duties of editor, financial and general manager, correspondent for all purposes, agents, subscribers, correspondents, etc., sub editor, proof reader and other office business, were too many and onerous for one man. I have, moreover, to look to the subscribers' books. The discharge of those duties impaired my health, and would finally undermine it. Moreover, the revenue of the *Independent* did not afford for myself, for the discharge of all the said duties, one dollar from the day I started it. Hence, in order to make an effort to send relief to my destitute wife and family, still in Ireland, and to support myself, nature and religion advised me to resign; and therefore, with this view, I now propose to practice law in this city and state. The *Independent*, considering it was never

⁶⁵ *Universal News* 27/6/68 p7

advertised in other journals, was a great success, having supporters in every state of the Union. Chicago needs it, and let its citizens rally to uphold it. I am grateful for their generous support and to the members of the company for the trust they unanimously confided to me, I now resign it, unsullied, to their hands, but shall continue as a shareholder. As a slight change in the program and a re-organisation of the company will take place, the publication may be suspended for a week.⁶⁶

Shortly afterwards, having fought the Church in Ireland, and in England, and the British government, he managed one last tilt at authority in the shape of the City of Chicago. The evidence for this comes, like the majority of evidence in this essay from a hostile source. In this case a very hostile one. O'Brennan had sued the City of Chicago after he was struck on the head by some falling plaster whilst in the Council Chamber. The incident had taken place in early 1870, and O'Brennan was successful in his suit, being awarded the considerable sum of \$950.0. The evidence cited here is the brief for the appellant in the appeal, which was dated September 1872. O'Brennan had been awarded the damages, not for physical injuries but for injuries to his 'powers of mind'. A description of his occupations at the time of his accident then followed, he was a: lawyer, editor, lecturer, historian, grammarian, journalist, essayist, teacher, logician and metaphysician owning and editing a paper in Chicago whilst writing for several other papers in America and abroad; preparing for re-issue his History of Ireland, establishing a law practice. He also lectured throughout the country, "clearing \$1000 a month." His opponents naturally scoffed at all of this as they did at his educational qualifications and achievements. He (O'Brennan) "seems to have regarded the accident as a special providence, by means of which he was to extort that money from the city which he was not able to procure by the labour of his wonderful faculties." So, O'Brennan was accused of being an ambulance chaser— at least the ambulance was his own.⁶⁷

Neither the merits nor the outcome of the case are clear, but we are given an indication of his situation-four years after his arrival, he had still not been able send for his family. He had by this stage given up the editorship of the *Chicago Independent*-

⁶⁶ *Universal News* 20/11/1869 p14 copied from the Chicago Independent.

⁶⁷ Taken from a Supreme Court of Illinois Northern Grand Division. Brief Of Appellant, City of Chicago v Martin A O'Brennan. Chicago: Bulletin Printing Co. 1872 66 Legg (1997) p71.

ent. He died in 1878 after "a fall on the sidewalk...by which he broke one of his legs, the shock proving too much for his enfeebled constitution."⁶⁷ Another obituarist wrote, "Like too many men of fixed and steadfast principles and unfaltering devotion to the right, as it is vouchsafed them to see it, Dr. O'Brennan lived and died poor." He also continued right up to the last with the work of his lifetime—the independence of Ireland and the preservation of its native language. His last letter to the *Irish World* in New York was actually printed after his death, the paper being unaware at the time, and was characteristically pugnacious—he would have led a successful and prosperous life as a writer and linguist in Ireland he wrote, "had not the tyrant Saxon, through his minions in Ireland, interfered with me. Charley (now Judge) Barry is the vile tool that did the dirty work." Characteristic too, was his historical justification of the necessity of preserving the Irish language. He traced it back to the primitive Hebrew of Noah and said it was "if not divine, quasi divine." His family—"Mrs O'Brennan; Mr Cyrenus O'Brennan, eldest son of the dead scholar; Master O'Brennan and the five Misses O'Brennan, two more of the family being absent,"⁶⁷ attended his funeral in Chicago where he left them, in the phrase of the time, 'wholly unprovided for'.⁶⁹

This would tie in with Legg's view of O'Brennan as substantially a victim,

'repudiated by the Gaelic scholars he himself respected, ridiculed by the hard-line anti clerical Fenian leaders who would have been unlikely to trust a man who attempted to be called to the English bar; with one exception repudiated by the Catholic hierarchy and prosecuted by the authorities for association with Fenianism...'⁷⁰

It is not clear that he saw himself that way—he was perhaps unwise in his choice of friends, certainly so in the case of his enemies. He described himself, as we have seen above, 'as a historian, as a jurist, as an independent Irishman'. His was perhaps a wayward intellect, sometimes inconsistent—he supported the Fenians, but was never a member of the IRB and indeed repudiated them at his trial—he was a Catholic, but one who would not accept the authority of the hierarchy. 'An in-

⁶⁸ *Irish World* 2/3/1878

⁶⁹ *Galway Vindicator* 9/3/1878, quoted in Legg, (1997) p71

⁷⁰ Legg (1992) p.232

dependent Irishman', perhaps a little too independent, but one who, according to his own lights, fought the good fight. He was one of those whose efforts ensured the Irish language survived in a period when it looked all too fragile. As with the *Universal News*, the history of the *Irish News* illustrates the policing role the Catholic church played in the politics of the Irish in England. In the case of O'Brennan though, it is shown in much starker terms-he was arrested, imprisoned and then exiled by the state in Ireland-in England, the unique position of the Catholic church as an accepted authority among Irish Catholics, allowed Manning to destroy him with a letter.

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Part Five Sources and Methodology

5.0 Project Development

This thesis has undergone radical change during the course of its development. It began as an undergraduate research report and was originally intended to be a case study of the *Irish Post*, the most popular and well-established paper among the Irish in Britain today. In order to read back issues but also to find material for a projected section on the history of the Irish press in Britain, I visited the British Museum’s newspaper collection at Colindale. There, I decided to pursue the historical material first, with the outcome that I never read a single issue of the *Irish Post* but instead became fascinated with the nineteenth century immigrant press. And so it has remained.

Having whetted my appetite with a broad survey of the press throughout the out the nineteenth century, I began to narrow the focus—first to the half century after the Famine and eventually to a period of ten years or so from 1859 to 1870. There had been a clear hiatus in activity between the O’Connellite press of the 1820s and 30s and a new, popular press of the late 1850s, which provided a natural starting point. It soon became clear to me that it was possible to view the decade of (roughly) the 1860s as an episode in itself.

5.1 Definitions

In order to research a topic one has to define it, to map the parameters of the work at hand. How then does one define the Irish press in England? How can the Irish press in England be identified as distinct from the rest? What made a paper Irish as opposed to English, secular as opposed to religious? We might identify four elements which could be used as a measure of Irish influence—ownership; authorship (as writers and/or editors); readership; and address. By address, I mean the voice with which a paper spoke to its readers. Specialist papers address particular facets of their readers' interests and identities, so *St Crispin*, for example, was the leather workers paper and the point of contact between it and its readers was their profession. Other papers addressed themselves to their readers' religion. In defining a paper, it is address which is crucial. Address tells us not only who the paper is aimed at, for an examination of the advertisements carried, might do that in a broad sense. From the editorial content, the politics of the paper and its implied readers may be ascertained. Thus, in comparing the *Universe* and the *Universal News*, papers which began within weeks of each other in London in 1860, it is possible to state that the former could not truly be described as Irish whereas the latter could. This despite the fact that owners, editors and readership of both were Irish. Both newspapers were cheap, the *Universal News* cost 2d and the *Universe* 1d. Whereas the *Universal News* covered issues of concern to Catholics, it did not do so at the expense of other news, its concerns were Irish concerns; the *Universe*, though it did not ignore Irish matters entirely, its focus was always Catholic. It was an ultramontane¹ organ whose object was to forge a Roman identity for the Catholics of England, in the same vein as its French predecessor *L'Univers*. It addressed its largely Irish readership as *Catholics*. It was part of the story of the *Universal News* that it was not able to address its readers as Irish and Catholic separately. Nor could it continue to attract the support of English Catholics.

