# THE IRISH MIGRATION TO MONTREAL

## 1847 - 1867

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by

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## PREFACE

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help of several persons who contributed generously to the preparation of this thesis. Dr. J.I. Cooper was unstinting with help which went far beyond anything I can suppose to be the normal supervision by the director of a candidate's research. In particular, I am indebted to him for long extracts from the unpublished Clerk Diary, and from the Montreal Transcript.

I owe to the Treasurer of the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society, and to the Grand Secretary for the Province of Quebec of the Orange Order, valued information on their respective organisations. Mr. John Loye, President of the United Irish Societies of Montreal, gave me a picture of the Irish past in this city which I shall not forget.

The map was prepared by my wife, from a copy kindly furnished by the Deputy Minister, Public Archives of Canada.

# INTRODUCTION

The present study proposes a detailed examination of the Irish migration to Montreal between 1847 and 1867, that is to say between the Famine and Confederation. For vast numbers of Irish, Quebec and Montreal were of course merely staging-points in a weary journey whose end lay in Upper Canada[1] or, more often, in the United States of America. Although the percentage of natives of Ireland in Montreal's population fell from 21.8 in 1844 to 9.9. in 1871, the ramifications of the Canadian-born Irish must be considered though they are not easily ascertained, and the total infusion of Irish blood was significant, perhaps even disproportionately to the numbers of the Irish, in its effect upon the city. We have here an immigrant group, and their immediate descendants, with a distinctive colouring which makes them more easily identifiable than other immigrants of the same period. The Irish migrants of 1847 onwards, and in 1847 particularly, were not well-equipped for material success; the Montreal evidence, which is most abundant in the year of the dramatic Famine immigration, possibly distorts this aspect of the subject. Throughout the period, however, the Irish had the very great advantage of entering the city not as a migration de novo, but as newcomers to an Irish community already in 1847 well established and on the whole well thought of; and as newcomers in a continuing migration, able, that is, to look forward in their turn to a succession of humbler Irish backs upon which to climb in the painful social progression from the river bank to the lowest slopes of Mount Royal. This appears to be an important aspect of the present study.

In general, the manner in which these "displaced persons"

of the 19th century gained and kept their footing in the city, and the Province, affords a remarkable example of human adaptation to a strange environment. It was the opinion of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, the spokesman par excellence of the immigrants, that

> "an East Indian suddenly left on a cape of Labrador would not pass more visibly from one condition of being to another than the Irish emigrant who finds himself new landed in America",

and the hyperbole may not seem excessive to any who have known the contrast merely between the climates of Eire and North America. The story of the Irish adjustment in the physical, spiritual, economic and political life of Montreal is creditable to the exiles and to the total Montreal community.

Material for the study was diverse. An outstanding figure such as McGee is valuable as an interpreter and formulator of his community's aspirations. At the same time, a community cannot be known merely through its great men, and the work-and-play life of the average Montreal Irishman of the period is hard to trace. The local press, used with proper regard for the peculiarities of its editors, was extremely helpful. Strongest as a source during crises such as elections, it is also revealing throughout the period, for instance in its advertisements, which record much Irish commercial and other activity. The Irish are particularly identifiable through their religious life, and the activities of the Irish congregations and the St. Patrick's Societies were important for this study. Some of the inevitable difficulties may be mentioned: the absence of a documented history of Montreal, the lack of civic statistics in the

period. The Canadian census presented problems as well as valuable evidence. In the enumerators' sheets, Patrick Murphy of Montreal may duly appear in the nativity column as Irish, but his possibly many progeny who saw the light in Canada, as French, that is of birthplace "C.B.F." A detailed and necessarily prolonged study of the census, family by family, would be rewarding.

The development of the population of Irish nativity in Lower Canada was as follows:-

| CENSUS | NATIVES OF IRELAND | |
|---|---|---|
| | Lower Canada | City of Montreal |
| 1844 | 43,982 | 9,595 |
| 1851-2 | 51,499 | 11,736 |
| 1860-1 | 50,192 | 14,179 |
| 1870-1 | 35,828 | 10,590 |

Behind the record of successive censuses there may lie a lost history of internal migration between Montreal and the numerous settlements in Lower Canada which contained Irish. Something may be surmised from the rise and fall of the Irish element in the parish of St. Columban, where an Irish priest planted a little colony of his countrymen from Montreal in 1836. By 1844 they were 353 in a population of 860, and they grew to a maximum of about 900 in 1857. In 1847 some of them were trying, probably without success, to have relatives sent out from Ireland at Government expense. Their primary occupation was lumbering, and the abandonment of a worked-out lumber settlement is a familiar Canadian pattern. The Irish drifted back to Montreal, and French-Canadians took their place.

In the wider setting of 19th century history, the exodus from Ireland was the most dramatic episode in a lengthy process of human migration which drained off more than 50 millions of souls, between 1846 and 1932, from Europe to North and South

America, Australasia and South Africa: the most striking movement of peoples since the barbarian wanderings. From the United Kingdom alone, 8½ millions sailed between 1815 and 1880. To-day we have to promote, through such artifices as the International Refugee Organisation, an imperfect counterpart of that self-regulating process of human movement which for so long was a relatively cheap and reliable safety-valve for European discontents; the elaborate organisation created during the Second World War toiled to move in a year 50,000 persons all told. Until historically very recent times the growth of European population was slow; an estimated rate of increase of 40% between 1650 and 1750 had become 114% between 1800 and 1900, and dominated almost every aspect of economic and political change. The accompanying advances in technique tended rather to refinement of material comfort, particularly in the great towns, than to the requisite expansion, if Europe were to be in any measure self-sufficing, of basic resources of food, clothing and shelter. The answer to this situation was import of food and export of population. The dislocation of both processes in the course of two world wars, which have shattered Europe's economy without reducing its population, sharpens the contrast between 20th century demographic chaos and the easy, though far from painless, paths of 19th century emigration.

[1] "Upper Canada", "Lower Canada" are used throughout this paper in place of "Canada West", "Canada East", which seem never to have achieved wide usage.

# CHAPTER 1

## Extrusion

The process of emigration involves the united forces of extrusion and attraction, working in one direction; extrusion from the old country, attraction to the new, and the greater of these forces is extrusion. In the period 1921-31, the Dominion of Canada was spending yearly two millions of dollars in a vain attempt to attract the immigration for which an effective extrusive stimulus was lacking in Europe. Opportunity and, above all, desire to move must be reckoned as the real determinants of migration; in comparison with these, the attractions of the new land are shadowy and conjectural, and quite insufficient in themselves to dislodge from its ancient habitations a people so attached as were the Irish to their native land.

Abstractions such as social equality, political and religious liberty, recur in discussions of the motives for emigration. In a brilliant essay on "Immigration and Democracy",[1] Marcus Lee Hansen points out that the newcomer in the United States was likely to stress political freedom as his motive for emigrating, with a sound instinct (in which the Irish were blessed not least among emigrants) for the utterance most pleasing to American ears. There is no evidence that the Montreal Irish sought radical innovation in the system of politics which McGee could thus describe in an article of September, 1857 on "The Coming Election":

> "There is no PARTY, in the Provincial sense, now standing. The only political distinction known from Goderich to Gaspe', lies between the <u>ins</u> and the <u>outs</u>."[2]

While political stability was not perhaps the hall-mark of the Irishman in Montreal, he was generally loyal "last winter", as Lord Durham observed with satisfaction in his <u>Report</u>, and Dr.

Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan was notorious rather than famous in his community for his part in the 1837 rising. "The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth", and the immigrant Irish might have made a greater, though possibly unhappier, contribution to the politics of 19th century North America had it not been for their continued and natural concern with the politics of Ireland. When in the troubled summer of 1848 a placard appeared in Montreal with the adjuration:

> "Men of Ireland! the day is fast approaching when your suffering country's fate shall be decided!", [3]

the "suffering country" was of course Ireland itself, not Canada, and the meeting (which was not a success) was addressed by a delegate from the New York Irish Republican Union. O'Connell had had his supporters in Montreal as in other places, but in Montreal they were known, in 1844, as the "Loyal Repeal Association", [4] though some of them were very imperfectly "loyal". As Elgin pointed out, Repeal agitation in Canada was more likely to discredit the Canadian Irish than to serve Ireland, and it was later the distinction of the Irish in Montreal to find a leader who, Irishman though he was, gave his mind to the future of Canada rather than the future of Ireland. Three Irishmen, William Workman, Benjamin Holmes, Peter Drumgoole, appeared among the eight Vice-Presidents of the Montreal Annexation Association in 1849, [5] but the Manifesto meant as little to most Irish as to other Canadians.

The question of religious liberty did not arise for most of the immigrant Canadian Irish, happy that their maternal Church in her most maternal guise awaited them in Lower Canada. They crowded into the fold. A frequent question was raised when the New World was discussed in Ireland: "Are there priests

and potatoes?" The reality transcended both potatoes and expectation, as the Irishwoman found who wrote home from Vaughan in 1846 to describe ".....board of the best, every day is like a Christmas day for meat",[6] and this home-truth points the moral of Hansen's judgment on the question of emigrants' motives:

> "Even free speech meant little to persons who had few opinions to express, or a free press to those who could only with difficulty write their names.....What poor people wanted was freedom from laws and customs that curbed individual economic enterprise."[1]

Bearing this in mind, there is no need to look further than the condition of Ireland for the causes of the 19th century exodus. Ireland in the earlier 19th century still suffered a belated and inefficient colonial exploitation; inefficient in the sense that proprietors and tenants alike were trying to extract from the soil more, in the forms respectively of rent and subsistence, than it would yield under the techniques which were practised. The Irish proletariat from which the great migration was mainly recruited presents to history a spectacle so wretched as almost to justify the note of self-pity which resounds in Anglo-Irish literature. There was poverty whose counterpart must be sought in Asia or at least in Eastern Europe; Maria Edgeworth draws an apt parallel with the "poor Sclavonian race of peasant slaves". Population was already redundant at 6 millions in 1815, and remained so until, after reaching a maximum of about 8 millions in 1841, it came back, thinned by death and emigration, to 6½ millions in 1851. The Irish themselves at length broke the deadly cycle of pauper reproduction by behaviour which has a bearing upon emigration, and which has made their country a demographic

curiosity. At the census of 1926, 80% of males aged 25-30 in the Irish Free State were unmarried, and in Clare 90% of women aged 20-25. Since 1841, age at marriage and the incidence of celibacy had both increased, and this seems to be part of the answer, of which the rest is emigration, to a situation in which fragmentation of farms could go no further. The pattern of peasant familism in southern and western Ireland has long favoured dispersal of population; sons and daughters for whom land or portions were lacking "must travel", as the Irish say.[7] Since the 18th century, seasonal labour migrations from Ireland to England, and even as far afield as Newfoundland, had likewise predisposed to permanent emigration.

The remedies adopted by the British government for the plight of Ireland in the generation preceding the Famine were not such as to diminish the desire of the Irish for escape. There was never an official scheme of assisted emigration to British North America such as existed for Australia; the problem was too big and looked too costly. The main plank of the Irish Poor Relief Act of 1838, and of its subsequent extensions, was what has been called "a convenient workhouse to receive the evicted tenant", and although this legislation included provision for rate-aided emigration, even to the United States by the Further Amending Act of 1849, the Irishman's desire to move did not apparently extend to moving as an official pauper. The resemblance to penal transportation was uncomfortably close. There was a certain amount of estate migration from Ireland, privately financed by large landowners, up to 1848. Before a House of Lords Committee

of that year, the opinion emerged that Irish landowners were paying to ship their undesirable tenants to Canada;[8] and the same view seems to have existed in British North America, where a complaint arose at St John, N.B., in November, 1847 concerning "the decrepit, aged, and naked children and women brought to that port"[9] from Lord Palmerston's Irish estate, apparently with no landing-money.

Evidence taken by the Devon Commission in 1843-45 recorded that "the present emigration does not relieve us from those classes that it would be most desirable to part with." The movement of those who migrated in the mass, with one mind, and on the bare chance of survival when to stay seemed death, was under compulsion of the great Irish famine. After 1815 no year, except 1838, saw less than 30,000 Irish cross the Atlantic; but the figures furnished by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners show that from 1847 through 1852 the numbers yearly leaving Ireland only once, in 1848, fell below 200,000. The Irish potato crop of 1846 was a total failure, and the next census recorded 6,098 deaths by starvation in Ireland in 1847, and 57,095 by "fever", namely typhus. Cholera followed in 1848 in Ireland, as in Montreal; typhus was latent in Ireland long before the Famine, and in Canada both diseases were familiar concomitants of immigration. It is asserted that from 1832 to 1854 cholera and typhus killed more Montrealers than immigrants.[10] Relief measures, by government and private agency, were undertaken in many forms and in many lands. Montreal set up its Famine Committee and sent considerable sums of money not only to Ireland but to the distressed Highlands and Islands. In the United States, Irish priests opened the flood-gate of charity with impressive sermons. Hansen writes:

> ".....the New York commission agents sent the surplus of the New World to the starving Irishman. In so doing they fed not only his mind but his imagination, for he learned convincingly of a land where there was an abundance of food to spare."[11]

Canada taught the same lesson. The government there, in the U.S.A., and in England paid freight and charges (a precedent very worthy of present attention) amounting to £50,000 on parcels to Ireland.

Clearly there was no further question of desire to move; the Famine exodus was an evacuation of Ireland. The Cork Examiner of 3rd October 1847 noted the new spirit:

> "The emigrants of this year are not like those of former ones; they are now actually running away from fever and disease and hunger, with money scarcely sufficient to pay passage for and find food for the voyage."[12]

Desire to emigrate must be matched by some measure of opportunity, and if migration involves an ocean crossing the specific requirement is shipping. The development of an emigrant shipping industry designed in any degree for the steerage passenger was slow, and pioneered by the United States. The huge trans-Atlantic traffic of 1847-52 was, in the main, conveyed in ships designed for cargo rather than passengers, as many emigrants discovered to their cost; and the Irish of the great migration had mostly to be content with such rough quarters as they could get, at Belfast, Cork, Limerick or, more often, Liverpool aboard the boats which brought flax-seed or tobacco from the United States, and timber from Quebec and the Maritimes. A witness told the House of Lords Committee on Colonization from Ireland, in 1848, that "the Colonial Ships would go out in Ballast if it were not for the

Emigration", and T.F. Elliot, chairman of the Emigration Commission, wrote in a memorandum of January, 1847:

> "In a previous Return I have had occasion to show that there was room last year in the Timber Ships, for at least 20,000 more than actually went to British North America....and this only from the 10 Ports where there are Emign Agents."[13]

High freights around 1846 encouraged fresh tonnage. The timber ships hailed from both sides of the North Atlantic; Ireland, long since plundered of its once plentiful trees, was peculiarly dependent upon imports to supply its roof-beams and barrel-staves. Evidence in 1847 was that emigrants were leaving the Irish ports in timber ships, corn ships, cotton ships, and ships "sent to those [west coast] Ports for the express Purpose, as a mercantile Speculation".[14]

Sail overlapped with steam in the emigrant trade, or more accurately with steam-and-sail, which was rapidly absorbing the passenger traffic of the 1850's. To the end sail was of course the cheaper: £4 from Londonderry to British North America in 1864, against £6.6s by steamer.[15] By this time, competition was breeding a hitherto neglected courtliness on the Atlantic:

> "Mr. Buchanan also bears testimony to the general kindness which has been shown of late years by masters of sailing vessels to the passengers intrusted to their care."[16]

The fast American packets of the famous Black Ball Line, and others, were favourites with cabin passengers, and a reputation for good seamanship gave the United States boats a preference among emigrants during much of the period. Between 1851 and 1859 82% pf the emigration from the United Kingdom sailed under the United States flag,[17] and the four wooden paddle-boats with which Samuel Cunard opened the Liverpool-Boston

service in 1840 inaugurated a generation of fruitful rivalry between British and United States transport during which the British quietly perfected the iron screw-steamer. Meanwhile sailing ships, on what evidence it is not perhaps clear, were regarded by the travelling public as safer than steamers, and Enoch Train and Co.'s "Boston and Liverpool Line of Packets" sustained the American reputation very prosperously. Their advertisement of 1853[18] held out many attractions to the prospective passenger by the White Diamond Line, which Enoch Train had created with a particular eye to speed and to comfort in the steerage. He offered a passage from Liverpool to "Montreal, C.E., via Vermont & Canada Railroads" for $24.00, and this price embraced

> "a steerage passage from Liverpool to Boston, by any of our splendid Line of Packets; provisions at sea according to the undermentioned dietary scale; doctor's attendance and medicine on board when required; port charges at Boston, and all expenses of transportation of passengers and baggage from the ship at Boston to the destination agreed upon. In addition to any provisions which passengers may themselves bring, the following quantities, at least, of water and provisions will be supplied, to each steerage passenger of twelve years of age, and over, every week during the passage, commending on the day of sailing, and at least three quarts of water per day.
> Two oz. of Tea; 8 oz. of sugar; 5 lbs of Oatmeal; 2½ lbs Navy Bread; 1 lb Wheat Flour; 2 lbs Rice."

There follows a list of the Line's twelve vessels, with their Captains, and an eulogy of the ships' comfort, safety and speed.

> "These magnificent Ships are all <u>American Built</u>, and constructed expressly for Packets. They are all <u>New</u> and of the first class, being built on the most improved principles....The Captains have been carefully selected as first rate Sailors and men of humanity, and an experienced Surgeon is attached to each Ship, and no expense is spared to render this the very best and most popular conveyance to America....."

Testimonials are appended from the Very Rev. Theobald Mathew, and from Bishop Fitzpatrick of Boston, names of power among

the Irish on either side of the Atlantic. Ships such as these were still the majority in the trans-Atlantic passenger trade in 1850, when Nettle's "Practical Guide for Emigrants to North America" noticed steamers from London and Liverpool every week, line-of-packet ships "almost every day". Indeed, as late as 1880 more ships in sail than steam entered Montreal, though the former were freighters. The Emigration Commission reported in 1866 that no passenger sailing vessels left Liverpool for British North America in the previous year, though this was probably not the situation at the smaller Irish ports.

In 1856 the Allan Line of the Montreal Ocean Steam ship Company opened a service to Liverpool, and later to Glasgow, with four iron screw-steamers of about 1700 tons, built in Scotland, and operating under the shield of a contract with the Provincial Government. The beginnings of this enterprise may probably be traced in some discussions in the Legislature in 1851, when the dismal truth was reviewed that in spite of the Canada Ship Canals it was still cheaper to ship a barrel of flour from Lake Erie to Liverpool via New York than via Quebec. This was due to differential ocean freights, "whereby the trade of the St. Lawrence has been diverted to the Hudson"[19] - an historic complaint. Low freights from New York to Liverpool arose from government subsidies: British, to the Cunard Line, United States, to the Collins Line.