The permutations possible between Irish/English, Catholic/secular do not make for easy definitions, especially as newspapers (like the people who read them) were not born with a complete and immutable identity, but rather were subject to change and negotiation with the ebbs and flows of influences and pressures within and without the community of readers they sought to serve. For the three papers studied here, the *Universal News*, the *Irish Liberator* and the *Irish News*, it was fatherland that usually exerted a greater influence than faith.

¹ Meaning 'beyond the mountains' or Roman. That section of the Catholic church headed by Pius IX, which sought to unify and centralise the church in Europe under the papacy. Supported the temporal power of the Pope and famously the doctrine of Infallibility. The hierarchy in England and Ireland was strongly ultramontane.

5.2 Sources

One of the central concerns of the project is the desire for accuracy—I have wished to map as faithfully as possible the extent and shape of this press, both in terms of the papers themselves and the people who owned, controlled and wrote for them. Accuracy, as has often been stated,² is not a virtue in a historian but basic necessity, but it must be remembered that writing history is dependent on the evidence bequeathed to us by posterity. The course of this project has been shaped by the incompleteness of the holdings of the various papers; the almost total absence of day-to-day records and personal papers of journalists, editors and proprietors; and the lack of previous scholarly research. Those newspapers whose proprietors, very often anonymous like the editors and journalists, who did not see fit to deposit copies with the British Museum have not survived. The Newspaper Library at Colindale is by far the most important source, though other libraries in England and Ireland have copies of journals which the British library does not. Business records have similarly perished. An exception to this is the correspondence and other material of the Dublin *Irish People* which was seized by the police after the paper was suppressed in 1865.³ Though fragmentary, it provides a rare glimpse into the inner workings of an Irish nationalist paper and a revolutionary organisation, and, because of its connections with the London branches of the IRB and London journals, particularly the *Irish Liberator* it contributes directly to our story.

This is the first attempt at a detailed analysis of the role of the Irish press in England, for any period. It is virgin soil, uncharted territory. The burgeoning field of studies of the Irish diaspora has so far produced only one published essay on the subject, and I know of only two other undergraduate pieces, both unpublished.⁴ Even when writing about the Irish in Britain, serious historians have overlooked the remaining copies of those papers published for them as a resource. Rose, for example, makes extensive use of newspapers in his monograph on the Manchester Martyrs. He quotes from radical and mainstream English papers, right across the spectrum: the *Beehive*, *Reynold's News*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Times*; he

² For example in Carr, EH (1961) *What is History?* London: Penguin (1990ed) pp10-11

³ Irish National Archives Fenian Briefs 1865-9 Carton 5 Env 17 Business letters Jan-Sept 1865 & some undated. Consists mainly of letters from subscribers and newsagents usually addressed to the paper's business manager O'Donovan Rossa. Has lists of subscribers, complaints about clerical interference, distribution problems etc. There are also other files containing, for example, drafts of articles.

⁴ Dudley Edwards, O & Storey, P J (1985) 'The Irish Press in Victorian Britain' in Swift, R & Gilley, S (eds) *The Irish In the Victorian City*. London: Croom Helm; Conway, Linda 'An Analysis of the Irish Immigrant Press, 1831-1981' BA Media Studies 1981 U Westminster and an undergraduate research report of my own (1995) from the London College of Printing

quotes from nationals and local Manchester prints; he also quotes from a variety of Irish opinion, Dublin, provincial, Fenian and otherwise; he quotes from the *New York Herald*, *Times* and *Gaelic American*, *Liberte* from France and *Independence Belge*, but nowhere in this story of the Irish in England does he even notice the existence of an Irish newspaper in England.⁵

Coupled with the lack of primary sources, this dearth of secondary material means that one needs the investigative and deductive powers of a Sherlock Holmes, so little is there to go on. All is not doom and gloom, however, and after a while it becomes clear that, to borrow a phrase from a latter day sleuth of almost equal stature, *the truth is out there*—in boxes in archives, hiding among the pages of a hundred different newspapers, hints in one, half-truths in the next, false trails in another. Information on individual papers, or journalists does exist in the literature, merely that it is buried within other work and has to be disinterred, the scattered fragments, contained in writings on political movements, or in biographies, autobiographies etc., have to be collected together and re-assembled.⁶

This paucity of literature on the subject has certain implications: one being the increased likelihood of errors in the existing work. The researcher must depend upon his or her own resources more than is perhaps usual. The academic process where each work generates criticism and comment, re-evaluation and development, (hopefully) leading to greater understanding, is in its early stages. This is not to attempt to deflect criticism for any shortcomings in this work in advance, but merely to acknowledge the difficulties which come with this particular territory. ML Legg has criticised the inaccuracies of the only directory of the Irish press.⁷ As far as this study goes, the major sins of that work are of omission—very few of those Irish papers printed in England appear in the directory, making it of limited use.

Internal evidence (like any other kind) has to be treated with caution. By this I mean the evidence found in the pages of the papers themselves, or in documents

⁵ Rose, P (1970) *The Manchester Martyrs: the story of a Fenian Tragedy*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

⁶ For example WJ Lowe writes on the early development of Irish and Catholic journalism in Liverpool in his 'The Irish in Lancashire 1846-71' Ph.D. unpublished (1974) Trinity College Dublin; Details on the London Irish Liberator 1863-4 are found in Bell, T (1968) 'The Reverend David Bell'. *The Clogher Record*, Vol.6 No.2. Monaghan: Cumann Seanchais Chlochair

⁷ Legg ML (1999) *Op.cit.* p17. She is referring to the Waterloo Directory of Irish Newspapers and Periodicals, (Phase II Waterloo Ontario 1986), which she says has both major and minor inaccuracies.

emanating from them. This has its pitfalls—Edwards and Storey, for example, for this reason, wrongly ascribe editorship of the *Irish Liberator*, to one Thomas Cashen, who wrote the opening address in the first issue. Other such evidence—in this case the held in the PRO would have hinted that the witness to the Memorandum of Association. In itself it may seem a small matter but such wrong assumptions can break the chain of relationships between writers, papers and political movements that alone can give us a true picture of the role of both individual journalists and of the press in general.

Articles were in almost all cases published without by-lines and even the name of the editor did not appear anywhere in most papers,⁹ making authorship very difficult to ascribe. Journalists used pseudonyms, the unearthing of which has become a branch of study in its own right. Dennis Holland for example, who edited the *Irish Liberator*, employed different pseudonyms depending on what it was he was writing, so he was *Allua* or *Lamhdearg* when writing political stories; *Abhomor* in his prose fiction; *Otho* or *Le Reveur* or just *H* in his verse; and *DH* in his London column for the *Irishman*. *Allua*, Holland took from Callanan's *Gougane Barra*,¹⁰ so the choice of pseudonym was sometimes from a favourite piece of literature. It may well have been a clue to author's true identity for the initiated at the time, but from this distance we can do no more than speculate. *Caviare* may have been *Universal News* editor JF O'Donnell's way of asserting his superiority over the rest, or possibly a reference to the finer things in life which journalism did not buy him. He also wrote as *Monkton West* and *XMP*.¹¹

It is necessary therefore to utilise the widest range of sources as possible, not only before making any assertions of fact, however qualified. ML Legg has written that the *Irish News* was seized, meaning closed down by the police, as an explanation for its disappearance. Given the prior history of the editor, Martin A O'Brennan, the assumption of the interference of the state seems on the face of it, reasonable. He had, after all, been arrested and imprisoned at least twice before. As we have seen though, it was the condemnation from Cardinal Manning which was the instrument of his downfall.

⁸ They suggest the secretary of the publishing company. Evidence of the identities of the three editors who worked on this paper in its short existence is to be found in a variety of sources, from the T Bell essay previously mentioned, to Fenian papers in the National Archive of Ireland and articles in a variety of papers in England and Ireland.

⁹ The *Irish News* was unusual in this regard, Martin A O'Brennan's name being placed prominently under the masthead.

¹⁰ JJ Callanan, (1759-1829) poet and folklorist. *Gougane Barra* is one of his most famous poems blending a love of place with a condemnation of English rule and Protestantism. (From Welch, Op.cit pp77-8)

¹¹ *Irish Monthly* 1890 pp 609-615

Papers liberally borrowed articles from each other, indeed, papers such as the London *Universal Express* of 1867 vintage, of which no copy remains, exist only in the cut-and-paste articles to be found elsewhere. Newspapers wrote about themselves, gave details of annual meetings of shareholders, or those to raise support for the paper etc. The 'Correspondents' as opposed to the 'Correspondence' columns of the papers are often informative, though many of the announcements, queries and replies are cryptic, if not actually coded. Editors, of course convinced of their own importance praised their own papers, and damned those of others—often in very uncomplimentary terms, 'newspaper wars' as they were known being a common feature at the time.

In the absence of a directory, a survey of the Catholic press would seem to be a boon to the researcher. A general survey of the Catholic press worldwide was given in the New Catholic Encyclopaedia, but more specific and contemporary detail is contained a survey printed in 1867. It was written by a cleric, Canon Frederick Husenbeth and appeared on the front page of the first issue of a new Catholic publication, *Catholic Opinion*.



Fig. 40 Survey of the Catholic Periodical press in
Catholic Opinion 30/1/1867

In the survey was an entry for a paper of which there are no surviving copies. It was called the *Universal Express*.

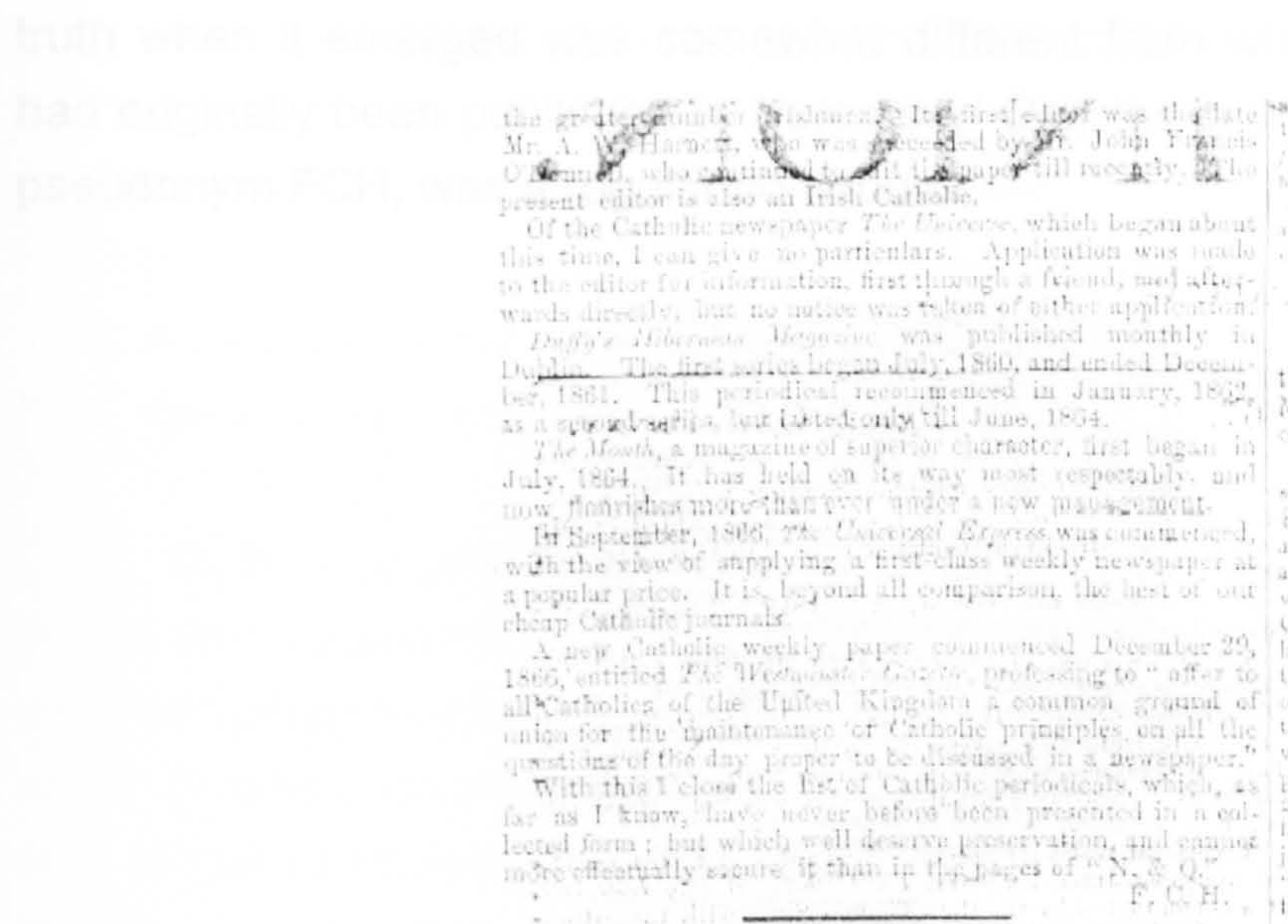


Fig. 41 *Universal Express* entry in *Catholic Opinion* 19/1/1867

The *Universal Express* also had an entry in Mitchell's press guide¹² for the year 1867, which went as follows:-

Universal Express Sat 2d & 3d Est. Sept 1866

The Express supports the Catholics, and especially the Irish section. All news concerning the Fenians is carefully reported, and the interest of the large religious body for whom the paper was established are supported by articles and correspondence. Publ. by R Archer 5, Red Lion Ct Fleet St.

I now had two intriguing pieces of information: the *Universal Express* "carefully reported" everything concerning the Fenians and it was at the same time, in the opinion of a fairly senior Catholic cleric "beyond all comparison the best of our cheap Catholic journals." I was now in something of a quandary—Fenianism and the press combined, was something which normally brought down the condemnation of the clergy upon the hapless heads of the journalists concerned, but here was a journal which seemed to have reconciled the irreconcilable. How was this possible? The

¹² Mitchell's Directory of the Press, 1867 p25

truth when it emerged was somewhat different from what I expected. The survey had originally been published in *Notes and Queries* to which Husenbeth, under the pseudonym FCH, was a regular contributor.