> "Although those Steamers convey passengers and light goods only, a trade in which the different Lines of Packet Ships were heretofore employed, still they have compelled those Vessels to embark in the ordinary transit trade, and thereby occasioned great additional facility for the conveyance of emigrants and freight to New York, and [sic] enabling them to take back return cargoes of produce at merely nominal prices; circumstances which combine to favour New York and the Erie Canal, to the prejudice of Quebec and the St. Lawrence route."[19]

It was therefore proposed that the British and Canadian Governments should join in subsidising a steamship line to British North America.

Anything resembling the relative comfort of the White Diamond steerage was not the fate of the average emigrant, Irish or other, in 1847, the year when Passengers Acts and the restraints of mere humanity were alike thrown to the winds in the scramble to get as many people across the Atlantic as cheaply as possible. As early as Lord Durham's time it was axiomatic that emigrant ships could be smelled at gunshot length, "either when the wind was favourable or in a dead calm". If deterioration from this standard were possible, it occurred in the Famine exodus, when the Medical Officer at Grosse Isle quarantine described thus the condition of the ships then reaching his station:

> ".....on visiting a passenger vessel, such as those described, in a morning before the emigrants had come on deck, I have seen a stream of foul air issuing from the hatches as dense and palpable as seen on a foggy day from a dung heap."[20]

Lack of light, air, sanitation and fresh water, possibly withheld to promote the illegal sale of spirits, appears to summarise the outstanding horrors, apart from overcrowding, of the long voyage in fetid ships' holds hastily fitted with floors and berths of a kind. The best evidence on the subject is the celebrated letter[21] of Stephen E. de Vere in November, 1847. This person, whose social status approximated to his name, testified with great humanity on behalf of others less literate,

> "having myself submitted to the privations of a Steerage Passage in an Emigrant Ship for nearly two months, in order to make myself acquainted with the condition of the Emigrant from the beginning....."

His letter, addressed to T.F. Elliot (by then at the Colonial Office), stirred the appropriate circles and passed from Grey to Elgin as an official dispatch. De Vere makes the common observations on bad cooking, no washing, no "moral restraint". The passengers were found in food by the owners, and the dietary included rice and salt provisions which could not be eaten for lack of water to wash them down. False measures were used for the food, for which de Vere had the Captain fined at Quebec; de Vere was fortunate: ordinary passengers could seldom afford the delay in getting legal redress. The most sinister feature of the ship was that

> "lights were prohibited because the Ship with her open fire grates upon Deck, with Lucifer matches and lighted Pipes used secretly in the sleeping berths was freighted with Government Powder for the Garrison of Quebec....."

The last point raises the reflection that ships' crews and emigrants probably had many sorrows in common at all times. De Vere stressed the moral ravages of an Atlantic crossing in such conditions:

> ".....A result far worse is to be found in the utter demoralization of the Passengers both Male and Female, by the filth, debasement, and disease of two or three months so passed.....The Emigrant...has not the <u>heart</u>, has not the <u>will</u> to exert himself...he throws himself listlessly upon the daily dole of Government....."

As a result,

> "clamor in Canada has been equally directed against the diseased condition, and the listless indolence of this year's Emigrants....."

De Vere suggested sensible remedies which were incorporated in a tightening-up of the Passengers Acts, and also made proposals for employment of immigrants in Canada which were less easy to attain, from the grant-aided erection of churches to "a few leading lines of Railroad".

De Vere's ship was "better regulated and more comfortable

than many that reached Canada". It is rather surprising that of the emigration to Canada in the five years preceding 1847, deaths in quarantine and on the voyage had not exceeded 0.63%;[22] and less surprising that they leaped up in 1847.

The cost of the passage from Ireland to Quebec had been, around 1830, 15/- to 50/-, half the rate to New York; earlier still, it cost an Irish peasant a year's wages to cross the Atlantic; but by 1848 the Lower Canada immigrant tax equalised the fares to New York and Quebec. In 1847, Canada was still the cheapest destination for the immigrant to North America:

| 1847<br>Fares From | To Quebec | To New York |
|---|---|---|
| Liverpool | £3 | £4 |
| Cork | £3 | £3.15s. |
| Londonderry | £2.15s. | £4. 4s. |

These are the lowest fares on each route, and include the legal allowance of breadstuffs.[23]

The question arises how a supposedly destitute peasantry paid any fares whatsoever, and there is a possibility that the destitution was sometimes technical. In a letter from a Co. Cork magistrate of 1846 or the early part of 1847, there occurs the passage:

> ".....I have reason to know that double the number leaving of an ordinary year will go this Year at their own expense, such as small Farmers who have not paid their rent - they are keeping it to take them to Canada - .....,"[24]

and in a memorandum of November 1847 T.F. Elliot says that Savings Banks are laden with deposits to finance private emigration. There is also some evidence from Montreal, which will be noticed later, that the Irish even of the Famine emigration did not in fact arrive penniless.

In addition to his fare, the immigrant to Montreal had to

meet the Lower Canada immigrant tax, instituted on the suggestion of the Colonial Office in 1832. This head tax was 5/- in 1847, but for the 1848 immigrant season was raised to 10/- currency (c. 8/4 sterling), and as an inducement to early travel was scaled at 20/- on those arriving after 10th September, 30/- after 30th September. There was an addition of 2/6 per head for every three days during which the ship was quarantined, to a maximum additional charge of 20/-. The standard rate underwent frequent changes; in 1849 it was reduced to 7/6, since the previous year's increase had apparently been a rather sharp deterrent. The proceeds of the tax were used partly to finance the passage of the indigent to Upper Canada, partly for the benefit of the Quebec and Montreal hospitals and Emigrant Societies.

A landmark for the immigrant, and in the cholera and typhus years frequently his cemetery, was Grosse Isle, some 30 miles below Quebec, which was used as a quarantine station from 1832. By 1850 the whole island was cleared, and included hospital, officers' quarters and isolation station. Kettle's "Practical Guide for Emigrants" of 1850 observes:

> "At this place, in the Spring of 1848, no fewer than 173 emigrants, chiefly destitute Irish, died from a malignant fever, engendered on ship-board, from being over-crowded during the voyage, and from indolent and filthy habits."

Here were detained the sick, and such as on a perfunctory examination were thought to be sick, while the healthy proceeded on their voyage to Quebec. In the plague year of 1847 this system, such as it was, broke down completely, as perhaps any system would have done. Thirty or forty vessels at a time crowded the anchorage, waiting their turn to disembark their companies, some of whom found shelter in the 200 tents which the government sent down in April. The ships were then

cleansed, according to the hygienic notions of the time; but at no stage of the journey from Ireland to Montreal could that sinister, because unrecognised, emigrant, the typhus louse, be properly dealt with. The general effect was to prolong the disastrous herding of the sick and the whole, and to render Grosse Isle a mortuary rather than a quarantine. Heartrending dispersals of families occurred at this and every other stage of the journey inland, and newspaper advertisements such as the following, in the Montreal Transcript of 24th July 1847, were not uncommon:

> "INFORMATION WANTED OF PATRICK HARLEY from the county of Cork who left his wife and two daughters at the Quarantine Station about eight weeks ago. This is to inform him that his WIFE is now in town.....She may be heard of at Mrs. O'Reilley's, Gain Street, Quebec Suburbs, where she is now residing."

The figures furnished by the Chief Immigration Agent at Quebec show that of 8,563 admitted to hospital at Grosse Isle in the 1847 emigration season, 3,452 died.

In the earlier years of the century, the passage inland from Quebec could be almost as costly and unhealthy as the ocean crossing, but facilities had improved by 1847. The St. Lawrence Steamboat Co. of Montreal began to operate six boats to Quebec in 1829, and trans-shipment to these, or a steam tow upstream, became the practice. By 1847 several steamers a day were available, and in 1844 a deck passage could be had for 2/-; by 1850 a line of navigation of 1600 miles, from Quebec to Chicago, was open to vessels of 300-400 tons, and the fare was 25/-.[25] It was de Vere's experience in 1847 that the emigrant's worst ordeal of all was the voyage inland from Quebec to Montreal, Kingston and Toronto in the small steamers provided by a government contractor:

> "Sometimes the Crowds were stowed in open Barges, and towed after the Steamer, standing like Pigs upon the Deck of a Cork and Bristol Packet."

The main preoccupation of Goverment seems to have been to arrange this transport as cheaply as possible. Allison, the Emigration Agent at Montreal, wrote in August, 1841 to the Governor General's Secretary:

> ".....During the last week competition among the Forwarding Merchants has broken up their established prices, and I have been enabled to despatch one barge belonging to Messrs. McPherson & Co." to Kingston with a load of adults and children at a low price.[26]

The monuments to the dead immigrants of 1847 at Grosse Isle, Montreal, Kingston are also a record of the conditions of the inland voyage in that dark year.

Under the general heading of the emigrant's opportunities to move may next be considered a group of enactments and agencies of the British Parliament which had a considerable bearing upon emigration to Canada: the long series of Passengers Acts; the government's Emigration Officers; and the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (which from 1856 became the Emigration Commission).

The Passengers Acts promoted emigration in the sense rather of enhancing the chances of survival of any given emigrant than of encouraging mass migration, which indeed the provisions of the Acts, in so far as they were observed, tended to hinder. The first Act, of 1803, prescribed the number of persons, crew included, which British vessels might henceforth carry (one for every two tons burden), the ports of embarkation, the standard of provisioning (as regards ships for North American ports). All ships with over 50 passengers must carry a surgeon. Some half-dozen further Acts during the next thirty years attest to some extent the difficulty of enforcing legislation at sea.

The Passengers Act in force in 1847 was an amended Act of 1842. It limited numbers of passengers in the ratio of three to five tons, prescribed a ration scale of 3 quarts of water and 1 lb of bread or 5 lbs of potatoes daily, enforced the carrying of lifeboats, attempted to stop the sale of liquor on the voyage. It was of little effect in the abnormal emigration conditions of that year.

Acts of 1848 and 1849 reimposed a principle which was first defined in 1817, of limiting passengers by deck space as well as tonnage: one passenger to two tons or twelve square feet of deck. Limitation merely by tonnage would not in itself prevent overcrowding in the steerage. By the Act of 1848 two children under 14 counted as one statute adult, a fruitful source of complication in emigration statistics. All ships with more than 100 passengers were to carry a cook. The Act of 1849 prescribed (for the first time) separate berthing by sexes for the unmarried aged 14 upwards; and improved the ration scale so that it included flour, rice, tea, sugar, molasses as well as bread and water.

1851 and 1852 saw adjustments of previous Acts to take into account the steamer traffic, and in 1855 came the last of the great Passengers Acts, known as the emigrants' Magna Carta. This brought within the Act all ships carrying 30 or more passengers, instead of 50 as before, reduced the passenger/tonnage ratio, and again increased the ration scale. By this time some of the questions which perplexed the earlier legislators on emigration had solved themselves. In 1847 T.F. Elliot was saying, in reference to amendment of the Passengers Acts,

> ".....we might perhaps do more Harm than Good to our poorer Fellow Subjects by keeping them to starve at home, instead of allowing them a Chance of reaching a Country where they might attain to Plenty", [27]

and this theme recurs in contemporary discussion: the delicate balance between the governmental view of minimum amenities on the voyage, and the emigrant's view of the fare.

The enforcement of the Passengers Acts at the smaller ports of the United Kingdom rested on the Customs Officers; at the major ports, on Emigration Officers, appointed by the Colonial Secretary. An Officer at Liverpool in 1833 was the first of a long succession of mainly very able men, lieutenants of the Royal Navy on half pay. Their function in smoothing the emigrant's path was most important. Among the Irish ports, Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick received Emigration Officers in 1834, Sligo in 1835, Londonderry in 1838. In Canada, Immigration or Emigration Officers or Agents (the terms are used indifferently) were similarly posted at main points on immigration routes. A.C. Buchanan began his long tenure of the office of Chief Agent at Quebec in 1836. The official Colonization Circular of March, 1847 lists the following Agents for Canada:

> Quebec: A.C. Buchanan, Chief Agent for Eastern(Lower) Canada.
> Montreal: James Allison
> Kingston: A.B. Hawke, Chief Agent for Western (Upper) Canada.
> Bytown: George R. Burke,

and Agents at Port Hope and Cobourg; Toronto; Hamilton. In Buchanan's circular "Canada, 1862 for the Information of Emigrants" the Montreal Agent is named as J.H. Daly, and there is the admonition:

> "The Emigrant should at once apply to the Government Emigration Officers, whose duty it is to afford him every information and advice. He should avoid listening to the opinions of interested and designing characters....."

A similar Circular, put out in 1861 at Quebec by the Bureau of Agriculture, was "intended for extensive circulation in Great Britain and Ireland, and.....Europe", and set itself a high ideal:

> ".....Let it be our place to undeceive [Europeans] and to shew that Canada is a country totally distinct from the United States.....",

a point of geography upon which earlier generations of emigrants had, in truth, been frequently ill-informed.

It was said before a House of Lords Committee in 1847 that

> ".....from Quebec to Hamilton...there is no important Stage along the Emigrant's Journey where they do not meet with a Government Officer,"

and these men, whose summer months must frequently have been a chaos of overwork, seem to have stood high in the regard of some at least of the emigrants. A petition of 1841 may be read, subscribed by hands unaccustomed to a pen, which recounts a moving story of a ship's company who had not received their water ration; it is addressed "Unto the Honourable Her Majesty's Government Agent, at Quebec".[28] The annual Reports of the Emigration Commission in London occasionally included notes from the Canadian Agents on the employment outlook and the like, and A.B. Hawke was not the last man to have occasion to repent an economic prophecy; he reported in 1856 that employment and good wages were abundant, and that these conditions were likely to continue in 1857.

The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was a valuable outcome of the Durham Report. The operations of the Commissioners, from their institution in 1840, had some bearing upon emigration to Canada although less than upon that to Australia. Their

duties respecting all Colonies included the "diffusion of any information which it may appear expedient to publish", and the Commissioners' pamphlets, Colonization Circulars, Annual Reports and ad hoc cautionary notices (usually against emigration to South America) may have helped many Irish to reconcile themselves to the prospect of life in Canada rather than in the more magnetic United States. The Colonization Circular of March, 1847 contains a mass of information useful to emigrants bound for British North America, South Africa, Australasia. The items applicable to the first of these groups include:

> Names and duties of Emigration Agents in the United Kingdom.
> Cost of passage to the various Colonies.
> Demand for labour, prices, wages in British North America.
> Expenses of clearing, and public charges on, land.
> Hints to Emigrants to the North American Colonies:
> these are comprehensive, and include practical advice on tools, maintenance on arrival, Colonial tax, the danger of refusing good wages, route to Canada West, route from New York to Canada, and the expense of erecting a log-hut ("These Huts, if properly constructed, are very warm and comfortable").

The Circular ends on the warning note that statements recently circulated concerning the amenities of Texas "are reported by Authority to be greatly exaggerated....."[29]

In sum, the well-known accusation by Charles Buller in 1843 that "the state exercised not the slightest control over the hordes whom it simply allowed to leave want in one part of the empire for hardship in another" appears to be quite unjustifiably strong even in relation to the period before 1840. Between 1847 and 1867 Parliament voted nearly £300,000 for emigration,[30] and the Emigration Commission, and their Agents at the ports, accounted for most of it.

Nevertheless it was the settled policy of successive

British administrations to avoid financing the large-scale emigration which was necessary to relieve the pressure of numbers among the swarming and impoverished Irish. The short-lived Emigration Commission of 1831-2 advised Government against assisting to Canada emigrants who were getting there satisfactorily on their own account; and Lord Elgin, in a dispatch to the Colonial Secretary of 8th May, 1847 on the subject of assisted emigration, wrote:

> "The assistance sought for might with great advantage be extended by charitable persons or Societies, but it is to be apprehended that if the Government were to interfere, the exertions now made by persons already established in this country to provide the means of transport for their friends at home, would be materially diminished."[31]

Here lies the answer to a problem from which any Government of the 19th century, orthodox financiers indeed compared with some of their successors, must shrink. The official experiments of 1823 and 1825 associated with the name of Peter Robinson had transferred about 2,600 emigrants from southern Ireland to Upper Canada at a cost of £20 a head; but Ireland needed to lose two millions. Between 1848 and 1869 a sum of the order of £15,000,000 - sufficient to pay the passage of every emigrant who in that period left a British port for North America - was actually remitted to the United Kingdom, a large though unascertainable proportion of it going to Ireland; and this takes no account of money transmitted otherwise than through the finance houses. On this point, the General Manager of the Bank of Ireland, in a letter to the writer of March, 1948, gave it as his opinion that "most of the finance was then done outside the Banking system."

There is no doubt that in emigrant remittances lay an unofficial source of the means to move which was of far greater

significance than any measure promoted by the British government. One million Irish had gone to the United States and British North America between 1815 and 1845; from those of this host and their descendants who survived and prospered, money poured back to Ireland to pay the passages of other members of that family group from which, such is the strength of Celtic familism, the Irishman is not sundered by the whole breadth of an ocean. Sociologists have recently traced the process by which, from one family in a remote corner of Ireland, a succession of nephews and nieces left the same farmhouse to follow their uncles and aunts to Boston for four generations; the passage-money came from the United States.[32]

The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission considered that three-quarters of the 1848 emigration from Ireland might be assumed to be financed by remittances; a process "most creditable to the Irish peasantry", as the Commission adds in a later Report. The Commission's 11th General Report gives the following estimated amounts paid for passages in North America, or remitted to the United Kingdom (" principally in Ireland"), in 1850:-

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| through | London ..... | say £ | 11,319 |
| " | Liverpool..... | | 475,415 |
| " | Plymouth..... | | 480 |
| " | Dublin..... | | 250,000 |
| " | Belfast..... | | 90,478 |
| " | Londonderry..... | | 35,670 |
| " | Sligo..... | | 15,470 |
| " | Limerick and Kilrush.... | | 43,350 |
| " | Cork..... ..... | | 25,841 |
| " | Waterford and New Ross.. | | 9,064 |
| | | £ | 957,087 |

In their 18th Report, of 1858, the Commission observes that their information

> ".....included only the remittances through the large mercantile houses and banks who are willing to furnish us with returns. We have no information respecting the sums, probably considerable, sent home through private hands, or through merchants or bankers from whom we get no returns. The money thus sent home has for many years been more than sufficient to pay the whole expense of Irish emigration. And as it is certain that the whole Irish emigration is not paid for out of such remittances, it follows that a considerable portion of them must go to increase the means of the small farmers and labourers in that country, and to improve the general condition of the people."

A favourite device of Canadian Irish and others who wished to help friends and relatives to join them was the pre-paid Passage Certificate. In Montreal, Henry Chapman & Co., St. Sacrament Street, were advertising this facility between 1853 and 1855:

> "Immigration. Parties wishing to secure Passage for their Friends from Liverpool to this country can obtain Passage Certificates either by way of the St. Lawrence or by New York.....Remittances to England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Drafts from £1 upwards, payable at sight, free of charge, at the Bank of Ireland, Dublin, and all its branches" (and in London, Glasgow, Liverpool).[33]

The Provincial Government sponsored this firm's arrangements:

> ".....the Chief Agent for Emigration has received the sanction of the Provindal Government to a plan..... Upon payment of any sum of money to the Chief Agent, a Certificate will be issued at the rate of Five Dollars for the Pound Sterling, which Certificate on transmission will secure a passage from any Port in the United Kingdom by Vessels bound to Quebec. These Certificates may be obtained on application to the Chief Agent at Quebec; A.B. Hawke, Esq., Chief Emigrant Agent, Toronto; or to Henry Chapman & Co., Montreal."[34]

Enoch Train & Co., whose shipping advertisements were referred to above, made careful arrangements for pre-paid passengers:

> "As soon as our Liverpool House informs us per steamer of the names of pre-paid passengers embarked, we publish their names in the Boston Pilot, and also notify each purchaser of pre-paid Certificates, either directly or through our agents. On the arrival of any

> of our ships in the outer harbour, we immediately dispatch an agent on board, to give pre-paid passengers the necessary instructions regarding their route westward."

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Where there was a will to emigrate, the way has always, until very recently, been found. With some help, though very little, from Government; with much help from earlier emigrants; and by their own contrivance and tenacity, the Irish made their way overseas in great numbers after 1846. The Famine was only the ultimate propellent of a movement which had long been strengthening. By the spring of 1847 the survivors could turn their eyes to North America with no fears, if with few hopes, and during that year about 80,000 Irish embarked, at Liverpool and at eighteen ports in Ireland, for the Province of Canada[35] - "huddled masses", less anxious to "breathe free" than to eat thrice a day.

[1]Hansen, M.L., The Immigrant in American History, 1942, c. IV

[2][Montreal] New Era, 15th September 1857.

[3]Elgin-Grey Papers, 1846-1852, 1937, Vol. I p.205

[4][Montreal] Pilot and Evening Journal of Commerce, 5th April, 1844.

[5]Mills, G.H.S., The Annexation Movement of 1849-50, 1947, p.154

[6]Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland, 1847, Q. 3296

[7]vide Arensberg, C.M., and Kimball, Family and Community in Ireland, 1940.

[8]First Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland, 1848, Q.485.

[9]Morehouse, F., Irish Migration of the 'Forties, Am. Hist. Rev., Vol.XXXIII, 1928.

[10]Bertrand, C., Histoire de Montréal, 1935- 42, t.II, p.171.

[11]Hansen, M.L., The Atlantic Migration, 1941,p.248.

[12]cited Handlin, O., Boston's Immigrants, 1941, p.55.

[13]Elgin-Grey Papers ut supra, Vol. III, p.1114.

[14]Sel. Comm. House of Lords, 1847 ut supra, QQ. 1147, 1171, 1685

[15]Emigration Commissioners, 24th General Report, 1864

[16]the same, 22nd Report, 1862

[17]the same, 24th Report, 1864

[18][Montreal] True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 30th December 1853

[19]Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, Session 1851, June 16th, p.85.

[20]Brit. Amer. Journal of Medical and Physical Science, Vol.III, No. II, March 1848 (per Dr. J.I. Cooper).

[21]Elgin-Grey Papers ut sup., Vol.IV, p.1341.

[22]Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, 8th Report, 1848

[23]Sel. Comm. House of Lords, 1847 ut sup., Q.4427

[24]Elgin-Grey Papers ut sup.,Vol. III, p.1138.

[25]Colonial Land and Emigration Comm., 10th Report, 1850

[26]Public Archives of Canada: Correspondence of Gov. General's Secretary, 1841, G20, Vol. 5, 538.

[27]Sel. Comm. House of Lords, 1848 ut supra, 462-3

[28]Pub. Arch. ut supra, G20, Vol.5, 587

[29]Sel. Comm. House of Lords, 1847 ut sup., Appendix No.7.

[30]Hitchins, F.H., Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 1931 p.317

[31]Pub. Arch. ut sup., Despatches, Earl of Elgin to Earl Grey, G 12, Vol. 65.

[32]vide Arensberg and Kimball, ut supra.

[33]True Witness, ut supra, 24th June 1853.

[34]ibidem, 29th December 1854, 28th December 1855

[35]Colonial Land and Emigration Comm., 8th Report, 1848, Appendix No.1.

# CHAPTER 2.

## Attraction.

The figures for the years 1848 through 1867 furnished to the Emigration Commissioners by A.C. Buchanan, Chief Agent at Quebec, give among other things a broad statistical picture of Irish immigration into Canada in the period. His returns for 1847, if in that chaotic year he made any, do not appear in their place in the Reports of the Commissioners. The accuracy of any returns in the earlier years of the period is questionable; and some of the figures in the following abstract are clearly approximations. The Canadian figures of immigration are probably nearer the truth than the figures of emigration gathered in the United Kingdom. The Commissioners observe in their 13th Report, 1853, that "we have no means of ascertaining the precise number who have emigrated from Ireland", but this deficiency was supplied before their next Report appeared.

| year ending 31st December | 1848 | 1849 | 1850 | 1852 | 1853 | 1854 | 1855 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Canada** | | | | | | | |
| Total immigrants | 27,939 | 38,494 | 32,648 | 39,176 | | 53,183 | |
| Remain C.E. | 2,534 | 3,000 | 3,900 | 2,276 | 4,395 | 31,183 | |
| " C.W. | 17,994 | 26,687 | 14,980 | 34,100 | 20,800 | | |
| Proceed U.S.A. | 7,355 | 10,477 | 13,723 | 2,800[1] | 11,504 | 22,000 | 5,500 |
| From U.S.A. | | 1,700 | 356 | "3-4,000" | | | 10,000 |
| Country of Origin | | | | | | | |
| Ireland | 16,582 | | 17,976 | 19,603 | 14,417 | 16,168 | 5,691 |

continued

year ending
31st December

Canada

| | 1856 | 1857 | 1859 | 1861 | 1863 | 1865 | 1867 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total immigrants | 22,439 | 32,097 | 20,240[2]<br>8,778[2] | 24,587[2]<br>19,923[2] | 19,419[2] | 21,355[2] | 30,757[2] |
| Proceed U.S.A. | statement that opening of railroads makes check difficult | | 13,940 | 10,700 | (est.)<br>5,000 | | "unknown" |
| Country of Origin | | | | | | | |
| Ireland | 4,357 | 2,016 | | | 5,508 | 4,682 | 4,260 |

[1] "by Lake Champlain"

[2] by St. Lawrence only

The falling-off in Irish immigration after 1854 is explained in the Reports as due to the Russian war, and later to the Indian Mutiny. It is noticeable that the decrease is proportionately much greater among the Irish than among the total immigration.

continued

In so far as Canada attracted the Irish in itself, and not as a stepping-stone to the United States, its strongest recommendation throughout the period was the success therein of earlier Irish emigrants. It is a reasonable presumption that the solid testimony of letters, remittances and even visits from the more prosperous among the earlier emigration made Canada a topic of favourable comment in many Irish communities. The counterpart of the more than feudal isolation of the rulers of Ireland was the growth of a serf mentality among the ruled, with outbursts of serf violence as its darker manifestation - the sporadic revolts of hunger, or perhaps more often of land-hunger. From the later 18th century, Ireland was seldom entirely free from agrarian disturbance, and a condition of extended civil war was the lot of certain districts. Lecky observes:

> "Under the long discipline of the penal laws, the Irish Catholics learnt the lesson which, beyond all others, rulers should dread to teach. They became consummate adepts in the arts of conspiracy and disguise."

Whiteboys, Ribbonmen, Oakboys, Steelboys, Rightboys, Shanavests, Thrashers, Carders and the rest, down to Sinn Fein and beyond, bettered the instruction in their blending of the murderous and the grotesque. The consequence which, for the present study, is most significant is that the steadier elements among, for instance, the middling farmers of Ulster and elsewhere were crossing the Atlantic long before the great migrations, seeking a land where they could accumulate a competence in peace. Their destination was often Upper Canada. From that land of relative peace and absolute plenty an Irishwoman wrote home

"Vaughan, October 25th, 1846

"Dear Father, for the first time since our landing in this country I send yous a few lines hoping the will find you all in good health as the leave us in at present, thanks be to God for all his mercies us. We had six weeks passage, during which time myself and John had good health, but Johanna and Margret was sick during the voyage. When we came to Montreal we went over to the States and spent three weeks traveling, which is very expensive in this country, and Retured back to Toronto. I have from ten to thirteen dollers per month, four Shilling Sterling makes one Doller, with board of the best, every day is like a Christmas day for meat. Dear Father, we are as comfortable as we can wish to be, but I feel lonesome for the leaving of my friends; but there is no doubt but my Brothers could do will here; but I leave them to themselves, least any thing might happen them crossing the Atlantic; but for my own part if I was in the old country I would come back gain. But if none of my friends come out, I hope, with a blessing, to go home in the course of three years, that I may see Father and Fatherinlaw both alive.....Summers in this country very warm; for the winter I cannot speak about it yet; but I have a prospect of plenty of work .....Potatoes has failed in this country, as we have heard the did so at home.....Dear Father, mother, I feel very lonesome after you,also after Sister Bridget, and brothers Patrick, Matthew, Denis and Micheal.....
Hoping to see yous all gain, and if not, to meet yous all in Heaven is the wish of

Johanna Kelly

Addressed: For Micheal Gleeson, Newtown, near Killalue, County Tipparera, Ireland."[1]

As regards the striking statement about "board of the best", Adams[2] quotes an exactly similar passage from an emigrant's letter before 1832.

There is record of Irish in French Canada from the end of the 17th century. Among the names of naturalised French Canadians in the 18th century appear Denis Byrne, Timothé Sylvain. "Sullivan" lends itself to gallicising more easily than some other originally Irish names from the early baptismal registers of Montreal: Makarty, Milony, Obraïn. In Con Cregan Charles Lever describes the Franco-Irish underworld

of Quebec City in the earlier part of the 19th century, where his former countrymen spoke a language bearing little resemblance to French and none to English. According to the census of 1844, the following counties of Lower Canada contained each more than 1,000 natives of Ireland:

| | |
|---|---|
| Quebec | 7,267 |
| Two Mountains | 2,046 |
| Ottawa | 3,158 |
| Montreal | 12,293 |
| Beauharnois | 4,007 |
| Sherbrooke | 1,235 |
| Lotbinière | 1,315 |
| Megantic | 1,426 |
| Dorchester | 1,667 |

In the following townships and parishes, at the same date, a considerable minority of the population was Irish:

> Rawdon, New Glasgow & New Paisley, St. Columban, Gore of Chatham, Buckingham, Hemmingford, Sherrington, Tingwick, St. Sylvestre, Leeds, Broughton, Frampton,

while in the little townships of Cranbourne and Standon the Irish were a majority of the population. This fairly wide rural distribution is not without interest. The Irishman in North America was no pioneer; he has been called the continent's first slumdweller. In so far as free land was available in Lower Canada in the period, he was likely to lack the recommendation from Resident Magistrates or Protestant clergy in Ireland which would have helped him to it. Irish communities overseas set great store by an English-speaking priesthood, and Irish priests for choice; a witness before the House of Lords Committee of 1847 considered that this factor had weight in causing the Irish to settle in the towns of North America:

> ".....I think that the Nucleus of an Irish Roman Catholic Emigration must be ecclesiastical..... they being too Poor to take their Priest with them

> to the Wilderness, in order to partake of the Ordinances of their Church and to enjoy spiritual Advice and Comfort, remain in the Towns, where they are simply Labourers, and are checked in going upon the Land as rural Settlers".[3]

There is some evidence that the presence of these Irish in the Eastern Townships was not altogether fortuitous or, in a sense, voluntary. The Eastern Townships were the domain of the celebrated British American Land Company, which in the early 1840's was still some years from the happy consummation of declaring a dividend. The Company laid ambitious plans to attract settlers from overseas, and had agents at Quebec and Montreal who endeavoured to canalise in the direction of the Townships some of that fructifying immigrant stream which tended obstinately towards Upper Canada and the United States. Nevertheless, the affairs of the Company did not prosper. In 1841

> "only 400 of the 28,000 immigrants who landed at Quebec could be diverted to the whole Eastern Townships. The sale of land was under 1,500 acres and did not even meet the cost of the Canadian establishment."[4]

In July of that year James Allison, Government Emigrant Agent at Montreal, wrote an interesting letter to the Provincial Chief Secretary in which he said he considered it his duty to direct immigrants to the Eastern Townships, where chances of employment were good:

> ".....I have also scattered small portions throughout the rural districts in the vicinity of this City, among these were a number of young women not qualified for domestic Servants in a City, but who may be found useful as servants in farm Houses....."[5].

Allison goes on to mention the cordial co-operation of the (Montreal) Emigrant Committee, which recommends immigrants to him for "free passage". These cases he scrutinises closely,

"in accordance with the views His Excellency has taken of this matter."

There is evidently here a working example of the practice well-known to modern Britain as "direction" of labour. At the same time, A.T. Galt, by 1843 the Secretary of the British American Land Company, was advocating the sale of the Company's land on long credit and for payment in labour and, especially, in produce. Into this economy even a pauper immigration might conveniently be fitted.

The colonial Emigration Agents were no doubt well-placed for anticipating some of the functions of a British Ministry of Labour. In 1857 "An Old Settler" wrote to the editor of the Montreal New Era:

> ".....Now, Sir, if the Agent at Montreal would send to Perth five or six hundred laborers, they would have no difficulty in getting immediate employment",

and a rambling, unsigned letter from Sherbrooke to the Montreal True Witness in 1861 points out that the Irish have already been successful settlers "all over the Eastern Townships" and especially in Sherbrooke, and advocates an Irish Colonisation Society to foster this process.[6]

It is clear that Canada in general was attractive as a staging-point to the many Irish who, in Hansen's words, "sought neither the United States nor Canada, but America and opportunity." Anything like the precise amount of this re-emigration is probably unascertainable. Most of Buchanan's figures of those proceeding to the U.S.A. in the period (pp.35-6 above) may be little better than conjecture. Lord Durham considered that in his time the rate of re-emigration from Canada was as high as 60%, and comprised more Irish than

Scots. The Colonial Land and Emigration Board's Report of 1848 speaks of 19,000 immigrants "supposed to have" passed through Canada to the U.S.A. in the previous year, and 38,781 (whether or not this figure includes all or some of the former) who were forwarded from Montreal to Upper Canada at the public expense. The Commission's 9th Report observes:

> "Under any circumstances it is in the United States that the great bulk of the emigrants must eventually settle, as Canada does not possess a tithe of the captal necessary for their employment",

and Elgin pointed out to Grey in 1848 that government schemes for employing immigrants were hamstrung because Canadian credit for raising the necessary money was exhausted.[7] A favourite scheme of Grey's for railway construction and the like by regimented immigrant labour apparently never matured.

In 1847 the embarkations at Irish ports and at Liverpool for the United States numbered about 127,000, compared with about 80,000 for Canada.[8] Between 1817 and 1827, when by the operation of the Passengers Acts ships to British North America could carry ten passengers for every three to the United States, Canada and New Brunswick were the accepted route to New York, and an historical habit was established whose influence lasted long. In 1849 the Canadian Legislature instituted an inquiry into emigration from Lower Canada to the United States, and in 1857 a Special Committee on Emigration reported that re-emigration, generally to the United States, had been "perceptibly more extensive" from Lower than Upper Canada.

The magnetism of the United States, a cardinal fact in Canadian history, worked with possibly even greater power upon the new immigrants of 1847-67 than upon Canadians of some years'

standing. The United States had much the greater population, and in that measure the greater absorptive capacity for the Irish, who preferred the diverse chances and the sociability of town life to the lonely austerity of pioneering. The United States, too, had more to offer than Canada of the rough construction work on canals and railroads in which the Irish of North America were prominent; in 1852 agents of the Illinois Central Railroad were distributing handbills in Quebec which promised work for 10,000 men.[9] Among that large proportion of all the American Irish which the United States census of 1850 showed to be living in the north-eastern States, accessible from Canada, an influential American-Irish priesthood was growing up.

From 1819 there were Federal Acts of the United States aimed at overcrowding on immigrant ships. Not until 1882, however, was there decisive Federal legislation on immigrants, and meanwhile the varying enactments of individual States and ports against pauper immigration were at least equally important. About 1847 many overcrowded vessels bound for New York changed course to the St. Lawrence. Their passengers might enter the central and western United States by the St. Lawrence canal system and the Lakes, or New York State by the Richelieu-Champlain route, though these were a minority judging by Buchanan's figure for 1852 (p.35 above); but there might be excellent reasons for preferring either route, with its possibility of evading State regulations, to the stricter supervision of the ports of New York or Boston. In 1855 the State Department informed the Mayor of New Orleans that

> "Circulars issued by the immigration agents in the interior of Germany caution immigrants who are deformed,

> crippled, or maimed, etc., against taking passage to New York, and advise them to go by way of Baltimore, New Orleans, or Quebec, where the laws prohibiting the landing of immigrants of the above classes do not apply....."[10]

In the prosperity of the mid-1840's, Canadians joined Americans in expanding the frontier of settlement into the Mississippi valley and beyond , the more so since Canada was cut off from a West of its own by the Laurentian Plateau and the Lakes. This was not perhaps an enterprise of the kind most attractive to the Irish; they were more likely to be drawn into the wake of the considerable French-Canadian emigration to the New England towns towards 1850.

There were in Montreal observers who noticed with discontent the eugenic drain, as it were, of re-emigration from Lower Canada, and principally the editor of the Witness, a Scottish Presbyterian. In August of 1847 he drafted a highly pragmatic balance-sheet of immigration in the columns of that newspaper. He calculates that 60,000 immigrants have arrived that season in the St. Lawrence, but of these probably only one quarter were men aged 16-60, of whom one third are dead or sick. Of the remaining 10,000, "at least one half, including Germans, have found their way to the U.S.", leaving the paltry figure of 5,000 labourers for the whole of Canada. The immigrants, he complains, ("are all hurried past to Toronto and Hamilton", in spite of shortages of labour en route, both on the Lake shore and in the back townships.) "It will only be" he observes elsewhere "after they have got all that they can get, that they will cross over to the U.S."; and "the great mass of the emigrants appeared well and hearty, earnestly seeking for free passages, and bent upon going westward as soon as

possible."[11] As appears later, John Dougall had no liking for Irish immigrants except as a potential labour force.