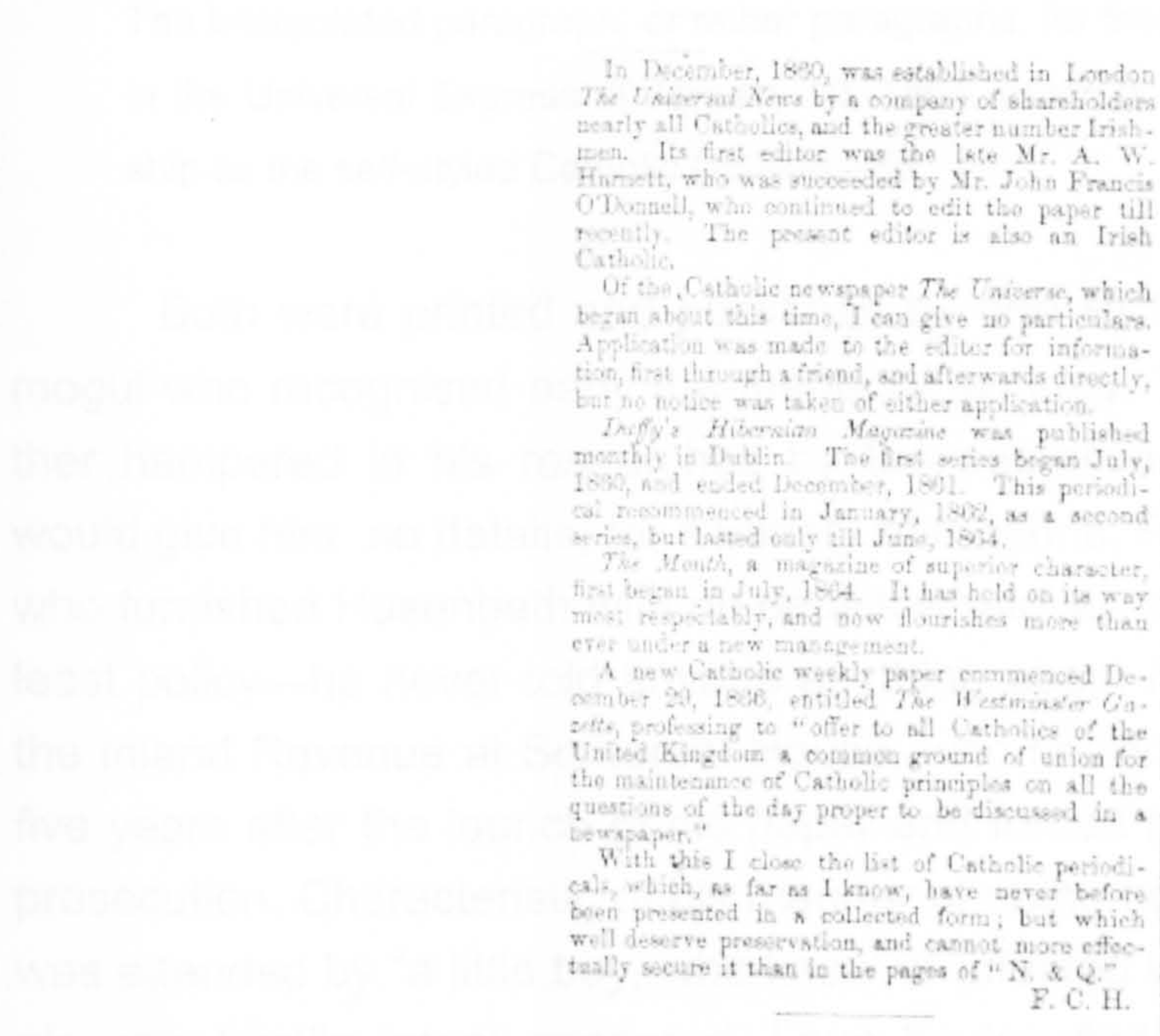


Fig. 42 The original survey from *Notes and Queries*
(3rd S. XI 12/1/1867, p31) minus the *Universal Express* entry

So, in the original there was no mention of the *Universal Express*. The entry, it transpired, was not written by Husenbeth at all, and he was not impressed when he found out. He wrote to *Notes and Queries* in February denying all knowledge of the paper,¹³

This list has been transferred, with due acknowledgement, from "N&Q" to the first page of a new periodical called *Catholic Opinion*. But I was surprised, and by no means pleased, to find a paragraph interpolated, of which I never wrote a word, noticing a paper accidentally omitted in my list, and also extolling it as 'beyond all comparison, the best of our cheap Catholic journals.' Now, whether this paper, *The Universal Express*, deserves this high praise or not I do not know; but I must protest against being thus made responsible for what I never wrote..

¹³ Frederick Canon Husenbeth, *Notes and Queries* 3rd Series XI Feb 23 1867 p155 The editor's contribution is on the same page.

To Husenbeth's answering the question What? The editor of *Notes and Queries* supplied the Why?

The interpolated paragraph, or rather paragraphs, for there is another, first appeared in the *Universal Express* of January 19, 1867, which is under the same proprietorship as the self-styled *Catholic Opinion*. -Ed

Both were printed and published by one Richard Archer, a would-be media mogul who recognised early the merits of synergy. The good Canon had been further hampered in his researches by the secretiveness of some proprietors who would give him no details, for a variety of reasons. For Denny Lane of the *Universe*, who furnished Husenbeth with no details whatever, it was a matter of principle, or at least policy—he never told anyone anything about his business dealings, including the Inland Revenue at Somerset House, who finally tracked him down in July 1865 five years after the launch of his paper and forced him to register it under threat of prosecution. Characteristic of his manner of doing business is the fact that his office was attended by “a little boy, who knew or affected to know nothing” whenever people with hostile intent appeared, Lane having first made himself scarce.¹⁴ An ill-tempered exchange of letters in the Dublin *Irish People* shows that it is not only present day researchers who have difficulty in determining who wrote for which paper, the journalists and editors concerned at the time could not always agree. Augustus Keane, editor of the *Glasgow Free Press* wrote first, saying it had been put about that a John McGairy had been a sub editor on his paper. The man in question, he said, was a journey man printer employed only briefly as such, and was never employed as a writer for any period of time. A long letter from McGairy followed, claiming he was indeed a sub editor and there had been an announcement to that effect in the paper in May of that year.¹⁵

Newspapers, in their own time, are not rarities, they are produced in thousands, read by tens of thousands, but they are essentially ephemeral. The records of failed businesses are consigned to the flames. Chance always has a part to play in what is left to posterity. Governments keep records of course, but they can be accidentally destroyed or lost. The revolutionary politics of this period has meant that one side of the argument—the conspirators—have been largely silent, as they were

¹⁴ PRO IR 56 45 letter from the editor of the *Stockton Herald*, 1/8/1866.

¹⁵ *Irish People* 21st and 28th may 1865.

indeed sworn to be. There have been famous exceptions, but even they are thin on detail, and as Patrick Quinlivan,¹⁶ one of the historians of the fenians has noted, very many of those who were connected to the IRB never felt secure enough in their lifetimes to tell their story.

¹⁶ Quinlivan, P (1994) 'Hunting the Fenians: problems in the historiography of a secret organisation' in P O'Sullivan, (ed) *The Creative Migrant*. Leicester University Press. esp pp145-8

5.3 Context

The above discussion of sources inevitably touched on the question of context. Nothing exists in a vacuum: any organisation, phenomena, practice is embedded in a other organisations, phenomena, practices. The subject of study is of course brought into sharper focus, but isolated from its hinterland, its background, it loses meaning. Nowhere is this more relevant than in the study of the media—no other industry is as embedded in everyday life, in the period in question the press was involved in every area of human activity—cultural, political, economic, religious. Here is both the fascination and the difficulty of a historical study of a press. John Boyle O'Reilly, fenian soldier, newspaper editor and poet, said in a speech in 1872,

But the newspaper is a biography of something greater than a man. It is the biography of a *Day*. It is a photograph, of twenty four hours' length, of the mysterious river of time that is sweeping past us forever. And yet we take our year's newspapers, which contain more tales of sorrow and of suffering, and joy and success, and ambition and defeat, and villainy and virtue, than the greatest book ever written, and we give them to the girl to light the fire. It is a strange fact that nobody prizes a newspaper for its abstract value until it is about a century out of date. It would seem that newspapers are like wine; the older they are, the more valuable. If we go into a library piled with books, old and new, we may find it hard to select one to suit our taste. But let a man lay his hand upon a newspaper of a hundred years ago, with its stained yellow pages and its old-fashioned type and he is interested at once. He sits down and reads it all through, advertisements and news and editorials—only, fortunately for the people of the olden times, there were very few editorials written then. And why does he do this? Because he recognises the true nature of the newspaper. He sees in the yellow paper and small page what he probably fails to see in his splendidly printed daily or weekly newspaper of today. He realises as he reads that the newspaper is indeed the truest biography of a day. Its paragraphs and articles are a mosaic of men's daily actions; and his heart feels the touch of the wonderful human sympathy that makes us brethren of the men of all climes and all ages. ¹⁷

According to Michael Wolff,¹⁸ in any historical study of the press, we need to know who owned, conducted and wrote for the paper(s). Something too, of the con-

¹⁷ Roche, JJ (1891) *Life of John Boyle O'Reilly*. Philadelphia, PA: John J McVey. Pp130-131. Condemned and transported for treason felony, he escaped from Western Australia and went to Boston where he edited the Boston Pilot until his death.

¹⁸ Quoted from Pykett, L (1990) 'Reading the Periodical Press: Text and Context' in L Brake, A Jones & L Madden (eds) *Investigating Victorian Journalism*. London Macmillan. p4

ditions under which they worked. What were their aims? Were they commercial or did they have political or other purposes? Who read the papers? What kind of lives did they lead? What part did the papers play in their lives? A newspaper has a cultural and an economic existence. If a paper did not make sufficient sales, unless supported by patrons, or political, social or religious organisations, it did not survive. It is therefore necessary to take account of the economic conditions under which papers operated. It may be, for example, very pertinent to the failure of one or more papers in the late 1860s that this was a period of recession. A paper is not a passive object, but is an actor in its own right, shaped by but also shaping the society in which it exists. It can lead its readers as well as being lead by them. It is necessary then to understand the context in its fullest sense in which those papers operated. Lyn Pykett has argued that this desire to contextualise necessitates an approach to scholarship which can lead the researcher into aspiring to the impossible, a desire for "total knowledge of a past culture."¹⁹ This is fair comment—the papers constantly referred to events happening outside of the then United Kingdom—their 'home beat' comprised not only these islands but the British Empire. Events in Europe, America and elsewhere were similarly relevant. If one attempted to follow every reference, backwards in time and outwards geographically, then the end result would clearly be confusion. However, I would contend that it is not possible to read the Irish newspapers of the 1860s and 70s without being aware at the very least of how such seemingly distant events as the Italian *risorgimento*, or the American Civil War impacted on Irish (and English) society.

There is also a personal context. I originally proposed to study the *Irish Post* partly because it was a feature of my family life. Like thousands of other London Irish households we took English papers in the week; on Saturday we took the *Irish Post* and on Sunday we read, along with Beaverbrook's *Sunday Express*, De-Valera's *Irish Press*. In reading the Victorian papers, with their beautiful, complex prose, which gave them an air of sophistication that at the same time possessed a quality of earnestness that strikes the modern reader as somehow innocent, I entered a world which was at once utterly strange but also in other ways familiar. At first, the yellowing, badly-printed pages, whose tightly-packed columns contained, for example, parliamentary debates quoted verbatim and entire, seemed to resist interpretation. So too, did the subject matter—names of long forgotten campaigns, policies, people—controversies that were now silenced forever and forever inscrutable.

¹⁹ Pykett p5

The past is indeed a foreign country, but there was familiarity, though. In some ways we do things the same. Some names from the Victorian era had survived down to the present. Names of people—Cardinals Manning and Wiseman—to me, a London Irish Catholic, they were the names of the schools we went to, their portraits hanging in places of honour on the walls. The papers of the nineteenth century were festooned with appeals for money to build schools and churches, and such notices still appeared, the diocese was still building. In my youth in the 1960s, at the back of the church or in the repository, after mass on Sundays, you could buy Catholic papers, the *Catholic Herald*, and for a hundred years, since December 1860, the *Universe*. For a while, in 1970 when it began, you could also buy the *Irish Post*, but the old problems resurfaced within a year, and in response to a story headlined 'Sex goes underground', priests around London banned it.²⁰ The relationship between secular world of the journalists and the religious and moral one of the priests were still capable of producing sparks. The nineteenth century was not so strange after all. The *Universal News*, *Irish Liberator* and *Irish News* were not perhaps the direct ancestors of the *Irish Post*, for their politics were hotter, their opinions expressed more stridently. The old ingredients were still there however—emigration, the faith and the politics of Irish freedom—the peasants of the 1840s had moved on, assimilated, died. Those of the 1940s were still here, still living in two worlds. There was a point of entry. For me, in a way, the history I was reading was my own.

²⁰ Conway, L (1981) 'An analysis of the Irish immigrant press, 1831-1981' unpubl. BA dissertation, University of Westminster. p50 The story was about a man Michael Meany who was attempting a world endurance record for staying underground. He said that he was taking his wife along with him for company, hence the offending headline. From one church in Quex Road Kilburn the paper lost over 500 sales.

Part Six Concluding Remarks

In this concluding section I wish to relate the findings of the foregoing study to wider concerns within the fields of communications, cultural and historical studies, which though they have informed the analysis of the papers and are implicit in it, have not thus far been dealt with explicitly. In particular, I wish to explore what contribution might be made to the still unfolding discussion on the role of the media in the formation of a public sphere, and what is the place of the press of the Irish immigrant press of 1860s England in the development of Irish nationalism in general and in Irish cultural nationalism in particular?

As others have found before,¹ though there is a great deal to be said for Habermas' public sphere as a normative concept, as a historical description it leaves much to be desired. Whatever one's views on the nature of the public sphere in England of the 1860s, it is clear from this study that the Irish immigrants both were and felt themselves to be excluded. There was no overarching forum to which the Irish migrants could contribute as equals, they were at this period a largely despised and unheeded minority, who were doubly or trebly excluded on grounds of class, nationality, and religion. The Irish migrants, 'the most disaffected of their race' were viewed as an alien and unwelcome addition to the English scene, and were treated as such. Geoff Eley has drawn attention to the weakness inherent in the idealised nature of Habermas' historical public sphere, which ignored the fact that many of its institutions were "founded on sectionalism, exclusiveness and repression," and which denied to more plebian radicals those rights it was wresting for itself from the aristocracy.² So though Fox in 1795, might have promised in the House of Commons to defer to public opinion if it should fundamentally disagree with him,³ the public he had in mind, was tiny, and the organs which helped form it like the London *Times* were far from egalitarian. The true picture was therefore more complex than Habermas suggested, involving competing publics, an arena more than an agora.

Nancy Fraser's extension of Habermas certainly offers, on the face of it, a likelier theoretical home for an immigrant press. She, like Eley sees the public sphere

¹ For example James Curran (1991) 'Rethinking the Media as a Public Sphere' in P Dahlgren & C Sparks, (eds) *Communication and Citizenship*. London: Routledge.

² Eley, G (1992) 'Nations, Publics and Political Cultures' in C Calhoun (ed) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press p 321

³ Habermas, J (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. London: Polity Press p 65-6

as a site of struggle, and based on exclusions and inequalities. Habermas idealised the liberal public sphere because he did not consider other, competing public spheres. The notion of contesting publics, one of which in this case constituted by working class Irish nationalists is certainly appealing. Could then, this Irish, urban, working class, the most 'subaltern' group of their day, have formed an alternative public sphere, or 'subaltern counterpublic'? We might see in the newspapers, public meetings, petitions, and organisations such as the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick, the growth of an alternative public, outside of the control of either government or the church. The public house, in addition to but also in competition with the libraries and reading rooms of various political complexions, as both a physical and an intellectual space, would have been a counterpart to the coffee house of the 'historical' bourgeois public sphere. However, in Habermas' eighteenth century coffee houses there were newspapers to be discussed. The story of the Irish press in England in the 1860s is one of the struggle to establish such newspapers, and either they operated within the limitations imposed by the church, or they did not last. It may be possible to argue that cumulatively the succession of short-lived newspapers that made up the press provided something like a public sphere, but it would be difficult.

Fraser has argued that in twentieth century America subordinated groups have found it to their advantage to form 'alternative publics'. In this regard, she writes, feminists have been particularly successful and have been able to mobilise a wide range of media in order to present and develop alternative viewpoints. However, the Irish immigrant press in the period I have studied has not been a story of success, but of avenues being closed down, rather than opened up. Excluded from the mainstream of English political life, the press of the Irish migrants was further constrained by the fact that access to its readers was controlled, or at the very least heavily influenced by the church. The lesson learned by revolutionary Irish nationalists from this period was that in future public utterances and private conspiracies had to be separated more effectively—and the shadowing of public bodies such as the National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick by covert ones like the IRB, was indeed carried out much more successfully by the revolutionaries of the early twentieth century than it had been hitherto.

⁴ Fraser, N (1992) 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy' in Craig Calhoun (ed) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge Mass: The MIT Press p 123

⁵ *Ibid.* p115

⁶ For example the Rev. O'Brien's Catholic Young Men's Society.

⁷ Fraser *Op.cit.* p123

Replacing, or rather, adding to Habermas' overarching, single public sphere, Fraser sees a formulation of many competing public spheres some dominant, some subordinate, delineated according to class or race or gender, which nevertheless can contribute to a more general sphere to which all, in their different ways, belong. The members of each sphere, though they speak in the first instance within their own public, do not constitute 'enclaves' but "aspire to disseminate [their] discourse to ever widening arenas"⁸, and do not therefore encourage fragmentation. In this way her counter-publics do not lead as might be supposed, to separatism. Separatism, and I assume she is referring to black or feminist separatism in the context of the present day United States, is in this reading a bad thing, and as Fraser sees her formulation of a public sphere in a normative sense, which, if nurtured would best give a voice to all sections of society, she wishes to diminish any possible ill effects. She does not wish to replace a singular public sphere which ignores and excludes, by a set of inward-looking groups which speak to no one but themselves. According to Fraser, contesting counter-publics, in the long run unify and do not separate.

To Irish nationalists, on the other hand, separation (admittedly to varying degrees), was the prime objective. They did not want to play, they wanted to establish their own game with their own rules. *Sinn Fein* (Ourselves). The *Universal News* began as a paper which was intended to unite English and Irish Catholics, and would not give offence even in a Protestant household. Within months of its launch it was losing English readers and supporters because they perceived it to be too *Irish*. It spent its entire career, as did the other papers studied here, arguing the case for the separation of Ireland from England. This was the central question of Irish political life. The English Catholic church condemned these papers precisely because it perceived the dissemination of nationalist ideas could lead to such a result. It would seem then that the likely effects of any particular counter public ultimately depend upon the objectives of those who form it. There is no inherent tendency either towards fragmentation or unity in any configuration of publics. An agora composed of competing publics does not by its nature lead towards fragmentation but it is equally clear, from our study, that in some cases it most certainly does lead to separatism.