In Montreal itself the Irish found the focus of that prosperity which reigned in the St. Lawrence valley, with only brief recessions, throughout the period 1847-67. It may be convenient to consider at this point the economic attractions of the city and so much as can be ascertained of the Irish share in its economy. In his "Origins and Early History of the Montreal City & District Savings Bank", Dr. J.I.Cooper writes:

> "In the middle 1840's Montreal was a prosperous place. The population was rising towards 50,000, and was soon to establish railway connexions with such remote western points as Lachine. Within the City, much building was going forward.....",

and the Irish were traditionally good hodmen:

> "In eighteen hundred and forty-six,
> I changed my trade to carrying bricks."[12]

A contemporary description shows Montreal as a clean, well-lighted town; the cleanliness, on much contrary evidence, is questionable;

> "You see in it all the energy and enterprize of an American city, with the solidity of an English one... Occasionally disturbances.....occasioned by the collisions of the English, Irish and French races."[13]

The endless adventure of the rival St. Lawrence and Hudson valleys was in full play, and as always Canada throve on the competition. Still the Province pursued the phantom of equality with its teeming and prepotent neighbour Republic; the Canadian canal system was completed by 1848 as railways already pushed it towards obsolescence; the vital rail link with ice-free water was attained in 1851. The most important factor in Canadian prosperity was beyond the Province's

control: growing populations in the United Kingdom and the United States. By 1850 Canadian farmstuffs replaced lumber as the country's prime export, carried in the very considerable merchant fleet which was built in British North America. As one door seemed to close, another opened; and when Peel rang down the curtain on the Old Colonial System, the 1850's were at hand, with Reciprocity and railway building to bring Canada new markets both north and south of the United States frontier.

Montreal was by geography happily placed to share in the advantages of this period, at a nodal point of transport east and west, and later, when the Victoria Bridge shortened the route to New York, of transport north and south also. The city had, too, the long tradition of a shrewd commercial elite, recruited from the United Kingdom and full of Celtic, if not Irish, names. Montreal was the indispensable financial and commercial clearing-house for dealings overland and overseas, ready to profit from the more diversified Canadian economy which around 1850 was coming into being. Both the location and function of the city had a bearing on the history of its Irish community. In comparison, for instance, with Quebec City and Boston, Montreal was a place from which the Irish could easily get out, as so many did; from a maximum in the period of 14,179 in 1861 their numbers fell to 10,590 by 1871 (see p.4, above). This decline is no doubt a reflection in part of the limited opportunities in Montreal for such skills as the Irish possessed; but it may indicate, equally, a satisfied Irish community, since the unsatisfied could leave.

The Irishman was not prima facie well-fitted for colonial

life. As early as 1841, Buchanan complained that Canada received "too large a proportion of mere labourers", and that these formed the bulk of the re-emigration to the United States. As a "mere labourer" the Irishman was unrivalled if he were well treated, but he had probably never handled the first tool of the pioneer labourer in Canada, an axe. A letter from Upper Canada of 1847 stresses this point:

> ".....a new settler.....his sole business is to chop, log up with his oxen and burn off.....shoemakers do well if they will only work out till they get used to the country, save some money & watch for an opening.... but to succeed requires a turn & I may say a little dab of roguery and deceit with a countenance of brass....."[14]

In Montreal, however, the range of occupations in industry alone was already in 1844 not inconsiderable; the census of 1844 reports the following undertakings in the Parish of Montreal, within the City:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Grist Mills | 8 | Trip Hammers | 1 |
| Oatmeal Mills | 2 | Nail Factories | 1 |
| Barley Mills | 3 | Distilleries | 3 |
| Saw Mills | 2 | Breweries | 6 |
| Oil Mills | 2 | Tanneries | 11 |
| Iron Works | 3 | Pot & Pearl ash Manufactures | 2 |

Other Factories 15

To be sure, the "factories" were the small establishments of the time when manufacture was still at the stage of transfer from home or farm to local shop; but throughout the period Montreal had the greater part of such industry as the Province possessed before 1867. A brochure prepared at Montreal in celebration of the opening of the Grand Trunk Railway in 1856 describes the city's manufactures as potential rather than realised. Along the Lachine Canal, which provided water-power, were to be found mills for flour, lumber, paint

and oil, oatmeal, corn and cotton, and manufactures of spikes and nails, engines and boilers, ships, saws, sashes, blinds and doors, staves and barrels, India rubber, woollens, rope and cordage, etc., employing altogether 2,000 men. At St. Gabriel Lock the Montreal India Rubber Co. and the Redpath Sugar Refinery, and on the Canal basin the City Flour Mills, the Beaver Foundry, and the St. Lawrence Engine Works had all been established since 1847. The manufacture of ships' engines was a profitable ancillary to the expansion of ship-building which took place on the Atlantic after 1850, stimulated by the withdrawal of much tonnage to the Pacific in the gold rush. These works all adjoined the principal Irish quarter of Montreal.

We do not find Irish names in control of such enterprises. "Mr. Michael O'Meara, Carriage Maker", and Mr. Neil Doherty, Manufactory of Tobacco Pipes" are representative of the Irish contribution to the city's managerial group, although one of the Bank directorates had a strong Irish minority. Irish-men were prominent in wholesale and retail trade, particularly in grocery and dry goods. Michael Patrick Ryan, who succeeded McGee as Member of the Dominion Parliament for Montreal West, was a produce merchant. The corner grocery, where the Irish storekeeper dispensed to his compatriots foodstuffs and liquor, illicitly on Sundays, may well have anticipated, in Griffintown or the Quebec Suburbs, the political importance of the shopkeeper-publican in Ireland of the later 19th century. Apart from the important position of the Montreal Irish priesthood, which will be reviewed later,

there was a solid Irish representation in professional circles. Between 1851 and 1864 about a dozen Irish advocates and doctors were advertising, as the custom then was, in the columns of the Montreal True Witness alone. Sir William Hingston, the ornament of medicine in Montreal, was of Irish extraction, though not birth. Dr. John Tracy, at one time Professor of Surgery at McGill, died in the typhus epidemic of 1847. Irish teachers appear occasionally throughout the period, both as principals of private schools and serving in the public school system.

Of the rank-and-file Irish community it is less easy to write; their memorial is apt to have perished with them, unless it survive in a canal, a bridge, an industry, to witness for the nameless. A Montreal Directory of 1819 gives, among 74 obviously Irish names, a sprinkling of schoolmasters, physicians, merchants, artisans and nine tavernkeepers. Adams says, of the period before 1845,

> "in Canada, Irish peasants, reproducing the conditions and standards of life in the old country, undersold habitans in the market of Montreal",[15]

an incredible achievement, and it is easier to picture the typical Montreal Irishman of that time as a gang-labourer on the new Lachine Canal, or a hand in Griffin's Mills, which gave their name to the Irish "suburb" of Griffintown. Skilled labour was generally imported English or Scots. For the years after 1847, one has recourse to the detailed enumeration sheets of the census. The circumstantial statements which these yield as to personal occupation must be accepted with considerable reserve; the occasion offered much scope to the

the Irish (or any other) imagination, and a man's calling might have to be assessed by his wife, or worse, his landlady. Of the emigrants arriving at Quebec and Montreal during 1849, the vast majority described themselves as (a) Common Labourers, or (b) Farmers and Agricultural Labourers, in almost equal proportions.[16] At the census of Montreal City in 1861, in Districts 35, 36, 51 and 52, comprising parts of St. Lawrence and St. Ann's Wards, among those of Irish nativity the category of "labourer" was far from the most numerous. Shoemakers and grocers show a slight preponderance among a very wide variety of trades and callings, but the category which really predominates is that of "servant", with its variants of waiter, butler, coachman, cook, housemaid. The Irish entering Canada in 1847 included, among adults, about 16,000 females to about 19,000 males,[17] a higher proportion of females than formerly, and the perennial call for domestic servants in North America matched the fact that in Ireland servant girls took their year's wages in the spring, early in the emigration season. As to general wage-rates in Montreal, the immigrant labourer could look for 50¢ a day to compare with his 6d in Connaught or 1/- in Ulster. The Emigration Board's Colonization Circular, already quoted, mentioned wages in Lower Canada at December, 1846 as follows:

| | Sterling, per diem without Board |
|---|---|
| Bricklayers | 5/- to 6/- |
| Farm Labourers | 2/- to 2/6 |

Common labourers in Lower Canada earned 3/- to 4/- a day in 1860.

The available evidence leaves a good deal to be desired,

but may on the whole suffice for the judgment that the Montreal Irish of 1847-67 were a moderately prosperous community, wanting in extremes of either wealth or poverty, and fitting very successfully into a pattern of economic life some of whose elements must have been strange indeed to the bulk of the immigrants. In the course of a year or two around 1850, the Irish community raised more than $50,000. for their Orphan Asylum and the embellishment of St. Patrick's Church.

From 1842 through 1846, Buchanan was sending back to the Emigration Commission reports on employment prospects in Canada which were encouraging to prospective emigrants: few unemployed, no "industrious" unemployed, employment abundant, "little, if any, Distress". These were comfortable words, but a probably stronger local determinant was the known success of the earlier generation of Montreal Irishmen. As far back as 1832, when the City of Montreal promulgated its coat of arms, the shamrock took its place in the design with the rose and the thistle. Before and since then, solid examples of Irish achievement in the city and Province were not wanting. The distinguished families of McCord and Workman, both originating in Co. Antrim, were very well established in Montreal by 1847. Thomas McCord, who died in 1824, owned a large part of Irish Griffintown, and sat in the Provincial Parliament. His two sons were judges. The name of Workman was well known by 1847, the celebrated Francis Hincks and three other Irishmen (Sullivan, Blake, L.T. Drummond) appeared in the Administration in 1848. Benjamin Holmes, Cashier of the Bank of Montreal, was an alderman by 1843. The Corporation of Montreal had at least one Irish alderman during

four of the years 1847-67, and at least one Irish councillor in every year of that period; in 1850 and 1855 there were three Irish councillors, and in 1854, 1856, and 1863-66 there were two.[18] J.P. Sexton, a "second-generation" Irishman, was City Clerk and from 1859 Recorder. Hincks, Drummond, two of the Werkman family, Henry Driscol, K.C. and Benjamin Holmes were among the members of the Montreal Famine Committee of 1847. Successive waves of immigration, by preempting the lower-rental sections of the town, probably pushed such men as these into socially more acceptable dwellings and thus into better standing with Montreal at large. It is a point which would repay investigation.

Celebrations of St. Patrick's Day in Montreal can be identified as far back as 1819, in which year the function was military and presumably intended for Irish members of the garrison, and St. Patrick's was the earliest of the city's various national societies. The constitution promulgated by the St. Patrick's Society of Montreal in 1834 indicates the earlier existence of a society of like name if not purpose:

> Art.I The name of this Society shall be as heretofore, the St. Patrick's Society of Montreal and the seal shall have engraved thereon a device similar to same as on the badges worn by the ordinary members of the Society as hereinafter described, around which shall be the words St. Patrick's Society Montreal MDCCCXXXIV.
>
> Art.II. The ordinary members of this Society shall consist of Irishmen, and those of Irish descent, of all classes and of all creeds, residing in the District of Montreal.....
>
> Art.VIII. In order the better to create good feeling and social intercourse among the members, the Society shall have an annual dinner on St Patrick's Day and the members shall on that day wear the badge of the Society, suspended by a green ribbon on the left breast, viz. a shield bearing

> a blood red cross or Saltire on a silver field, in the Centre of which shall be a harp, gold, with the motto Erin Go Bragh.[19]

In 1835 the Society had a committee (including officers) of twenty-one. At the St. Patrick's Day banquet of that year two hundred guests assembled, and brotherly greetings were conveyed from the newly-formed St. Andrew's Society, in language pompous even for 1835, by the Hon. Peter McGill, first President of that Society. All this indicates the attainment, by at least a minority among the Montreal Irish, of a certain success and acceptance. When the Montreal City and District Savings Bank opened its doors in 1846, about a quarter of its 59 Directors, and five of its 15 Managing Directors were Irish, both Catholic and Protestant, and the managing directorate included office-holders of the St. Patrick's Society. [20]Here was a well-knit group of Irish established in one of the seats of power in Montreal at a time when their countrymen numbered perhaps one-quarter of the population.

Certainly Montreal had solid attractions for the Irish emigrant of 1847, if he could reach it alive.

[1] Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland, 1847, Q.3296

[2] Adams, W.F., Ireland and the Irish Emigration to the New World, 1932, p.180

[3] Sel. Comm. House of Lords, 1847 ut supra, QQ. 1790, 1798

[4] Skelton, O.D. Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt, 1920, p.43

[5] Public Archives of Canada: Correspondence of Gov. General's Secretary, G20, Vol.3, 303

[6] [Montreal] True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 27th December 1861.

[7] Elgin-Grey Papers, 1846-1852, 1937, Vol. I, pp.203-4.

[8] Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, 8th Report, 1848.

[9] the same, 13th Report, 1853.

[10] quoted Garis, R.L., Immigration Restriction, 1927, p.44.

[11] Montreal Witness, 1847, 24th May, 14th June, 9th August.

[12] Irish Ballad, quoted Adams ut supra, p.208.

[13] [Warburton, Major G.D.], Hochelaga, 1846, Vol..I, pp.207-8.

[14] Pub. Arch. ut supra: Papers of John Lee, 1827-65, 26 - 3 - D.

[15] Adams ut sup., p.354, citing J. E. Alexander, Transatlantic Sketches, 1833.

[16] Statistical Soc. of London, Journal Vol. XIII, 1850, May.

[17] Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 8th Report, 1848.

[18] Lamothe, J.C., Histoire de la Corporation de la Cité de Montréal, 1903.

[19] per Dr. J.I. Cooper.

[20] vide Cooper, J.I., Origins and Early History of the Montreal City & District Savings Bank, 1846-71, Can. Cath. Hist. Ass. Report, 1945-6.

# CHAPTER 3.

## The Irish in Montreal.

The process of social adjustment of the Irish in Montreal was tempered by the appalling misery which surrounded the passage and arrival of the Famine emigrants. Of the Atlantic crossing something has already been said (pp.17-19 above); but of those who embarked for Canada in 1847, almost twice as many died at the Quarantine and in the hospitals as on the voyage,[1] and in the process they spread a trail of disease and death far inland from Quebec and Montreal. The advantages which the Irish enjoyed throughout the period in joining an established national group in Montreal might well have been offset by the manner of their arrival in 1847, when, according to the Emigration Commissioners, six-sevenths of Canada's immigrants consisted of "destitute" Irish.

The contemporary Montreal press is, naturally, rich in material on the events of 1847 and the process of immigrant adjustment. An assessment of those newspapers catering for, or with a special interest in, the immigrant Irish may be attempted. John Dougall, already referred to, was an emigrant from Paisley to Montreal where he established successively the "Religious and Useful Book Store" and two newspapers, the Canada Temperance Advocate and, in 1846, the Montreal Witness.[2] The titles of these enterprises indicate their author's austere Protestantism, which lent a distinctive flavour to the columns of the Witness. A remarkable religious faith upheld Dougall throughout a long life, and prompted him in a giant's task such as the attempt to convert French Canada through the agency of the French-Canadian Missionary Society, in which he was prominent. His Witness was an eight-page

weekly, the common size of this type of paper in Canada and the United States, and sold for $1.00 monthly. It claimed to be a "general Family Paper"; to D'Arcy McGee it was "that curious compound of piety and the prices current".[3] The general aim, indeed, of the Witness was "upsetting privileged churches, securing Anglo-Saxon supremacy, and ushering in the bourgeois paradise",[4] and it catered for a solid middle class which, in pursuit of these objects, had an interest, and not always a friendly interest, in immigration.

The Witness permitted itself amenities, such as the suggestion (23rd August, 1847) that the Irish were plague-stricken because Catholic, which would read oddly in a "family" or any other paper of our own time, but allowance must of course be made for a robustness of allusion, particularly of personal allusion, which the press has since lost. Dougall's homilies were on occasion described in a contemporary Montreal newspaper as "the fanatical ravings of a foul mouthed liar and hypocrite"; and McGee's New Era, no doubt with more justice than courtesy, referred to a recent lecturer in the city as "the superannuated drab, Lola Montez". Religious and political polemic was conducted pro rata.

The True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, publishing weekly from 1850, was a counterblast to the Witness on the opposite side of the religious cause which Dougall had espoused, and on several occasions emerged triumphant from a duel between the two newspapers. Its founder and first editor was George Edward Clerk, younger son of a titled Scottish family and a convert to Catholicism at about the age

of 30. Clerk made himself the patron of Irish interests in Montreal, in so far as these were compatible with the main purpose of the True Witness, which was to produce a rallying-point for Catholics of both languages. The political implications of this situation will be considered later, in reviewing Clerk's relations with McGee. Clerk's spiritual director was a Jesuit, his wife a French Canadian; he was a generous donor to Catholic causes, and a devout participant in the offices of his Church. His Diary records the genesis in 1850 of the True Witness, under the tutelage of the Catholic Bishop of Montreal, the Archbishop of Quebec, Sadlier the Irish bookseller, and others. By 1858 there were but 2,837 subscribers, and although Clerk received subsidies from Bishop Bourget and others of the hierarchy in the Province, he depended for his livelihood almost entirely on family support. There are signs that the finance of all these lesser newspapers was continuously or intermittently precarious; Clerk complained that McGee nearly ruined the True Witness during 1861. Hence no doubt the heavy and continued increase in the advertisements of patent medicines which the paper carried about that date, although with a certain ethical inconsistency Clerk sometimes refused lucrative Government advertising in order to keep his paper non-political. Clerk was at first editor-proprietor, from 1859 editor only, the ownership being transferred to Gillies, the printer. Clerk wrote each week the editorial articles and half the rest of the paper. On his death in 1875 he was followed as editor by a succession of Irishmen, the first two of them priests.

Clerk made his editorial début with an article calling upon "our Irish brethren for countenance and support",[5] and observing that it is time there was an English-language newspaper to defend them from "the taunts of mental blindness, of bigotry, and of superstition", although "we have no wish to enter upon a religious newspaper controversy" - immediately following which came a three-column onslaught upon the Witness, by name. The True Witness, it is stated, is to be "essentially", but not exclusively, a religious publication, and though it will be conducted and edited by laymen, any doctrinal matter will be censored by the Church. "The True Witness....will not be a political paper." Clerk was no more successful than some later and possibly wiser heads in his delimitation of politics, and he is to be found in 1854 explaining to his subscribers that in giving much space to the School Question and to Clergy Reserves he has not departed from his non-political pledge, because these are politico-religious matters.[6] In 1863 he is obliged to admit that "religion has, or should have, a good deal to do with politics."[7] His valediction to the Parliamentary Session of 1857 has an anti-political flavour:

> "Members have made everything comfortable for themselves and their friends; have done all the jobs they were expected to do; and having done this, will speedily be dismissed to the enjoyment of their ill-gotten gains."[8]

This echoes to some extent his earlier pronouncement that

> ".....we may take it as a general rule, that all secular Governments, all administrations, are jealous of, and hostile to the Catholic Church....."[9]

Clerk's paper, in short, was just as much or as little "political" as Clerk's clerical controllers. The first year's

issues of the True Witness are mainly filled with Catholic polemic of a rather more violent kind than the contrary propositions in the Montreal Witness. Much space is given to news from Catholic Europe, almost none to Montreal news as distinct from controversy, and little to Canadian news: an item "Canada News" appearing towards the end of the year is not sustained. The paper's motto might be an entry in its editor's diary for 30th September 1858: "T.W. placed under sole surveillance of Bishop of Montreal."

The Pilot and Evening Journal of Commerce, becoming in a few months the Pilot and Journal of Commerce and later the Pilot, was larger and cheaper than both Witness and True Witness, and aimed much more obviously at the world of Montreal business. Its founder in 1844, the Irishman Francis Hincks, found no difficulty in proclaiming his adherence not, like Dougall, to the politics of the Kingdom of Heaven but to those of the Upper Canada Reformers:

> ".....The Reformers of Upper Canada will, it is hoped, estimate the importance of having a Journal at the seat of Government to advocate the principles which they have on all occasions so nobly maintained.....Although the main object in establishing The Pilot is to secure for the Reformers of British origin an organ at the Seat of Government, it will advocate the Agricultural, Manufacturing and Commercial interests of the Canadian people, while defending their rights and liberties....."[10]

Hincks had twice to resign his editorship in order to take his seat in Parliament; in spite of the heavy advertising, including official announcements, which the Pilot carried from the outset, the paper lost money, and in 1849 Hincks sold it to Rollo Campbell, a Scot. Allowing for the larger sheet which the Pilot adopted from its nineteenth issue, the paper has in

its first six or seven years much more news of the great world than either Witness, though the space given to European news falls off considerably about 1851.

The newspaper which pre-eminently catered for the Montreal Irish, the New Era, began its short career only in 1857 and can best be considered among the activities of D'Arcy McGee.

All the above newspapers had the important effect, in a greater or less degree, of providing a group-stimulus for the emigrant Irish by purveying news of Ireland. As regards the Witness, the stimulus, for most of the Montreal Irish, was perhaps that of attack. During 1848 sundry articles in the Witness show a growing interest in Ireland and an increasing tendency to vilify its priesthood. Reprints begin to appear from the "co-temporary press", usually that of London and New York, of derogatory articles on Catholic Ireland. The True Witness, alone of the Montreal press, provided substantial cuttings of the home news congenial to most of the Irish abroad, sustained over a period of many years. Whereas two or three columns are given to "Irish Intelligence" in 1851 and 1852, the average is nearer five columns by 1866 and 1867. Week by week the expatriates were regaled with generous extracts from the Irish press, including the most insignificant local journals. A Repeal meeting in Dublin went in alongside the state of the weather and crops (some weeks out of date) in Co. Clare. Much space was taken, also, throughout the period, by advertisements and reports of the activities of the St. Patrick's Societies of Montreal. Here, in sum, was one of the strongest stimulants of group-

identity accessible to the emigrant Irish. The Pilot was giving, in 1844, as much as a whole page of Irish news, and in 1848 news from Ireland "by our own special reporter" as well as cuttings of the Irish press; but by 1851, and possibly earlier, Irish and other European news had dwindled to a column or two, once a week, and the St. Patrick's Society advertisements disappeared. A change of ownership no doubt brought a change of policy.

The general aspects of the Irish immigration to Montreal receive amplest attention in the pages of the Witness, but from the extremely individual standpoint which its editor had adopted on the subject. There are indications that Dougall, the exiled Scotsman, ripened into a Nativist North American of an early vintage, and as the flood of low-grade Catholic immigration rose, so did the apprehensions of the Montreal Witness. Something resembling the nascent spirit of Know-Nothing appears in certain editorial articles between 1847 and 1851.

> "The Roman Catholic Irish:.....even America, free as she deemed herself, is in danger of having the natives of her soil swamped at every election.....by..... ignorant men, who will not learn, and who are at the beck of a designing priesthood..... Canada is in the same position.... We recommend this matter to the Evangelical Alliance of Canada. Popery is one of the enemies to which they have thrown down the gauntlet."[11]

On 19th June 1848 the Witness reports a speaker as warning the American Protestant Society that the stream of Irish immigration will become a flood, and urging gospel preaching in Ireland - "sanctify these streams at the source". Failing such radical measures, Dougall had already urged missionary work in the immigration sheds. In September, 1851 he reprints

a letter from the Boston American Celt, then edited by McGee, whose writer ("Shamrock") describes with relish the burning of the Union Jack by an Irish assembly in Montreal. Dougall's comment is:

> ".....we know it may be said that we misunderstand and misrepresent the Irish among us.....our best reply to cavillers will be to let the Irish speak for themselves....."[12]

A yearning for a Nordic and Protestant immigration appears in several articles:

> "German Emigration": the German portion of the emigration passing through Montreal is "strong and hearty.....they pay their way and trouble nobody." Most are no doubt on their way to the "western States" - but perhaps they will spend on average $4.00 a head in Canada![13]

> "Emigration:.....Of the thriftless Romanist population of Ireland we obtain enough without urging; but of the young agricultural population of England, Scotland, the North of Ireland, etc.....we desire to have as many as possible."[14]

> "The Irish and German Exodus": the Germans are doing well in the United States, "in a land of Bibles and personal responsibility." The Irish are tolerable if mixed with "Saxons"; and "the fact is, all that Irishmen need in order to advance themselves with the foremost, is, to get beyond the influence of their priests....."[15]

The impression of the foregoing extracts is in total formidable; but they must not be mistaken for evidence of an anti-immigrant attitude in Montreal as a whole. Even the Witness commented with humanity and good sense on the developing tragedy of 1847, and John Dougall served on the Montreal Immigrant Committee. Montreal's state of mind on the Irish is probably far better crystallised in an article in the Montreal Transcript of 1st May 1847, although this appeared before the full tide of the Famine immigration:

> "In our last number, we gave the outlines of a scheme

> proposed to the Government by Mr. John O'Connell..... for emigration from Ireland to this country. We think no one can read it without being struck with its extravagance. The population of this Colony is..... not much over a million, and Mr O'Connell seriously proposes by one move to more than double it! Such an invasion would have more the character of the Huns and Scythians than anything else. It would overwhelm us. Where would be found the means of employment and feeding the enormous multitude? We need scarcely say that the present labour market would be quite insufficient. All these people, too, would be of the lowest class - destitute - paupers.....They could not all come into our cities - they could not exist by themselves - where would they go.....?.....
> No, for the industrious, self relying, and self-emigrating population of Ireland there is plenty of room in this country, and they will be gladly received, but we cannot consent to be swallowed up in the invasion that Sir John O'Connell so patriotically proposes, and the sole object of which is to relieve the Irish landlords from doing what they ought to have done long ago - and what the proposed poor law will make them do - find employment for their unfortunate tenants."

"Self-emigrating" is the key word.

The columns of the <u>True Witness</u> have little to say on what may be termed the philosophy of immigration. This is understandable, since the paper did not appear until the events of 1847, and even the cholera of 1849, were past; and a Catholic newspaper had nothing to gain by re-opening discussion concerning the first principles of the Irish influx. The <u>True Witness</u> records, with suitable indignation, a couple of relatively late examples of infringement of the Passengers Acts. In 1854 the Chief Agent at Quebec said:

> "It is only very rarely that I now have to proceed against masters for breaches of the Act....."[16],

but in June of that year the <u>True Witness</u> reported:

> "We are happy to see that a determination exists on the part of the proper authorities at Quebec, totrounce the mercenary scoundrels who have so long made their profit out of the sufferings of the unfortunate emigrants. A case was lately brought before the police court, by W.A. [sic] Buchanan, Esq., - who deserves much credit for his

> vigilance - charging the master of an emigrant vessel, with the issuing to his passengers, fetid, putrid water .....".[17]

The penalty was £20 or one month; the True Witness advocated hard labour. The other case was in 1857:

> "The Captain of the United Service has been sentenced to pay a fine of Fifty pounds, together with the costs of the trial, for not furnishing his passengers with a sufficient supply of good provisions."[18]

The Montreal Witness and Transcript provide some of the best available evidence for the events of 1847 in the city. The situation facing Montreal in the spring of that year was terrifying. In the month of April, at least 75 vessels cleared for Quebec from the ports of Liverpool, Limerick, Cork, Belfast, Dublin, Sligo, Londonderry, Waterford, Plymouth, Glasgow and Newry, bearing 22,406 passengers.[19] The Quebec correspondent of the Transcript wrote in May:

> "We have had 26 arrivals since last night and there are about 30 more at hand. The wind still continues from the East."[20]

The east wind propelled a famishing and diseased multitude which swamped Grosse Isle in the manner described above. /The overflow came up to Montreal, to be dealt with by the City Council through its Board of Health, which unfortunately seems to have left no records, by the city Immigration Commissioners, and, in the words of the Transcript, by "Mr. Yarwood, R.N., the excellent Emigration Agent" - who was dead by July 13th. By that time Lord Elgin was calling on the home government "to stem this tide of misery", and had transmitted to the Colonial Office the following Address to the Queen from the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of Montreal:

"We, your Majesty's loyal subjects, the Mayor, Aldermen and citizens of the city of Montreal, most humbly present, -
That wholesome immigration, composed of men with capital, or of men able and willing to labour, will always be acceptable and beneficial to your Majesty's faithful Canadian subjects;.....but that paupers unused to labour, mendicants with large families, averse from every industrious pursuit, whole cargoes of human beings in a state of destitution, and in every stage of disease, must prove, as they have already proved, a grievous burthen to the resident colonial population.
That thousands of men, women and children of this description, have this season arrived, and are daily arriving; that the mortality among them is appalling, and that a pestilence is seriously apprehended. That your petitioners have learned with equal surprise and pain, that some Irish landlords, among whom is said to be one of your Majesty's ministers, have resorted to the expedient of transporting the refuse population of their estates to Canada;.....that, owing to the severity and length of the winter, should multitudes congregate in the towns, where food and fuel are scarce and expensive, hundreds must perish. That among the evils entailed on this community, your petitioners would notice the number of orphans.....
That the tax-payers of Montreal, though heavily burthened, will continue to meet the demands of the resident poor, who have natural claims on their charity; and that they cannot resort to the measures lately adopted not only upon this continent, by the seabord cities of the United States, but in Liverpool, rigorously to exclude the ship-loads of famishing beings arriving in search of food and shelter.....that the authorities charged with making preparation in this province, have not acted with the requisite energy and promptitude.....such remedy as your Majesty may see fit to apply.....

(signed) Jno. E. Mills, Mayor.
J.P. Sexton, City Clerk.

City Hall, Montreal, 23 June, 1847[21]

The Provincial Government was even then wrestling with the problem. In the absence of local poor rates, twenty-eight Corporations were authorised to nominate Boards of Health from their own membership, to draw up sanitary regulations and to allot contracts for bread and meat, at the rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ lb of each, per day per adult, for six days.[22] During 1847, the

Provincial Government was involved in expenses of the order of £140,000 for Boards of Health in Upper and Lower Canada, for transport of immigrants inland, and for sheds and fittings at Montreal, Quebec and Grosse Isle. After considerable debate, the Imperial Government shouldered the entire burden on the understanding that it was non-recurring.

The framework of a local organisation to meet the emergency was already in being. Emigrants' Societies had existed at Quebec and Montreal since about 1820. They received laudatory notice from Durham in the celebrated Report: "benevolent associations of which I am bound to speak in the highest terms of commendation", but a much less charitable interpretation from Buller:

> ".....the poorer classes would have to find their way as they best might to the Upper Provinces, or to the United States, were it not for the operation of societies whose main object is not the advantage of emigrants, but to free the cities of Quebec and Montreal from the intolerable nuisance of a crowd of unemployed, miserable and too often diseased persons."[23]

The Montreal Immigrant Committee included in 1843 Benjamin Holmes and James Allison, the Emigration Agent,[24] This Committee replaced the old Emigrant Society in 1840, and since then had received and expended about £1300. At a meeting in May, 1847 it was re-constituted, and instructed to agitate for hospitals "at a safe distance from the city and from the sheds."[25] This opened a controversy which occupied Montreal for some time.

Under the existing routine, immigrants in transit were landed at the stone wharves "in the lowest and most confined part of the town", as the Montreal Immigration Commission described them, and carted about one mile to the old Immigrant

Sheds, which also served as a hospital, at Wellington Street Bridge. Here the sick were detained, having breathed, as it was held, pestilence upon the city in passing, and the healthy were loaded into the Canal boats. From a description of the immigrants reaching Lachine, above the city, may be guaged the condition of those judged unfit to proceed thus far:

> "Lachine, June 16, 1847:.....the distress, poverty and sickness which rages through the immigrants at this place is truly heart-rending. The boats generally stop here three or four days. There is no hospital, nor shelter for the sick.....I have seen a man this morning crawling on hands and knees, in the last stages of the Fever; he was carried by the Canal Police to an old store on the wharf....."[26]

As to the Wellington Street sheds, and the Rope Walk adjoining them which was pressed into service, the Witness thus describes them:

> "Site of the Emigrant Sheds. It is low-lying and overhung by the high bank of the canal.....The ground is swampy.....The water which is most within reach..... is.....the muddy water of the canal.....There is no suitable vacant space for washing or drying clothes, and for the exercise and recreation of convalescents and children.....
> The present emigrant sheds are a vast charnel house for the emigrants themselves as well as for the physicians and nurses who attend them....."[27]
>
> "The Emigrant Sheds:.....The most distressing part of the spectacle in going through the sheds, is the number of persons, chiefly men and children, who appear to be laid down with dysentery, low fever, bad colds, etc., and most of them.....attribute their sickness to the hardships they suffered at the Quarantine Station.... the hospitals were full of the more serious cases..... We saw the physician labouring away with generally half a dozen persons speaking to him at once, and two young gentlemen serving out medicines with great activity, while nurses were coming and going in all directions...."[28]

Humanity and prudence alike required that this plague-spot be removed from Montreal; traffic with the "hospital" had

already carried disease into the city, and alarm was spreading. A public meeting in July called for the building of new hospitals on Boucherville Islands, a few miles below Montreal, no doubt on the analogy of Grosse Isle. Cupidity outvoted caution. In a Report of the Montreal Immigrant Commissioners of July 24th their Chairman, Mayor John E. Mills, made a statement which, if true, substantially modifies the theory of a destitute Irish immigration:

> "In ordinary years, ¾ of the immigrants select and pay for their own conveyances, and purchase their own provisions - and even this year, more than half of the immigration is thus circumstanced."

This astounding remark can perhaps never be confirmed or refuted, but the circumstantial evidence seems to the writer to bear in its favour. It is necessary to recall the hard schooling of the Irish in the "arts of disguise". The Mayor (who died of typhus) continued:

> "Should these fellow subjects whose coming among us is profitable to all concerned, be detained upon an island, they would be almost forced to become dependent upon Government."[29]

Perhaps the harm was already done, since by mid-July typhus fever was said to be in every street in Montreal, and in one or two localities almost in every house. It spread the more easily in a town whose "abounding nuisances to public health" were noticed alike by the Immigrant Committee in 1847, and the True Witness in 1864, which observed, on the occasion of an outbreak of yellow fever, "unfortunately Montreal is dirty enough and stinking enough for anything." The process of contagion was explained in the Transcript:

> "We have been informed.....that it is the custom of some of the immigrants to leave the sheds at a very early hour in the morning, taking with them portions of their over-

> plus allowance of oatmeal and loaves of bread and selling them at the petty stores in Griffintown for the sum of a few coppers which most likely is expended afterwards in liquor."[30]

This particular alleviation of an intolerable destiny was restricted under the new dispensation which was in partial being by the beginning of August. The immigrants were now landed, not at the city wharves but, in the words of the Immigrant Commissioners, at Windmill Point "at the mouth of the canal, on the side furthest from the city". From here the healthy were sent on to Upper Canada, and the sick to the "spacious and airy hospitals" on the high bank of the St. Lawrence at Point St. Charles. As regards Windmill Point,

> ".....In order that this place of transhipment may be even more isolated.....a strong paling is to be put round it, with a Policeman stationed at the gates, to prevent the ingress to the city of baggage, bedding, etc., as well as of immigrants, except those who are clean and healthy."[31]

The new hospitals were indeed "airy", to judge from the Witness's description,

> "there not only being a window opposite every bed, but a door for every four beds, besides a ventilating roof".[32]

The best of the old sheds were assigned to such immigrants as were obliged to wait for their sick relatives. This policy had at least the virtue of dispersal, and was thus superior to nostrums such as various disinfecting fluids from which much had been hoped. Two promotors of these suffered in person for their mistakes:

> ".....some experiments were made at the Marine Hospital.....to determine which fluid possessed the greater power of mitigating.....the effluvium from soil, votes were given in favour of Sir W. Burnett's

> fluid.....M. Ledoyen has left for England, after having suffered from typhus; and poor Colonel Calvert is no more, having succumbed.....to the same disease.....The consequences to M. Ledoyen and Colonel Calvert are a strong proof of the fallacy.....which.....they entertained....."[33]

The bills of mortality for the city, which recorded 134 deaths in June and 353 in July, fell to 274 in August and 164 in September, although deaths from typhus were still occurring in Montreal in December, 1847 and January 1848.[34] The waning of an exceptionally hot summer helped to arrest the disease. The number of dead among the immigrants has probably been the subject of patriotic exaggeration; the truth, if it could be known, would be bad enough. Buchanan's figure of 3,579 dead at the emigrant hospital and elsewhere in the city to 1st November is much lower than the figure on the Victoria Bridge monument. On the other hand, the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission's Report for 1848 gives 6,585 as the number of those who "died at the Hospitals" in the Province of Canada during the previous year.

The whole history of Irish immigration to the Province has been coloured, and probably overcoloured, by the events of this one disastrous emigration season, and of one or two seasons of lesser epidemic disease which preceded and followed it. In all the circumstances, the official estimate of 16.33% as the death-rate among the total embarkation for Canada and New Brunswick in 1847[35] is surprisingly low. Even the judgment of a contemporary Montreal doctor,

> "it is understating the mortality to say that of those who left Britain, one person in every five was dead by the end of the year",[36]

still leaves a presupposition of abnormal resistance to bestial conditions, among emigrants who must be supposed undernourished, if no worse. / Nevetheless it is equally surprising that the attitude of Montreal to this visitation did on the whole remain one of acceptance; it is impossible to discern any widespread and sustained outcry against the Irish as a public nuisance and liability. It appears, for instance from the Immigrant Commissioners' Report already quoted, that the city's pattern of thought, or hope, about immigrants was in 1847 already well established, namely that they would spend some money and then proceed westward. A repetition of 1847 might have shattered this stereotype; but the immigration of 1848 was small and healthy.