The Irish press operated within a form of social organisation which was denominational. As previously stated, (Section 1.7), it was a Catholic community. This is not to say that its members were entirely composed of Catholics, or even believ-

⁸ Ibid. p124

ers—they clearly were not—but in its social organisation it was Catholic. The church offered the Irish migrants many things, some physical, some spiritual: shelter; education for their children; morality; a sense of human dignity; an explanation for the universe, but it did not offer a free arena for political debate. This is not to say that there was no exchange of ideas at all, there most certainly was, but it was a sphere so attenuated as to bear little resemblance to Habermas' idealised version of it. Indeed this has been the study of how one section of the working class in England were prevented from participating in public debate, how one group who may have formed part of a public sphere were excluded.

It must be remembered the church of which the Irish migrants now formed the greater part was an *English* Catholic church and the political concerns of the hierarchy were dominated by English and not Irish concerns. Cardinals Cullen in Ireland and Manning in England may have been in agreement on the subject of Fenianism but they arrived at the same point by very different routes. Within the parameters laid down by the church and under the guidance of the clergy, political discussion was possible, but outside of these parameters and against the guidance of the clergy life was very difficult indeed.

The three papers studied all contribute something different towards this hypothesis. The *Universal News* was able to survive for as long as it did because it adapted to changing circumstances and was able to negotiate a path between the political aspirations of its readers and the Catholic hierarchy. As the decade progressed, and the politics of Irish separatism grew ever more insistent, this became more difficult, leading it from co-operation to compromise, and then finally to open confrontation. The *Irish Liberator* existed entirely beyond the pale of the church, and was thus economically vulnerable. Only those agents and vendors who were willing and able to face down the opposition of the hierarchy would have handled it, and only those readers who were prepared to go against the advice of the clergy to shun secret societies would have read it. More than this, the fate of its second editor, the Presbyterian minister David Bell, demonstrates that within this community one's right to communicate publicly was in part determined by one's religion. Martin O'Brennan's *Irish News* demonstrates that beyond religious affiliation, orthodoxy within Catholicism and acceptance of due authority was a pre-requisite for what we might call a licence to communicate.⁹ O'Brennan was perceived to be a dangerous person and was therefore anathema. He had no powerful allies within the church in

⁹ Curran J & Seaton J (1994) *Power Without Responsibility*. London: Routledge write in Ch. 4 of advertising as a de facto system of 'licencing'.

England who might have protected him as they did in Ireland, and so he failed.

One of the most striking attributes of this press was its role as political organiser. This was a role self-consciously embraced by the papers and was enunciated in both the *Universal News* and in the *Irish Liberator* in terms which are virtually identical to those used by Lenin over thirty years later at the start of the twentieth century.¹⁰ It allowed the most far-flung elements of organisations such as the National Brotherhood of St Patrick not only to keep in touch with the central committee but also, indirectly, with each other and permitted the spread of the NBSP and the accompanying shadow organisation of IRB members throughout the United Kingdom and beyond. Ireland had long seen secret organisations on the lines of the Ribbon societies, but these were essentially local. A national movement required national organisation, and this was achieved by means of the press. The *Irish Liberator* had three clearly defined roles, all recognisable in Lenin's later writings on the functions of a political press—education, organisation and propaganda. The role of a newspaper” Lenin wrote,

however, is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser.¹¹

Both Irish nationalists of the 1860s and the Bolshevik revolutionaries of the early twentieth century built organisations of which to use Lenin's term, newspapers were the scaffolding. Compare the following previously included, (see 3.6) quote from the *Irish Liberator* in 1863 to that of *Iskra (The Spark)* in 1901 on the educative and organisational role of newspapers in revolutionary movements. First the *Irish Liberator*. Branches of the NBSP needed to be *au fait* with the political situation,

a thorough acquaintance with, and a watchful vigilance over, every incident of political moment taking place in Ireland is requisite. The state of the country, and the tendency of foreign politics...should be made known to every member of the Brotherhood throughout the three kingdoms.

¹⁰ Compare Lenin VI (1961) *Where To Begin* (published May 1901) *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition Vol. 5 pp13-24 and *What Is To Be Done?* pp 347-529. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House. Both are available at The VI Lenin Internet Library <http://www.marx2mao.org//Lenin/Index.html>, with, for example, the *Irish Liberator* 14/11/1863 p104-5, 22/11/1863 p121-2; *Universal News* 22/3/1862 p4, 3/1/1868 p8.

¹¹ Lenin VI 'Where To Begin' *Iskra* no 4 May 1901 in Jerome, V (ed) (1961) VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House. p 23

What they were building was a 'grand Association of Nationalists,' which could

only exist by means of local and parochial tributaries, all flowing harmoniously together and meeting together at a common source" which was the Central Committee.

And now we come to the main question as to how or through what sources the accumulated body of information, instruction and thought is to be sent forth to the Brotherhood at large, in all the diversified parts of its organic combination. The answer to this is as clear as common sense or experience could make it. It can only be done by means of a public organ or journal properly conducted, vigorously written, scrupulously truthful, and enjoying the confidence of the entire Brotherhood. Without the existence of such a journal, let each brother remember, there exists not a particle of a chance of success.¹²

The parallels of this vision with Lenin's vision of *Iskra* are striking,

With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape, that will engage not only in local activities, but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effect on the various strata of the population, and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence those events.¹³

The idea of the newspaper as political organiser then may be just as fruitful a way of viewing the Irish immigrant of the 1860s as seeing it as helping to constitute a 'counterpublic.'

According to Benedict Anderson, the newspaper press allowed the inhabitants of putative nations to imagine a community between themselves and their fellows even though they were never to meet. The fact of diaspora gives a curious twist to this because the emigrant Irish did meet—face to face in the slums of London, Manchester, Liverpool, New York and Boston. All the 'Little Irelands', were in fact just that—microcosms of the whole. It was easy work for the nationalist presses of Britain, America and Australia to exhort their readers to define themselves in 'national' rather than 'local' terms as they had in their previous, parochial, rural lives. In the industrial cities and towns of the nineteenth century, Irish men and women from

¹² *Irish Liberator* 14/11/1863 p104-5

¹³ Lenin, *Op.cit.* p23

county Derry and county Cork, from the hills of Wicklow and from the Burren, lived, worked and died as *Irish*. Lumped together by the wider societies they lived in as 'mere' Irish, they did come to define themselves in these national terms in ways which very often transcended notions of class. The medium of print may have been the cement which united the French bourgeoisie, who were otherwise connected within the physical space of the state only by 'reverberation',¹⁴ but the fact of emigration reinforced for the Irish middle classes, as it had for the peasantry, any unifying tendencies to be found in literature. For them too, the process of imagining themselves as a nation was facilitated, (perhaps indeed made necessary), by exile.

For a nation borne out of a diaspora, the task of a nationalist press was to weld a whole from a population without as well as within the proposed national territory. Exile, or emigre groups have often been central to independence movements. Modern Greek nationalism in the shape of *Phileke Hetairia*, the secret society that was responsible for the 1821 uprising against Ottoman rule, had been founded some years before in Odessa, and the first Greek newspapers had also been printed outside of what is now Greece, in Vienna.¹⁵ The poem from JF O'Donnell (Fig. 41 Below) is an example of the place of periodical literature in this process—printed in an immigrant paper in London, it describes those in another part of the diaspora, America, who maintain their 'national' identity and associations partly by reading in the American counterparts of his London paper similar (perhaps the self-same) poetry and literature, news and opinion. Some of the poetry, the songs which unified the scattered fragments of the Irish people were O'Donnell's own.