As it was, the city responded to the challenge with magnanimity. Catholic and Protestant clergy, doctors, nurses and other lay helpers gave their efforts and frequently their lives in the service of the sufferers. Bhe Bishop authorised the Grey Nuns to leave their cloister and nurse the sick; all were eventually infected and a number died. The Bishop himself and his Vicar General, who died as a consequence, spent alternate nights watching over the sick and dying. At least eight Gentlemen of the Seminary gave their lives, and several of what the Witness called a "more than Spartan band" from the congregation of Trinity Church. The Jesuit Mission of New York — Canada sent reinforcements to Montreal, one an Irishman. The problem of the orphans, referred to in the Montreal Council's address to the Queen, was peculiarly poignant. On 30th June the Transcript

reported:

> "The mortality among the infant orphans, who are literally starving for want of wet nurses is very great."

Of those among the "'47 orphans" who survived, many were adopted into charitable French-Canadian families, whence they emerged in due time as French-speaking adults. For others, the French and Irish communities joined in initiating the great enterprise which resulted in St. Patrick's Orphan Asylum. As early as 1842 a French priest had been assigned to the service of the Irish as almoner of the poor, and he rented a house on Colborne Street for the adult and orphan sufferers of 1847.[37] In September, 1848 the celebrated Fr. Dowd was appointed almoner of the poor and Superior of the House, from which sprang the idea of the Orphan Asylum. Fr. Dowd secured a small house on Craig Street from a M. Augustin Perreault, a man of unostentatious charity, and here the Irish orphans were cared for by the Grey Sisters and the Ladies of Charity of St. Patrick's congregation, who from 1849 organised bazaars to help the cause. Another contingent of several hundred orphans from the sheds at Point St Charles were tended by the Sisters of Providence, and Mgr. Bourget appealed to the diocese on their behalf. An Irish priest was their first religious instructor, and many became priests and nuns.

The Craig Street premises were occupied for two years. Then a parishioner of St. Patrick's, Bartholomew O'Brien, died leaving £1,000 to build an orphan asylum. A building committee was formed from St. Patrick's congregation, and a plot of land on Dorchester Street was given by the Fabrique of Notre Dame.

The St. Patrick's Orphan Asylum was occupied from November, 1851 by two hundred boys and girls. The Irish raised more than $18,000. towards the cost, and the Provincial Parliament granted £500. It is a fine example of the swift process of Irish integration into the Montreal community; and the agency is, characteristically, that of the Catholic Church.

The newcomers settled into the areas of Montreal indicated roughly on the accompanying map. Irish nuclei were already established in the Quebec Suburbs, round Beaver Hall Hill, and in Griffintown, of which the Irish quarter in Point St. Charles was a later extension. In 1851-52 the County, as distinct from the Parish, of Montreal had upwards of a thousand first-generation Irish, mainly in the Village of Lachine and the parish of St. Michel de Lachine.[38] A landscape view of Montreal of 1852[39] shows Griffintown as a lesser aggregation of buildings than the Quebec Suburbs. Field and orchard penetrate far into the city of that time, and to Griffintown in particular give a rustic appearance which somewhat belies the record of the numerous single storey frame houses in the census returns. A meeting of the Board of Health in June, 1847 has left a glimpse of what may be hoped to be worse than average living conditions in Griffintown:

> "Robert Everett, a proprietor, residing in Ann Street, appeared before the Board, and complained that one of his tenants who occupied a lodging containing two rooms of about 14 feet square each has a family of six persons, and has taken besides nine boarders, one of whom is sick of what we believe ship fever, which creates alarm among his other tenants.....ordered that the Chief of Police be requested to send an officer to the house complained of, - if any sick person be found,

to send them to hospital or apply to Doctor Munro."[40] To-day, when the hovels have mostly given place to warehouses, the face of Griffintown is changed but still severe. Until late in the 19th century its low-lying streets were liable to flooding from the river. The Canal did not contribute to the social stability of the district; McGee wrote, in 1857:

> "St. Ann's Ward.....contains 10,000 stationary inhabitants. But it also, unfortunately for its peace, includes the Canal Basin, and the low resorts of the floating population who daily come down the Canal."[41]

The 1847 immigration, and its physical adjustment in Montreal, had thus to be made in circumstances as little propitious as could be imagined for an easy and lasting fusion of the new community with the old. Hence the importance of the subjects next to be considered, the elements of group consciousness and group conflict which were inherent in the situation of the Montreal Irish during the period.

The great, and indeed the only, institutional heritage which the majority of the Irish brought with them was their Catholicism. Nothing could have evoked a readier response, nothing could have served them better in Montreal, a city so eminently the creation of the apostolic Catholic Church. It is only necessary to contrast the position of the Irish at the same period in Boston, where they found themselves the one immigrant group violently opposed to the Protestant and

rationalist culture-pattern of the city. From every place of worship which they frequented in Montreal, until the opening of St. Patrick's Church, the Irish literally overflowed into the streets; what further passport was required to the protection of the most powerful, and the wealthiest, corporation in the city, the historic Seminary of St. Sulpice?

It was 1851 before the Society of St. Vincent de Paul set up in Dublin an Emigrants' Protection Society with the particular purpose of safeguarding young women on the emigrant ships,[42] an office whose urgency was probably past. This was perhaps the first Catholic "recognition" of emigration, and came when the advantages of the process, to the emigrants and to Ireland, had been demonstrated. An earlier proposal to concentrate, under clerical direction, an Irish nation in Canada was damned both by the Irish priesthood, as tending to emasculate the country, and by the Canadian press, as a prospective popish invasion. The idea emanated from the Anglo-Irish landowning class. Otherwise, the task of counselling upon emigration fell to individual priests, who tended to be less unfavourable to the project after the Famine than before. They did not perhaps realise that in Lower Canada the Catholic immigrant entered a country in which the power of his Church made that of the Irish hierarchy seem in comparison a thing of small substance. At Montreal, Mgr. Ignace Bourget administered a diocese which the winds of 19th century liberalism and gallicanism troubled but little. He was, a Jesuit writer observes, "éminemment un homme d'oeuvres et, qui plus est, un homme de Dieu,"[43] proceeding <u>suaviter</u>

but still, as more than one Irish congregation had occasion to notice, fortiter.

In opening the Grand Seminary on Sherbrooke Street in 1857, Saint-Sulpice celebrated the bicentenary of the coming of the Gentlemen to Canada. In 1840 they took over the instruction of priests for the Diocese; the first clause of the concordat reads:

> "1°. Monsieur l'Évêque confie pour toujours et irrévocablement au dit Séminaire de St-Sulpice de Montréal, l'éducation Ecclésiastique des Aspirants au Sacerdoce, de Son Diocèse; pour être dirigée selon les Règles et usages de la dite Compagnie."[44]

In 1841 the Seminary was confirmed in its very valuable land tenures by Lord Sydenham. Of the Seminarists in the period 1842-64, at least seven with Irish names became bishops in North America. The Professeur de Dogme of 1855-56 was an Irishman. At least in the earlier years of the period, Bishop and Seminary co-operated well, and it was their joint policy for some years already before 1847 to furnish Montreal with an appropriate number of English-speaking Irish priests. That is to say, there was no attempt, which in the event could evidently not have succeeded, to force the immigrant Irish into an existing French-Canadian Catholic framework. This was a master-stroke of good fortune or good policy.

Alongside Bishop Bourget's concordat with the Seminary stands his Appel aux Jésuites of 1841, heralding the return of the Company to a field of earlier renown from which they had been excluded for more than a generation. They returned primarily to teach, established a house of Novices in Montreal by 1843, and opened their college of Ste.Marie in 1850. no 1848 Catholicism in Montreal of the mid-19th century was strong

indeed.

The beginnings of an Irish congregation appeared in 1817 among the worshippers at the Bonsecours Church, Irished to "Bosco";

> "un sanctuaire modeste, couvert de boiseries sculptées, à la manière de nos vieilles églises canadiennes."[45]

Here they attracted the notice of their pastor, Fr. "Richards", born Jackson, an ex-Methodist from the United States, who died in the typhus year. The priest in charge at the Récollet, to which the Irish moved in 1825, was Fr. Patrick Phelan, until his promotion to the See of Kingston in 1843. Of the Récollet, Mackay's Guide for 1843 says: "services always in English.....the Irish church." Phelan was the hero of two cholera epidemics, and the founder in 1840 of St. Patrick's Total Abstinence Society, the first example on the continent of the celebrated Father Mathew's temperance movement, of Irish Quaker origin. Other Irish priests in Montreal before 1847 were Frs. Patrick Morgan, Peter O'Connell, James McMahon and Joseph Connolly, the first pastor of St. Patrick's Church, which was served, after him, by an impressive list of Irish, with a few English and French-Canadian priests. Until 1903 they were provided by St. Sulpice. To St. Sulpice, which staffed the churches in the parish of Montreal, all English-speaking Catholics of the period, for whom the Seminary showed wide sympathy, owed a great debt. To meet the emergency of the Famine immigration, the Abbé Joseph Quiblier, Provincial Superior for Canada of St. Sulpice, wisely begged from the Primate of Ireland the services of certain priests.

These included the legendary Fr. Patrick Dowd, already referred to; his successor as Director of the Orphan Asylum, Fr. Michael O'Brien; Fr. Patrick McCullough, who served in Montreal 1848-55. St. Patrick's Church, high on Beaver Hall Hill, was dedicated in 1847; it was a monument in itself to the thriving Irish community of the earlier migrations, which collected £3,000 towards it. The Seminary guided the negotiations between the Irish congregation and the Fabrique of Notre Dame, which purchased the site for the church; and St. Sulpice gave $12,000. Dowd was pastor from 1859 to 1891. In the period to 1867 he had a share in founding St. Patrick's Servants Home, St. Patrick's Benevolent Society (1862), schools for girls and boys, and St. Bridget's Home and Night Refuge.

The other "Irish" Catholic churches were St. Ann's, Griffintown, founded in 1854 as the successor to St. Ann's Mission of 1848; in the east St. Bridget's, Quebec Suburbs; and in the west, after 1870, St. Gabriel's, in Point St. Charles. Plans for building St. Bridget's were discussed at least as early as 1858, when at a meeting of subscribers it was

> "Resolved:- That the Irish of the Quebec Suburbs shall have a chapel, in which instructions shall be given only in English",[46]

but the Bishop withheld permission to build until 1873. This church was intended to solve difficulties, issuing it is said in physical combat, which had arisen between the French and Irish portions of the congregation of St. Mary's, in the same Suburbs. The dispute recalls a much earlier situation at the

Bonsecours where, we are told by a French-Canadian historian, when the Irish part of the congregation began to grow, "cet accroissement même devint gênant pour les Canadiens-français."[47]

It is significant that French and Irish Catholics preferred to worship separately. The language problem was probably at fault, and there may have been economic rivalry. A German traveller maintained in 1841 that Irish and French-Canadians competed in petty occupations;[48] and the complaint is heard among the latter to-day that the Irish, whom they succoured in 1847, then displaced them. Tradition says that no French-Canadian dared tread the streets of Griffintown in its heyday; yet the same tradition holds that Irish girls tended to marry French-Canadians, while Irishmen, as in Ireland at a later period, tended to celibacy. If this is true, it accounts to some extent for the relatively painless absorption into the Montreal community which the Irish experienced. The question needs investigating. In Boston, the percentage of Irish marriage outside their own racial group was lower than for all other groups, not excluding negroes;[49] the Montreal Irish could at least marry Catholics exogamously.

The same racial question appeared in a crisis of the affairs of St. Patrick's parish, when in a Pastoral letter of 1866 Bishop Bourget announced the erection of St. Patrick's into a bilingual parish with much restricted boundaries. Involved in this issue was some difference between Bishop and Seminary. Fr. Dowd and his congregation were up in arms, D'Arcy McGee and another leading Irishman took their case to Rome. The Holy See wisely annulled the offending decree,

and approved the system of national churches as better suited to the existing conditions in Montreal. It appears that, apart from an ad hoc collaboration such as the Orphanage evoked, there was no broad French-Irish alignment on the basis of a common religion. As to language, English was throughout the period the dominant language, as the British were the predominant race, of Montreal. The French and Irish shared a common acknowledgment of this predominance, and English, not French, was normally the acquired tongue of any immigrants, possibly a not inconsiderable number, who arrived with only Gaelic.

Among Anglican clergy in the Diocese of Montreal, the following were of Irish birth:

| | arrived in Canada | ordained[50] |
|---|---|---|
| Carmichael, Rt. Rev. James | 1859 | 1859 |
| Clayton, Rev. F.H. | 1864 | 1871 |
| Henderson, Rev. William | | 1857 |
| Lonsdell, Ven. Richard | 1839 | 1839 |
| Montgomery, Rev. Hugh | 1832 | 1854 |

The Anglican chapel of St. Ann on Wellington Street, in the Irish quarter, was traditionally an Irish church, and the Rev. Daniel Falloon, its incumbent in 1847, was Irish and an historian of medieval Ireland. The chapel was later destroyed by fire, and rebuilt on Dalhousie Street as St. Stephen's, in deference to the susceptibilities of the Catholics who had recently founded St. Ann's Mission in the same neighbourhood. There was apparently no Methodist or Presbyterian church which was popularly regarded as an "Irish" church.[51]

For the young Irish, who had perhaps to make their living in an exceedingly multinational, and officially bilingual, city, it was indeed fortunate that the principle of national

congregations could have no large application in the schools. In 1846, the first "sane and permanent Education Act"[52] which the Province had experienced offered, in theory, the dilemma of instruction in English, in Protestant schools, and instruction in French, in Catholic schools; in either case, of the quality to be expected in communities many of which were content to employ unqualified women teachers at £15 per annum. It may be observed that the Irish, in particular, were strong objectors to the requisite taxation. With the foundation of the Montreal Catholic School Commission, the enlightened principle of bilingual teaching by lay teachers was not very long in offering a solvent of the racial difficulty. The Plateau School, founded in 1854, was staffed by English-speaking Catholic teachers; its first Principal, William Doran, and some of the staff, were of Irish birth or extraction. St. Patrick's Model School was opened on Wellington Street in 1863.

Just as the Church in Montreal made provision for an English-speaking priesthood against the growth of Irish congregations, so, even earlier, Bishop and Seminary sought teachers from the Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Four of the Brothers arrived in Montreal in 1837, where they taught, and also founded a Novitiate of their Order; of 304 English-speaking Brothers who were connected with the Montreal Province to 1922, 168 were born in Ireland.[53] Their St.Laurent School, on Vitré Street, begun in 1839, was the first in the world where the Brothers taught in English. Private schools, sometimes with Irish

Day Principals, appear in Montreal from the early 19th century. An interesting illustration of the functional response which such schools must make to the requirements of the group they serve may be followed, from about 1850, in the advertisement columns of the True Witness. In 1851, Mr. Anderson of Craig Street announces "classical and Commercial Evening Classes"; three years later he is purveying the same instruction on St. Dominique Street, and finds a rival in 1855 in Mr. Daniel Davis's "Grammar, Commercial and Mathematical School" on St. Bonaventure Street. Mr. Davis's regime includes an Evening School "devoted to the teaching of Mercantile and Mathematical Branches". Mr. Anderson's answer to this is to open a "Class for young Gentlemen Studying for Commissions in the Army", and, two years later, afternoon classes for "Medical, Law and Commercial Students." In 1860, "T. Mathews, Teacher" advertises a "Commercial School, Point St. Charles", in a growing Irish district. "The object of this School is to impart a good and solid Commercial Education....."

The picture into which these and similar items may be composed is that of an ambitious and far from penniless community, not of course exclusively Irish, whose sons begin to need the educational equipment for a world which, very properly, is scarcely included in the philosophy of the Christian Brothers. The same utilitarian tendency developed in the Protestant public schools. The Catholic Bishop's School, later the Archbishop's Academy, founded on Cemetery Street in 1862 with a classical curriculum, [illegible]

reappears in 1873 on St. Margaret Street as the Bishop's Commercial Academy - but under the direction of the Christian Brothers! Even the Jesuits added commercial classes to the curriculum of their College of Ste. Marie in 1868.

In 1863 an English Public School, Clifton College, advertises in the Montreal Herald.

There is no evidence of particular Irish identification with any of the miscellaneous cultural facilities of the city during the period. The Theatre Royal apparently catered on occasion to an Irish audience with such seductions as "Norah Creina, or the Rose of Galway", a title very like some of the interminable serial stories in the Montreal Irish press. No Irish names appear among the officers of the Mercantile Library Association, the Mechanics' Institute, the Natural History Society of 1843. These and similar bodies, such as the Shakespeare Club, organised a variety of public lectures each winter. The reading public was of sterner stuff than to-day's, to judge from the lengthy advertisements of the Irish bookselling and publishing firm of Sadlier, which included editions of Thucydides, Tacitus and Gibbon. It is to be supposed that the average unlettered immigrant of the period, fresh from his peasant culture, cared for none of these things. On the other hand, the example set by a small pre-1847 Irish "aristocracy" may have served in time to lead him, even in the month of August, to two lectures at the Mechanics' Hall on Recent Humorists,[54] or more probably to the much richer political and literary dissertations, with

their Irish emphasis, offered by McGee.

Hansen says: "To some extent, nearly every immigrant nationality managed to perpetuate the atmosphere of the motherland."[55] Yearly around St. Patrick's Day the present United Irish Societies of Montreal perambulate the city in a procession which, however diminished from its former glories, does homage to a motherland whose shores perhaps a majority of the celebrants have never seen Who shall say that these men are not Canadians? On March 17th, however, it would be unwise to say that they were not Irish. The problem was stated, if not resolved, as long ago as 1864, when at the St. Patrick's Day Grand Promenade Concert, attended by 2,000 persons, the principal inscriptions displayed in the hall were:

"Canada the land of our adoption"
"The spirit of a nation never dieth"
"Erin-go-Bragh".[56]

The St. Patrick's Day parade of that year included the following organisations:

Irish members of the Volunteer Force
Children of the Christian Brothers' Schools
Congregation of St. Patrick's Church
St. Patrick's Benevolent Society
Total Abstinence Society of St. Ann's
" " " " St. Patrick's
St. Patrick's Society.

1864 By this time the manifestations of group consciousness among the Montreal Irish of the period were in full flower; it will be convenient to examine here some of the activities through which that consciousness found expression. The beginnings of the St. Patrick's Society have been described (pp. 52-3 above). Its routine, as revealed in press advert-

isements, was a monthly meeting for busiress, maintained with great regularity, a "Grand Annual Soirée" in the winter, and in the summer a "Grand Annual Pic-Nic" at such resorts as Guilbault's Gardens or Vaudreuil, conducted at one period, somewhat surprisingly, "on strictly Temperance principles".[57] Drunkenness was the characteristic vice of the North American Irish, and there is a good deal of evidence that the demon was publicly, if intermittently, wrestled with in this manner. The excursion of 1854 was to Lavaltrie by two "splendid and commodious steamers"; no liquors were sold on board. The steamers were probably crowded although commodious, since 1,000 persons embarked, and the occasion yielded a handsome balance for the funds of St. Patrick's Orphan Asylum.[58] In 1857, the year of depression, appears an advertisement of a meeting of the Society's Charitable Relief Committee, but notices of this side of the Society's life are otherwise wanting, or at least very infrequent. The St. Patrick's Day procession, which elsewhere than Montreal was often the occasion of serious disturbances, appears to have been in this city normally peaceful. During the procession of 1851 the Young Men's Band played God Save the Queen outside Government Buildings, in spite of which attention a mild skirmish ensued with the Orange faction, in which a fire-engine was somehow involved.[59] There is no evidence of other than unexceptionable loyalty in the public activities of St. Patrick's Society itself; the toast-list at a St. Patrick's Day dinner in Beauharnois County in 1851 opened with "The Day and all who honor it", and "The Queen, God bless Her."

Around this vigorous Society grew a complex of Irish organisations with objects so diverse as mutual aid and social intercourse, total abstinence, athletics. The Young Men's St. Patrick's Association was presumably founded about 1849, since it advertised its "Third Annual Soirée" in January, 1851, as a result of which the "Almoner of the Irish Poor" acknowledged receipt of £29.[60] Shortly before 1864 appears what may be a successor organisation with a like purpose, the Catholic Young Men's Society of Montreal:

> "The objects of its members are mutual improvement and the extension of a spirit of charity: the means employed are the faithful and regular frequentation of the Sacraments....."[61]

Its President referred, very happily, to the connexion between the "Island of Saints" and the "City of Mary". The St. Patrick's Literary Association, the St. Patrick's Total Abstinence Society, and the Erina Snow-Shoe Club (meeting "at the corner of Dorchester and DeBleury Streets" in 1859) are self-explanatory, and all sufficiently prosperous to pay for occasional advertising space during the period. In 1851 appeared a letter expounding the need for a hospital:

> ".....Trusting in God, and in the Irish, that it shall rear high its head.....I remain, Sir, Yours very truly, Catholicus."

The Hospital was opened, at the corner of Guy and Dorchester, in January 1852; Hingston was the Doctor in Chief. In six months it had treated 732 patients, on and off the premises, of whom 704 were Catholics, 20 members of the Church of England, and 6 Presbyterians. The total included 86 French Canadians.[62] The Montreal Hibernian Benevolent Society advertises its meetings in 1850 and 1851, but not, apparently, later. This organisation must be distinguished from the

Montreal Hibernian Society, which in 1864 had, or was said to have, Fenian connexions and was condemned by the Church in Montreal. A further distinction must probably be made, of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which in spite of questionable antecedents in the United States had as the President of its Montreal Division No. 2 an Irish alderman of the utmost rectitude, towards the end of the century. In 1862, and possibly earlier, St. Patrick's Society had an Emigration Committee, which advertised its function as being:

> "to give Advice and Assistance to Emigrants in need, and to endeavour to procure employment for those of them who wish to remain among us".[63] Prospective employers were invited to communicate.

Lastly, the Irish appear, in a corporate capacity, in a non-Irish organisation such as the volunteer militia; a news item of 1856 records:

> "On Monday last, Captain Devlin's Company of Volunteers completed their ten days' drill, as required by law.... The Irish citizens of Montreal may well feel proud of Number Four Company."[64]

The Militia officers in 1865 included Devlin, now a Lieutenant Colonel (commissioned 1862), Lieut.-Col. Henry Hogan, and a few others with possibly Irish names.[65] In 1861 the Montreal Irish offered the Governor-General the services, if need arose, of an Irish battalion - or regiment!

Given the total Irish population of Montreal in the period, it is unlikely that the membership of these numerous societies constituted, in any narrow sense, an élite. On the other hand, the prices at some, at least, of the entertainments sponsored by the St Patrick's Societies seem to have been high in relation to contemporary wage-rates for the lower

grades of labour. Whereas "St. Patrick's Pic Nic" at Guilbault's Gardens in June, 1858 cost 1/10½, 1/3 and 7½d, probably the price of admission, respectively for men, women and children, tickets for the Grand Annual Soirée at the City Concert Hall in the following year were 6/3, or for ladies 3/9. 1,000 persons paid 3/9 in 1854 for the excursion to Lavaltrie. The impression is of a community either relatively prosperous, or very strongly addicted to its occasional outings. The Irish Societies of Montreal were essentially a group-strengthening device, as such societies are, and developed no doubt among their functionaries the usual vested interest in a given Society's continuance; personal prestige was at stake; there might even be indirect emoluments. Of the first President of St. Patrick's Society, John Donnellan, we are told he had "gained an easy independence". Among succeeding Presidents were Benjamin Holmes; William Workman; W.P. Bartley, a "Ship and General Smith"; Henry Howard, M.D.; and the advocates Marcus Doherty and Bernard Devlin. Such as these made up the light and leading of the Irish community, but the executive and committee of the Society, at various times, also showed a preponderance of men of substance, merchants with premises in Notre Dame or St. Paul Streets, and the like. The executive of 1843-44, and the executive and committee of 1844-45,[66] together included, according to Mackay's Montreal Directories:

3 commission and general merchants
2 each: priests, doctors, dry goods merchants, grocers, coachbuilders

1 each: schoolmaster, prothonotary, merchant tailor, chandler, cabinet-maker, pot and pearl ash inspector, and the City Clerk.

The executives of 1853-54 and 1854-55 included:

the clergy of St. Patrick's Church, henceforth members ex officio
2 doctors
1 each: Custom House officer, Comptroller of Customs, grocer, coachbuilder, paint and oils merchant.

A certain democratising is perceptible in the executives and committees of St. Patrick's Society in 1863-64 and 1864-65; they included, besides clergy and doctors:

5 grocers, wholesale and retail
2 lumber dealers
1 each: Government emigration agent, sub-chief of police, advocate, notary, contractor, auctioneer, superintendent of gas works, dry goods merchant, merchant tailor, boot and shoe maker, clerk, plasterer, carpenter, baker.

Alongside this Irish life - or was it mock-Irish? - the assimilation of the membership to the cultural pattern imposed by Montreal and by Canada proceeded imperceptibly and at levels below consciousness; the fact that these Irish had settled in the city, and not, like many of their compatriots, in the Quebec countryside, was acceptance of the North American way of life.

As was pointed out, the Irish in Montreal were never involved in serious inter-racial group conflict. The dominant British group was unassailable, the stresses between Irish and French never, except in parochial affairs, became overt. In the same way, the Irish themselves were at no point the objects of persecution by another race: a different situation from that in Quebec City or Boston. Much the

greater possibility in Montreal was what did not in fact occur, a disruption of the Irish community into warring Catholic and Protestant factions. It is difficult to determine the relative strength of the two confessional groups, except that the Catholic Irish were clearly much the more numerous and had behind them the weight of their ancient and formidable Church. In 1856 occurred a split, according to tradition not over religious matters, in the St. Patrick's Society, and the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society began the separate existence which it still maintains. The episode is obscure, since it is probable that most of the early records of both Societies perished in one or more of several fires at St. Patrick's Hall. It may be not without significance that after 1856 the St. Patrick's Society's advertisements appear under a new emblem bearing the motto "Erin go Bragh" in Gaelic letter instead of Roman as before. The Protestant wing may have felt an impulse, unshared by the rest, to compromise in some way with the future; but the relations between the two sections were, and are, excellent. A more dangerous source of strife, actually and potentially, lay in the activities in Canada of the Loyal Orange Association; these can best be examined in reviewing the career of McGee, whose New Era was to so large an extent an anti-Orange tract.

A disturbance which in June, 1853 aroused much excitement in Montreal might well have been the excuse for a concerted anti-Irish movement in the city; and that this did not occur is evidence, if only negative evidence of the strong position which the Irish had already won. The occasion was calculated

to foment group conflict of the bitterest description. A renegade Italian priest or monk, Alessandro Gavazzi - "the Rev. Father Gavazzi, the celebrated Italian Orator"[67] - was advertised to lecture on June 8th, 9th and 10th at Zion Congregational Church, Radegonde Street, in a district of St. Lawrence Ward, near St. Patrick's Church, which at the 1861 census contained over 1200 Irish-born inhabitants. Gavazzi's harangues were notoriously offensive to Catholics, and there had been rioting, attributed to the Irish, at his recent lecture in Quebec City. At his Montreal lecture of June 9th there was disturbance, matters naturally looked so threatening that troops were stationed outside the church, and as the throngs were dispersing after the meeting someone, generally thought to be the Mayor, lost his head and gave order to fire. This was obeyed, and some half-dozen persons lost their lives in consequence. A tendency quickly developed in some of the Montreal press, particularly the Witness and Herald, to blame the Irish for this tragedy, in spite of the True Witness's previous advice to Catholics in general to avoid the meeting - "What need of a row?" A subsequent editorial article in the same paper exonerated the Irish:

> "At Montreal.....there is no proof that the blame is attributable to Irish Catholics.....In the same steamer that brought Gavazzi to Montreal came a numerous band of armed ruffians."[68]

Montreal Irish Catholics rallied briskly for defence. Broken windows in the Methodist and Episcopal churches of Griffintown were held to be the work of the more volatile of the Irish,

and added to the controversy. Griffintown prudently paid the glaziers.

A meeting of Irish Catholics was held on the open space around St. Patrick's Church. Clerk, of the True Witness, took the chair, and there were nine speakers. The gist of the proceedings was mutual exculpation from any responsibility for the riot. Clerk said:

> "... ..they met as Catholics for the purpose of preaching forgiveness and oblivion rather than revenge.....Moreover, they had met there to protest against the monstrous sentiments that had been laid to their charge.....and as Irish Catholics fond of freedom themselves they would not, because they happened to be the majority, think of molesting their Protestant fellow-citizens.....They were also met there to denounce the very improper conduct held towards the Irish Catholics by a certain portion of the public press of this city."[69]

This is not the language of one who feels his case is weak; nor was Bernard Devlin's: "is it fair to hold twelve or fifteen thousand Catholics responsible for the misconduct of a few?" In the upshot, a committee was formed to watch Irish interests at the Coroner's inquest, and Devlin's services were retained. The inquest lasted weeks and ended in a divided verdict, with most of the blame placed on an inefficient police. The City Council, at a special meeting, had by then decided to increase both the Police Force and its pay, to "something nearer the average compensation of labourers. It will be 3s 9d a day...."[70]

Little more was heard of Irish guilt in the Gavazzi affair.

[1]Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, 8th Report, 1848.

[2]vide Cooper, J.I., Early Editorial Policy of the Montreal Witness, Can. Hist. Ass. Report, 1947.

[3][Montreal] New Era, 19th June 1857.

[4]Cooper ut supra, p. 61.

[5][Montreal] True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 16th August 1850.

[6]ibidem, 18th August 1854.

[7]ibid., 29th May 1863.

[8]ib., 29th May 1857.

[9]ib., 18th August 1854.

[10][Montreal] Pilot and Evening Journal of Commerce, 10th May 1844.

[11][Montreal] Witness, 26th July 1847.

[12]ibidem, 15th September 1851.

[13]ibid., 23rd August 1847.

[14]ib., 12th March 1849.

[15]ib., 24th November 1851.

[16]quoted Johnson, S.C., Emigration from the United Kingdom, 1913, p. 122.

[17]True Witness ut supra, 23rd June 1854.

[18]ibidem, 11th September 1857.

[19]Montreal Transcript, 1847, May-July, passim.

[20]ibidem, 21st May 1847.

[21]Papers relative to Emigration to the British Provinces in North America, 1847, Part I, No. 8, Enclosure 1.

[22]Tucker, G., Famine Immigration to Canada, 1847, Am. Hist. Rev., Vol. XXXVI, 1931.

[23]quoted Johnson ut supra, p.23.

[24]Mackay, R.W.S., Stranger's Guide to the City of Montreal [1843].

[25]Witness, 24th May 1847.

[26]Transcript, 17th June 1847.

[27]Witness, 12th July 1847.

[28] ibidem, 14th June 1847.

[29] ibid., 2nd August 1847.

[30] Transcript, 20th July 1847.

[31] Report of Montreal Immigrant Commissioners, in Witness, 2nd August 1847.

[32] Witness, 2nd August 1847.

[33] Brit. Amer. Journal of Medical and Physical Science, Vol. III, No.8, December 1847 (per Dr. J.I. Cooper).

[34] per Dr. J.I. Cooper.

[35] Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, 8th Report, 1848.

[36] T. Stratton M.D., in Brit. Am. Journal ut supra, Vol. III, No.12, April, 1848 (per Dr. J.I. Cooper).

[37] vide Curran, J.J., Golden Jubilee of St. Patrick's Orphan Asylum, 1902.

[38] Public Archives of Canada: Census Returns, 1851-2.

[39] McCord Museum, framed.

[40] Transcript, 12th June 1847.

[41] [Montreal] New Era, 10th September 1857.

[42] vide MacDonagh, O., The Irish Catholic Clergy and Emigration, Irish Historical Studies, September, 1947.

[43] Lecompte, E , Les Jésuites du Canada au XIX[e] Siècle, 1920, t.I, p.31.

[44] Grand Séminaire de Montréal, Album du centenaire, 1840-1940, p.22.

[45] Maurault, O., Marges d'Histoire, 1929: La Congrégation Irlandaise de Montréal.

[46] True Witness ut sup., 25th June 1858.

[47] Maurault ut supra, p.150.

[48] Kohl, J.G., Travels in Canada, 1841, Vol. I, pp.137-8.

[49] Handlin, O., Boston's Immigrants, 1941, p.182.

[50] vide Borthwick, J.D., History of the Diocese of Montreal, 1910.

[51] Dr. J.I. Cooper.

[52] vide Woodley, E.C., History of Education in the Province of Quebec, 1932, c. III.

[53] Mactalius, Bro., Short History of the Archbishop's Academy, 1939, p.18.

[54]*New Era*, 11th August 1857.

[55]Hansen, M.L., *The Immigrant in American History*, 1942, p.140.

[56]*Montreal Gazette*, 18th March 1864.

[57]*True Witness*, 26th June 1863.

[58]*ibidem*, 1854, 18th and 28th August.

[59]*ibid.*, 21st March 1851

[60]*ib.*, 1851, January 17th, February 28th.

[61]*ib.*, 30th September 1864.

[62]*ib.*, 25th June 1852.

[63]*ib.*, 27th June 1862.

[64]*ib.*, 27th June 1856.

[65]Pub. Arch. *ut supra*: Macpherson, -., *List of Officers of the Volunteer Militia Force of Montreal*, 1865.

[66]*per* Dr. J.I. Cooper.

[67]*The Pilot*, 8th June 1853.

[68]*True Witness*, 17th June 1853.

[69]*ibidem*.

[70]*The Pilot*, 15th June 1853.

# CHAPTER 4.

## Thomas D'Arcy McGee

"All men have been emigrants or sons of emigrants since the first sad pair departed out of Eden." This was a saying of Montreal's, and Canada's, most famous emigrant Irishman, Thomas D'Arcy McGee. Adorned with its appropriate Miltonic quotation, it is a fair sample of the rhetoric with which McGee won the ear of the Canadian House of Assembly, and later, for so short a time, the first Dominion Parliament. In McGee, there blended happily a statesman and an artist of language, the statesman always predominant because the native exuberance of the Celt was in him disciplined by the reading and reflection of a patient autodidact. With little formal education, this silver-tongued Irishman had that which much education cannot ensure, the instinct for the possible that is said to be the master-key to political achievement, and is more often an English than an Irish characteristic. To carry the message of a golden mean to the Irish of North America, and specifically of Canada, was the mission for which McGee at last gave his life. The conservative Young Irelander of 1848, who objected to armed revolt not as treason against the law but as treason against common sense, had already sown among the "physical force" wing of the rebels the seeds of a hatred which pursued him throughout his career in North America and brought him to an untimely death in Ottawa, twenty years later. The same theme recurs in his condemnation of the Fenians, in 1866, for "this weak and wicked yearning after the impossible," and appears most explicitly of all in a speech in Montreal of March, 1861, wherein McGee acknowledges his allegiance to the political philosophy of an earlier and greater Irishman:

> "In his great speech respecting the Unitarians, Edmund Burke declared that he did not govern himself by abstractions or universals, and he maintained in that same argument (I think) that what is not possible is not desirable - that the possible best is the absolute best - the best for the generation, the best for the man, since the shortness of life makes it impossible for him to achieve all that he could wish."[1]

The "Wexford boy" made early acquaintance with his two major occupations, journalism and politics. At 17 he was already on his first journey to the United States, in 1842, and there in Boston the excitement of July 4th caused this emigrant youngster to deliver, on the spur of the moment, an impromptu public harangue upon the blessings, which later he had occasion gravely to suspect, of American liberty. He found work on the Boston Pilot, then the great American-Irish Newspaper for the United States and Canada, and in a year or two rose to a responsible post. At the same time he published "O'Connell and his Friends", which the hero noticed favourably as "the inspired writings of a young exiled Irish boy in America". By August, 1845 the exile was back in Ireland, with a post on the Freeman's Journal which led to work in London. Already the young McGee had formed ties with Gavan Duffy, Dillon and Davis of the Nation, and his emotional, and shortly his professional allegiance was transferred to this paper, whose nationalist and literary pretensions alike made it more congenial than the Journal to McGee. Meanwhile he was deepening his education in that nursery of lonely scholars, the reading room of the British Museum.

There is no doubt where McGee stood at this stage of the interminable Anglo-Irish quarrel: As late as 1851 he could refer to Queen Victoria's rule as "so vile and vast a despotism",[2]

and when the cause of Young Ireland, backed by the Nation, began to supplant the waning influence of O'Connell, McGee was with Young Ireland. It is interesting that there was a scheme, which fell through, to make the future architect of Canadian federation the co-editor of a Protestant national journal in Belfast. Already he was known for his adherence to the paths of conciliation, but he did not escape the condemnation of his Church, which prejudiced the careers of all the Young Ireland leaders for years ahead. By the summer of 1848, coercion and resistance in Ireland had sharpened one another to the point, in July, of an abortive insurrection which ended in the arrest and transportation of all the Young Ireland leaders except McGee, who was absent in Scotland seeking to levy aid among the Clydeside Irish. He eventually escaped from Ireland to New York, a second time an emigrant; and already a man with dangerous enemies in the movement which he himself had served.