The press of the period was intimately involved in promoting all aspects of what has been termed cultural nationalism—the promotion of the national language, national customs, sports, the creation of a national canon of literature, the creation and celebration of the national story. The careers of some of the editors studied here, O'Brennan and Holland for example would suggest that Hobsbawm is not totally correct in asserting that the Irish language "was not an issue"¹⁶ in the Fenian programme, as it had not been for O'Connell. If we take the Fenians strictly as the IRB then it is possible to agree. Within the confines of the organised conspiracy, the language had limited usefulness, because the intention of the IRB, (successful or not), was to fight, not to talk. However, taken in its broadest cultural and social

¹⁴ Anderson B (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso p 77

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p72

¹⁶ Hobsbawm (1992ed) *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p 106

sense, Fenianism was not indifferent to the language. It is here we find people such as Holland and O'Brennan—not conspirators, but part of a social, cultural and political up-welling which asserted Irish distinctiveness and claims to separation from England. Promotion of the language was one aspect of this. And they were deadly serious. In the 1840s, they had watched the Irish language dying, literally, at their feet, and subsequently they saw it departing for America with the western peasants who spoke it. It seemed to many at the time, that Irish as a language, the gaelic culture and way of life, the people themselves, faced annihilation and this leant an urgency to their efforts. O'Brennan for one, spent the rest of his life, until the mid 1870s, promoting the gaelic tongue. Indeed, as we have previously seen, his last letter to the press on the subject was published after he had already died. The *fin-de-siecle* language enthusiasts built upon foundations laid down some forty years before. As did the founders of the Gaelic Athletic Association—the groundwork for that had been performed by Dennis Holland.

Poetry and serial fiction were important ingredients of the Irish immigrant newspapers of the 1860s and are interesting in a number of ways. It has often been assumed that the part played by fiction, (and here there are similarities with what has come to be the received wisdom on the Irish language), in Irish cultural nationalism was confined to a brief (but very bountiful) flowering in the pages of the first series *Nation*, which was endlessly recycled later in the century and formed the basis for the Gaelic revival we are all familiar with. David Cairns and Shaun Richards, for example in their (1992) *Writing Ireland* are typical in passing from Davis to the literary revival and ignoring the twenty years after the famine. A study of the papers of the 1860s clearly indicates that there was greater continuity between the earlier and later periods. It is significant that it was the works of JF O'Donnell which the Southwark Irish Literary Society chose to collect in 1891 and publish as their first venture. The gentleman's rebellion of 1848 has for too long eclipsed what was, not least in terms of the numbers involved, more significant for the Irish people.

Hobsbawm sees the Irish nationalism of the period as anomalous to the European norm in that it claimed the right to a separate state earlier than other movements,¹⁷ but the strategies employed were not atypical. The National Brotherhood of Saint Patrick utilised the holding of banquets on St Patrick's Day, (which had been a

¹⁷ Hobsbawm E (1990) Op.cit p 39

feature of Irish public life for some time), to create an embryonic organisation. The formation of committees, the collection of funds for the purpose was put on a more permanent and continuous basis. Some of the writing, the poetry, in particular the kind of historical writing favoured by Martin O'Brennan, with its emphasis on the antiquity and splendour of Irish culture, and the evocation of Irish peasant life, which was a feature of Dennis Holland's prose fiction sits very comfortably within current debates on the invention of tradition and the nation as imagined community.

However, O'Brennan in particular was ridiculed by the Fenians of the *Irish People* whose cynicism towards such romantic storytelling has a very 'modern' flavour. It was his claims about the antiquity of the Irish language and the Celtic race, which the writers objected to. As they did when talk of Saxons and Celts emanated from other quarters, as in the following extract from a piece criticising the *Pall Mall Gazette*,

Perhaps the queerest part of this article is the talk about Saxons and Celts. We need scarcely tell our readers that we know no difference between Saxons and Celts in Ireland. Many of us do not know whether we are Saxons or Celts and most of us do not know how much Saxon or Celtic blood may be in our veins. In fact we care nothing from what part of the world, or at what period of its history a man's ancestors came to Ireland.¹⁸

But the concerns of much of this 'literary nationalism' of the 1860s were those of the moment. There was certainly a strain in the Irish nationalism of the time, which like the nationalisms of other small nations burdened with an inglorious present, gave "a disproportionate amount of their energies to cultural matters, to the recovery of the past and, where the past was found wanting, to its invention,"¹⁹ but as the Fenian's attempts at rebellion were founded on an organisation which was really quite formidable (however farcical it may have appeared and been subsequently characterised), there was also a hard, contemporary edge to the literary component.

Much of the serial fiction, far from evoking a golden past, an idealised Gaelic fountainhead from which the downtrodden serfs of the present only had to drink in order to realise their true destiny, was rooted very firmly in present conditions, and was therefore much more immediately and deliberately political in intent. The life-

¹⁸ *Irish People* 16/9/1865 Correspondence column. Quoted before (Part 4:3 p 272) but worth repeating.

¹⁹ Morgan, P (1983) 'The Hunt For the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period' in E Hobsbawm and T Ranger (eds) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p 98.

and-death struggles between landlord and tenant appeared, it will be remembered, in both the news columns and in those devoted to literature. News stories of the arrest of Irishmen in London on suspicion of complicity with Fenianism were mirrored in fictional accounts of the same. Some of the poetry was also overtly contemporary in a political sense, as in the following poem by JF O'Donnell, writing as usual as Caviare. It articulates the unique threat posed by Fenianism—the union of the Irish at home with those abroad. It is both a promise to those at home and a threat to the government. Those who had thought that emigration, voluntary or enforced, would act as a permanent solution to the perennial Irish problems of poverty and political unrest, were disabused of the idea by Stephens, O'Mahony and co., whose transatlantic conspiracy meant that the rulers of the Empire, far from being able to forget the remnants of the Irish peasantry once they had disappeared over the western horizon, were presently engaged in frantically scouring the streets of London for men wearing square-toed American boots.

Across The Seas

They are not dead—the exiles whom we saw
 Crowd the black ships, in those eventful years,
 And with clenched hands, and eyes the spoil of tears,
 Fled seaward before decimating Law.
 They are not dead, in watches of the night,
 Across the surges of the restless seas,
 Their voices reach us, like a wild delight,
 Passion and love in all their harmonies.
 No hut, no hearth in the vast continent,
 But treasures our traditions, songs and name—
 No tongue will soil dear Ireland with foul blame,
 Or tug her faded vesture where 'tis rent,
 For they are ours—our kith, our kin, our guest,
 Waiting till God makes right manifest.

Fig. 41 Across the Seas by JF O'Donnell, *Universal News* 6/7/1867 p9

The role of poetry and fiction in what is called cultural nationalism is not confined then to recalling past heroes and legends, but recounted in dramatic form, the struggles of the present: gave a voice and a face to the dispossessed peasant who attempted to take revenge on cruel landlords; drew the individual Fenian as dashing hero in counterpoint to the *Punch* portraits of the drunken brute astride a barrel of

gunpowder.

I have concentrated, mainly though not exclusively, on what I have identified as the crucial set of relationships which determined the fate of the Irish press in England, namely between the papers, their readers and the Catholic church. Other factors were of course also significant. The economic constraints on the development of the Irish press in England were undoubtedly severe, not least because of the ready availability of prints from Ireland. The lack of evidence of sales makes it impossible to be precise—we simply do not know how many copies of the *Nation*, or the *Irishman*, for example, were sold in England—and we do not know whether they were in addition to or in place of publications printed in England. The *Nation* was an ideological as well as an economic rival to papers such as the *Irish Liberator*. There is a deal of truth in Owen Dudley Edwards' assertion that the immigrant press was "never permitted by Ireland to establish a British identity",²⁰ but there is nothing in the record to indicate that this was the decisive impediment.

Evidence of the under-capitalisation of the papers does exist, at least for the *Universal News* and *Irish Liberator* which were financed by shares and which experienced the same difficulties in realising the sums promised by shareholders whose initial enthusiasm had waned or was outweighed by their poverty. O'Brennan's paper was financed, controversially, by private means and we have no way of ascertaining the depth of his backer's pockets but we can safely assume they were not bottomless. Similarly, the poverty and transience of the potential readership, and the collective and serial reading of papers, would all have been obstacles to a thriving press. The British radical press foundered on its inability to attract enough advertising²¹ and it might be assumed that the Irish press with a similarly impecunious readership would have suffered likewise. All the papers carried advertising, but the amount of income derived therefrom is impossible to calculate—no financial records are extant and in any case as we have seen, not all the advertisements were paid for. Of those that were, we have no way of knowing if they attracted premium rates or were discounted. The decline in political radicalism after the demise of Chartism has also been cited as the reason for the failure of the British radical press, though this has been disputed.²² No such cause can be attributed to the failure of the *Irish Liberator*, *Irish News* or the *Universal News*. Irish politics during the

²⁰ Edwards & Storey, Op.cit p178

²¹ Curran and Seaton Op.cit. Ch 4

²² Ibid.

1860s were becoming more and not less radicalised. This was a period of expansion for the press in general and given the clear motivation on the part of those who promoted, wrote for and supported this press, and given the large potential pool of readers, why was this press in general so short-lived?

The answer I have argued in detail in this thesis lies in the fraught nature of the relationship between the newspapers and the Catholic church. This is particularly clear in the case of the *Universal News* whose (relatively long) career was shaped by its relations with its English co-religionists and the hierarchy. Clerical opposition cannot be cited as the cause of the failure of the *Irish Liberator* but the opposition from 'moderate' Catholics in the shape of AM Sullivan's *Nation* to the paper's Presbyterian editor fatally weakened it. The evidence clearly indicates that over and above any other constraint on the development of the Irish press in England, it was the question of clerical influence within the Catholic community, in particular the hold the hierarchy had on the means of distribution of the papers which was crucial. Support, (or more properly what was perceived as support) for what the church regarded as dangerous secret societies was not to be permitted. If those writing for the press did not from conscience or from self interest follow the advice of the bishops, then they were publicly condemned from the altar, their readers advised to shun them and pressure was applied to those distributing them not to handle them. The transience, poverty and low levels of literacy of the potential readership undoubtedly restricted the development of the Irish press in England, as did the ready availability of newspapers from Ireland, but ultimately, it was the attitude of the church which determined the fate of newspapers addressed to the Irish migrants.

| Irish Publications in Britain 1800 to the Present Day | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| Compiled from various sources—the catalogue of the British Library the main source but also the National Library of Ireland and other libraries. Some titles gleaned from secondary sources, and for many no copies are known to be extant. Almost all holdings are partial, sometimes only one issue. End dates are in most cases approximate. BELB-Belfast Education and Libraries Board; BOD-Bodleian; BL-British Library; LNH-Linenhall Library Belfast; NEELB-North eastern (NI) Education and Libraries board; QUB-Queen's University Belfast; UNL-University of North London | | | | |
| Title | Place | Held | Start | End |
| The Harp | London | NLI | Dec 1810 | Feb 1811 |
| The Truth Teller | London | BL | Sept 1824 | Sept 1825 |
| Dublin & London Magazine | London | | March 1825 | June 1830 |
| Captain Rock In London | London | LNH,BOD, BELB | March 1825 | Dec 1826 |
| The Irishman | London | BL | Feb 1831 | March 1831 |
| The Dublin Review | London | BELB, QUB | 1836 | - |
| The Catholic and Irish Vindicator | London | | Jan 1852 | Aug 1852 |
| Glasgow Free Press | Glasgow | BL | Feb 1852 | Feb 1868 |
| Lancashire Free Press | Liverpool | BL | Oct 1859 | April 1860 |
| Universal News | London | BL, NLI | Dec 1860 | Dec 1869 |
| Northern Press became Catholic Times | Liverpool | BL | Sept 1860 | 1962 |
| Rose and Shamrock Magazine | London | BELB | July 1862 | |
| Irish/National Liberator | London | BL | Oct 1863 | July 1864 |
| Universal Express | London | | Sept 1866 | March 1867 |
| London and Dublin Family Journal | London | BL | Oct 1867 | |
| The Gael | London | | July 1867 | |
| Irish News | London | BL | March 1867 | April 1867 |
| Irish Catholic Banner | Glasgow | BL | Feb 1868 | July 1868 |
| Keltic Journal and Educator | Manchester | | Jan 1869 | |
| New Ireland | London | BL | May 1870 | |
| Irish Vindicator | London | BL | Sept 1870 | |
| Irish People | Manchester | BL | Oct 1875 | June 1876 |
| United Irishman | Liverpool | BL | May 1875 | Feb 1877 |
| Irish Programme | Liverpool | BL | Jan 1884 | Aug 1884 |
| Nationalist and Irish programme | Liverpool | BL | Sept 1884 | Feb 1885 |
| Irish Tribune | Newcastle Upon Tyne | BL | Dec 1884 | Feb 1895 |
| The Exile | | | 1884 | |
| The Glasgow Observer | Glasgow | BL | April 1885 | Jan 1939 |

| | | | | |
|--|---------------|---------|------------|------------|
| The Journal of the Home Rule Union | London | BELB | 1888 | 1890 |
| The Old Country | London | | 1893 | |
| The Irish Home Reading Magazine | London | BELB | 1894 | |
| The Purple Banner and Constitution | Manchester | NEELB | 1894 | |
| The Irish Endeavourer | Bristol | | 1895 | 1920 |
| New Ireland | London | BL | May 1898 | July 1904 |
| The Irish literary Society Gazette | London | BELB | 1898 | |
| Book Of Ireland | London | BL | March 1899 | June 1903 |
| The Shandonian | London | BELB | June 1900 | Sept 1900 |
| The Celt | London | | 1903 | |
| Inis Fail | London | | 1904 | |
| Ireland in London | London | | 1906? | 1916 |
| The London Irish News | London | | 1910 | |
| The Irishman | London | BL | July 1910 | Oct 1913 |
| The Irish Weekly Record <i>inc with the Daily Record & Mail</i> | Leeds-Glasgow | | Jan1911 | May 1931 |
| The Irish Exile | London | BL | March 1921 | June 1922 |
| Irish Freedom/ Democrat | London | BL | Jan 1939 | - |
| United Ireland | London | BL | Aug 1949 | Nov 1949 |
| The Irish Post | London | BL | 1970 | - |
| The Irish Universe | London | NLI | 1970 | |
| The Irish Advertiser | London | UNL | Jan 1987 | March 1987 |
| The London Irish News and Advertiser <i>formerly Irish Advertiser</i> | London | BL; UNL | April 1987 | May 1987 |
| The London Irish News formerly above | London | BL; UNL | June 1987 | |
| The Irish in Britain News formerly above | London | | 1987 | 1987 |
| The Irish World | London | BL | 1987 | - |

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Newspapers

Most of the newspapers consulted have been in the British library at Colindale, which holds the most extensive collection. The National Library of Ireland also has a large collection of newspapers, some of them printed in England. Other papers which are not in these central locations are harder to track down. *Captain Rock in London*, for example, I consulted in the Linenhall Library Belfast, which is also useful for secondary sources—for example the Clogher Record, a journal of local history from which I obtained details on the Irish Liberator. As well as a huge collection of secondary sources, Senate House library in London holds some primary material relevant to my topic, such as *St Crispin*, the leather workers journal, which contained John O'Neil's autobiography. St Martin's Printing Library, London was a useful source of trade information. The *Tablet* may be read at the impecunious but valuable Catholic Central Library in Euston, London.

Irish Papers Published in London

The Harp

The Truth Teller

Captain Rock in London, or the Chieftain's Gazette.

The Irishman

The Universal News

The Irish Liberator

The Irish News

The Irish Literary Enquirer

New Ireland

Other London Papers

St Crispin

The Commonwealth

Irish Papers Published in Liverpool

The Lancashire Free Press.
The Northern Press

Catholic Papers

Catholic Bulletin
Catholic Journal
Catholic Opinion
Chronicle
Tablet
Universe
Weekly Register
Westminster Gazette

Papers Published in Ireland

Irish Tribune
United Irishman and Galway American
Irish People
Nation (2nd series)
Irishman
Irish Builder
Irish Monthly

Manuscript and other Unpublished Sources

England

Public Record Office
BT Records of the Board of Trade
FO Records of the Foreign Office
HO Records of the Home office
IR Records of the Inland Revenue
MEPO Records of the Metropolitan Police
PO Records of the Post Office
Westminster Diocesan Archives

Ireland

National Library of Ireland
Larcom Papers
Luby Papers
O’Broin Papers

Irish National Archive
Fenian Briefs 1865-9
Fenian Photographs

Archive of All Hallows College Drumcondra

USA

Chicago Historical Society
State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Elsewhere

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