McGee's years in the United States, from 1848 to 1857, saw the maturing of his political outlook by the grace of a spiritual enlightenment of the first importance; the process may also be described, and has been so described, as his withdrawal "first to the clerical party and then to the hated English",[3] and his enemies had harder words for it than that. In worldly affairs, the period was not a happy one for the Irish of the United States. They had weathered the Nativist movement, issuing in anti-Catholic riots in Boston and Philadelphia in 1844, only to be confronted in a few years with the more formidable Know-Nothing organisation, the current

expression of the xenophobia, and the somewhat adolescent addiction to secret societies, which recur in the American culture-pattern. As late as 1856 the Know-Nothing party, with its antagonism to unnaturalised foreigners, though never in a majority, was not without political significance. In Upper Canada, the Clear Grit party had similar aims. Hostility to the Irish in the United States was for McGee a less serious matter than the hostility of some of the American Irish towards each other. The failure of '48 had aroused bitter faction in the American-Irish camp, and in attempting, unwisely, to pursue his chosen calling of journalism in this atmosphere, McGee encountered the gravest obstacles. In October, 1848 he founded the New York Nation, which from the outset had to contend, not only with the suspicions of the existing American-Irish press, alarmed at a possible diversion of subscribers, but with the condemnation of his Church itself through the person of the pugnacious and resourceful John Hughes, the Catholic Bishop, and later the first Archbishop, of New York. Hughes had been a supporter of O'Connell and Repeal, but after the failure of the stronger measures of July, 1848 he blamed Young Ireland for lack of organisation, and recommended his American flock to send Ireland no more money, to drop inflammatory meetings, and to disband their rifle clubs - a startling commentary on his earlier interpretation of the episcopal function. McGee and his bishop were quickly at odds, and in twelve months Hughes was urging that

> "every diocese, every parish and every Catholic door should be closed against the Nation".[4]

In this conjunction the disappearance of the Nation was certain, and in 1850 McGee followed it up with the American Celt, which he founded in Boston. It was moved to Buffalo in 1852 and to New York in 1854, and survived to be transferred to D. & J. Sadlier & Co. in 1857.

From 1852 this newspaper reflected a spiritual change in its editor. He was now, it seems, recalled to that earlier Catholicism which his rebel years in Ireland had compromised. The young, pushing, second-generation Irish who financed the Celt did not welcome the change; in Montreal, the True Witness praised it. McGee's first links with Canada were thus forming. In 1849 his first address to the Canadian Irish was a fustian and pointless pronouncement concluding "Prepare, arm and organize." There followed, it is to be supposed, better counsel in the course of his two Canadian lecture-tours of 1852 and 1854, which were McGee's real introduction to Canada. McGee's lectures were probably an important livelihood when journalistic or other resources failed; a form of public edification still almost as attractive, because almost as free from commercial competition, as the medieval friar's sermon. McGee covered a considerable range of literary and, particularly, historical topics, and had the art to make them attractive - Columbus, Shakespeare, Milton, Burke, Grattan, Burns, Moore, The Growth and Power of the Middle Classes in England, The Future of Canada, The Common Interest of British North America, The Irish in Canada, Confederation, and others. It was an activity worthy of the man who, in promoting night schools for illiterate immigrants, laid the foundations of adult education in New York. He is

said on one occasion to have lectured to "several thousands" in Griffintown, presumably out of doors. The Diary of G.E. Clerk records four lectures by McGee in Montreal in ten days of November, 1856: "to a pretty fair attendance, subject O'Connell"; "Tom Moore and his Poetry. Lecture and attendance good"; "Edmund Burke, attendance poor"; "The Irish Brigade at the Cote Street Theatre. House crowded". The ground was being prepared, one would think almost too liberally fertilised, for McGee's transplantation to Montreal.

From such of his lectures and speeches as are preserved, McGee is seen to be no trashy publicist but a man of solid acquisitions and original thought, occasionally much ahead of his time. The testimony of some, at least, of his published prose works is the same. The later books, very naturally in a self-trained man, surpass the earlier. The Irish Settlers in North America of 1851 tends to be subjective and unbalanced. In the Introduction to a short book, two pages are given to a spirited eulogy of Columbus; but one of the closing sentiments is significant: ".....our motto as American settlers is, 'THE UNION, IT MUST BE PRESERVED'". By contrast, the Notes on Federal Governments, Past and Present of 1865, though cursory is well proportioned and shrewdly reasoned. McGee wrote extensively on Irish history and biography, and his Popular History of Ireland of 1863 is a very good specimen indeed of the non-professional historiography of its time. In addition to all his other productions in literature and journalism, McGee wrote throughout his life a great quantity of verse, the solace of a scanty leisure. This was collected in a thick volume after his death by an old friend, Mrs. J. Sadlier. Her

piety led her to include much that any author might wish to see withheld; the historical and legendary poems, in particular, comprise too many lines of the order of

> "With many a tear she ponder'd o'er
> The story of Sir Thomas More".

The harp of King Brian was struck too often to yield always the true note. On the other hand, a piece like the incomplete poem, The Sinful Scholar, written in ballad form, on an Irish theme and with saving simplicity, has delicacy and rare charm. McGee's was nevertheless a prose genius, and its strongest weapon a cutting irony. Hidden in the pages of the New Era[5] is an elaborate prose satire upon the defendant in a recent criminal trial in Montreal; its saeva indignatio will bear comparison with Swift's. It is unsigned, but almost certainly McGee's.

The biographical sketch attached to the Poems[6] contains part of the Letter to a Friend, of August, 1852, which marks the crisis of McGee's career. The letter was addressed probably to Thomas F. Meagher, an old rival of his Irish days. It recalls Meagher, as the writer had recalled himself, to their ancestral faith:

> "Let me beg of you, in the sacred name of God, your Author and Redeemer, and in the dear name of Ireland, that you use this interval of exemption from a decided course to review the whole field of European politics, and to bring the proposals of the most conspicuous organs of power and agitators of change in our time to the only test of a Christian - the beam and scales in which St. John saw the angels weighing men, actions, and motives.... You are a Catholic. For you there is an exact and infallible standard, to which nothing is too high and nothing too low.....
> I discovered.....my own ignorance. This I discovered in a way which, I trust in God, you will never have to travel - by controversy and bitterness, and sorrow for

lost time and wasted opportunities. Had we studied principles in Ireland as devoutly as we did an ideal nationality, I might not now be labouring double tides to recover a confidence which my own fault forfeited.... in Ireland the study of principles is at the lowest ebb. Our literature has been English - that is, Protestant; our politics have been French, or implicit following of O'Connell; and under all this rubbish, the half-forgotten Catechism was the only Christian element in our mental Constitution.....
Thus I reasoned with myself, and then, setting my cherished opinions before me, one by one, I tried, judged, and capitally executed every one, save and except those which I found to be compatible with the following doctrines:

I. That there is a Christendom.
II. That this Christendom exists by and for the Catholic Church.
III. That there is, in our own age, one of the most dangerous and general conspiracies against Christendom that the world has yet seen.
IV. That this conspiracy is aided, abetted, and tolerated by many because of its stolen watchword - 'Liberty'.
V. That it is the highest duty of 'a Catholic man' to go over cheerfully, heartily, and at once, to the side of Christendom - to the Catholic side, and to resist, with all his might, the conspirators who, under the stolen name of 'Liberty', make war upon all Christian institutions."

The third, fourth and fifth of these propositions, with their warning against false universals, are the utterance of a man born nearly a hundred years before his time. "To this set of principles" says his biographer, "Mr. McGee faithfully adhered to the hour of his death".

To Montreal, whither McGee removed in the spring of 1857, he brought, besides these principles, the fruit of much observation of the condition of the Irish in the United States. His own experience there had been embittering, and the disillusion survives in his poem Ad Misericordiam:

"Where I look'd for a welcome, I meet but a frown."

In 1850 the Fourth Ward of New York City, given over to the Irish, had a population density of about 290,000 per square

mile. McGee was sickened by conditions of this kind in all the great cities of the eastern United States, and thereafter he never ceased to contrast the happy lot of the Canadian Irish, particularly that high proportion of them who dwelt outside the towns, with the urban squalor of the great bulk of the United States Irish. In a letter on Canada in the Wexford People of 8th May 1855, he said:

> "The colony is to all intents and purposes as free as the neighbouring Republic.....Lower Canada is three-fourths and Upper Canada one-third Catholic; its school system is more parental and less objectionable than the system of the Union; the rates of wages average as high as on the other side of the line; the wear and tear of human life is thirty per cent less in the colony than in the Republic, and the possibility of any such wholesale proscription as Know-nothingism is entirely chimerical in Canada."[7]

His final views on Irish emigration went much further, and appear in a striking passage of his letter of 3rd March 1866 to the Whole of the Irish press. It is a curious message from the pen of a Minister of Emigration:

> ".....I did not, when in Ireland, gentlemen, and I do not now ask you to circulate these views and arguments in order to stimulate emigration from Ireland to British America. I say now, as I said then, 'let every man who can live at home, stay at home.' Too high a price in body and soul may be paid for butcher's meat, and the wearing of glazed shoddy instead of honest frieze.....Come, you who must emigrate, to us....."[8]

Prophetic words, indeed, directed to "those whose minds were full of a fancy America", and echoing his famous speech at Wexford in 1865. Probably he was fighting Fenianism, as he boasted he had beaten Know-Nothing, by endeavouring to cut off the essential import of the United States - labour.

McGee was prominent in the Irish Emigrant Aid Convention held at Buffalo in 1856, at which Clerk and Bernard Devlin

were the Montreal delegates.[9] The Convention, of whose finance committee McGee was secretary, discussed plans for a Company to take up land for Irish settlers in Canada and the United States. Nothing came of this. The project of Irish dispersal so dear to McGee was not welcomed by the Catholic Church in the United States; notwithstanding which, in Upper Canada the Toronto Globe scented a "deep scheme of Romish Priestcraft to colonize Upper Canada with papists."

McGee, then, entered upon his Canadian career with a lasting suspicion of the United States, where he had never become legally or spiritually naturalised. In Montreal he was by no means without friends. The leaders of the Irish community were prepared to welcome, and even to finance, a man who might well become their first outstanding representative in the Provincial Parliament. McGee's talents had not included the making, or at least the retention, of money, and early in 1857 the subscription list for a McGee Fund was circulating. The result was a "Testimonial" of $2,000., presented to him in November. Later, about 1864, his constituents, or rather the Canadian Irish, gave him "a handsome residence, suitably furnished, in one of the best localities in the city he so ably represented".[10] This was No. 4, Montmorency terrace, on St. Catherine West, which replaced McGee's much less eligible address in Rodier place, St. Antoine Street.

His first approaches to the prospective constituency had been from the lecture platform; these were now fortified by the familiar entering wedge of local journalism. The first number of McGee's New Era appeared on 25th May 1857. It

reprinted, somewhat naively, from the American Celt of a recent week an elaborate invitation, dated Montreal, January 26th, from a Committee of Irish to McGee, to establish

> "In this city an ably conducted and ESSENTIALLY political and commercial daily, or Tri-weekly newspaper.....you can, as a journalist, effect more in the interest of those to the advocacy of whose rights you have for years devoted your energies, here than in the United States.....as between the SOJOURN of the NON-CITIZEN foreigner, of any origin, in the United States, and his HOME in Canada, there is immeasurable difference. There we are aliens, so far as our confiding natures admit, OCCASIONALLY TO BE USED in time of PARTY NEED. Here we are citizens in possession of a large proportion of the governing power in the State....."

Ths signatories were a Committee of four and some fifty "gentlemen of this city"; and appended were the names of adherents in nearly a score of places in Upper and Lower Canada. The claim of "possession of a large proportion of the governing power in the State" is remarkable in a community whose native Irish members numbered, at the previous census, 18.5% of the population of Upper, and 5.8% of Lower, Canada. Still stronger manifestations of self-confidence in the Irish community of Montreal occurred at the meeting which, in December, 1857, adopted the editor of the New Era as their candidate at the forthcoming parliamentary election. The substance of the proceedings on that occasion is as follows:

> "'Resolved. That the Irish portion of the population of Montreal, reckoning, according to the last census, fully one-third of all its inhabitants, is, on every principle of equity and justice, entitled to name one of the three members, allowed by law, to represent this city in Parliament.'
> 'Resolved. That the industrial and social interests of the Irish portion of the population, demand their union as one man, in the asserting of their rights, and the

> support of their own candidate (whoever he may be); and that the decision of this meeting, representing as it does our entire people, shall be considered strictly binding on every Irishman in the city.'
> 'Resolved. As the unanimous sense of this Meeting, that Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Esq., be requested to allow himself to be put in nomination as our candidate for Montreal in the approaching contest.'"[11]

The implications of these florid resolutions are extraordinarily interesting. Here is a racial group which, only ten years earlier, had to face the impact and the ensuing obloquy of the Famine immigration; a race which, by all testimony, was always disliked by the proletariat, whether negro or French-Canadian, of North America, since the rank-and-file Irishman must necessarily be their competitor in the occupations barred to the Anglo-Saxon ascendancy. These Montreal Irish have now won standing, and sufficient wealth to endow McGee with the property qualification required of a Parliamentary candidate. They feel strong enough to claim, on a very liberal computation, one-third of the city's population. They are proud to speak for "our entire people", Catholic and Protestant, and these form a well-knit group, since the resolutions "shall be considered strictly binding on every Irishman in the city." Most remarkable of all, the spirit of the meeting does not appear to be directed against any other group, in striking contrast to the venomous pronouncements, respectively, of the local Catholic and Protestant press. It might almost be concluded that the Montreal Irish could now afford urbanity, the reward of strength. Montreal, which had swallowed the British camel, was not after all disposed to strain at the Irish gnat.

Montreal's new tri-weekly could thus embark upon its task

of instructing and amusing what promised to be a compact Irish public, who probably appreciated the absence, in the New Era as contrasted with the True Witness, of any beating about the political bush. Embellished with the arms of the City and the extremely optative Concordia Salus, the New Era provided a guaranteed ten columns of reading matter, elbowed from the outset by the lavish advertisements, which no doubt helped to pay the printer, of proprietary medicine. Foreign news was reported scantily, but the proportion of it from Ireland tended to increase. Literature received more attention than in the other Montreal newspapers; there was a rather uncritical weekly article on new books, English and American, a serial story of Irish setting, and poems, usually not good. Opinions of the new paper expressed by the rest of the Canadian press were reprinted in each issue at considerable length. The solid fare came in the form of McGee's exegesis upon the contemporary human and political scene, Provincial and local.

It is scarcely to be doubted that the prime function of the New Era, in its editor's eyes, was the very proper one of getting him into the Canadian legislature, and in May, 1858 the paper was in fact suspended because a substitute editor for McGee could not, it was said, be found. In the columns of this obscure local newspaper may be found the momentous prefigurings of the Dominion of Canada; much may be forgiven its editor for that. The famous phrase "a new nationality" was coined by McGee in 1857, to reappear so happily in the Confederation debates, and in sundry editorial articles of the

New Era the eyes of the Montreal Irish were directed to the future:

> "The Irish in Canada: We believe the Irish in Canada to be sincerely attached to the present form of government, and to be daily growing in constitutional knowledge... Just yet, we have no party but our own readers...." The article goes on to advocate a continental policy for Canada.[12]

On August 8th, 1857 appeared an article on Confederation of the Colonies, and on November 12th:

> "An Irish Representation in the Canadian Parliament: .....It will be said.....that we propose an Irish party. Not precisely. But we do propose.....that no Parliament shall be without a potent Irish voice in it....."

McGee's path to the Provincial Parliament, and beyond, was not without obstacles. On December 12th the Evening Pilot had the following observations on The City Elections:

> "The Irish Roman Catholic electors of Montreal wish to force Mr. McGee down the throats of the electors of other creeds and origins.....What would be said if the Scotch electors of Montreal were to combine in intruding on the rest of the community some stray Scotchman, just arrived in the Province.....a few more McGees, thrust on the Canadian constituencies, would make the Know-Nothing doctrine as popular here as it is in the United States....."

This was general and not illegitimate criticism; the Pilot did not share our advantage of knowing McGee's future. There were more jealous opponents. George Edward Clerk, editor of the True Witness, was not of the reception committee which called McGee to Montreal. Clerk's unpublished Diary for 1856 has some revealing entries on this subject:

> "November 18. Mr. McGee called at the office and announced the design of a new paper. I said little as he starts to-day for Quebec."

> "Summary of year. .....in our Canadian parties nothing has been gained for the Catholic cause owing to the tirades of soi disant Catholic ministers and the venality of their Catholic supporters. I fear that the advent of Mr. McGee

> will tend still more to divide and accordingly to weaken... He can succeed only as a distinctly Irish organ and as such his policy must be injurious to Catholic interests...."

The antithesis between an "Irish organ" and "Catholic interests" is well drawn to show the difference between McGee's view of the Montreal Irish, and Clerk's; to Clerk they were merely the largest English-speaking group of Montreal Catholics. He failed, if indeed he tried, to envisage them as a possible factor, Protestant and Catholic alike, in Confederation, which in turn, eight years later, he saw only as something which could not benefit Lower Canada since Union had failed to benefit Lower Canada.[13] There is also the question of McGee's relations with the True Witness's paymasters, the Catholic Church in Montreal. McGee was a pewholder at St. Patrick's; but references to his Catholicism are very meagre, his early record, from the Catholic viewpoint, was not strong, and it may be significant that, although in 1862 a candidate for presidency of the highly "clerical" St. Patrick's Society, he never in fact held office in it.

A decline is perceptible in the temperature of public references to McGee in the True Witness. On May 29th, 1857 all was still relatively well:

> "The 'New Era': The first two numbers.....are before us; and by their appearance promise well for its future prosperity. To say that its articles evince first-rate ability, would be but a scant measure of justice to one who has earned for himself a position inferior to that of no journalist in this Continent.....We sincerely hope that the New Era may be the means of effecting much good among those for whose use it has been started; and of cementing that union which, for the interests of both, should always exist between our Irish and French Canadian populations....."

By August 19th, 1859 Clerk's disapproval could not be concealed:

> ".....we have expressed our strong disapprobation of

> parts of Mr. McGee's political career.....The question is not as to Mr McGee's talents.....our complaint against him is that he has prostituted to party, that, which if properly employed, might have been highly beneficial to the Catholic community of Canada."

The possibility has already been referred to of a breakdown, which would have wrecked McGee's aspirations, of the Canadian-Irish community along a politico-religious line of demarcation. Upon this danger the New Era bestowed much space and adjuration. In his dislike of all the Canadian works of the Loyal Orange Association, McGee had august precedent; Lord Elgin, fresh from a pelting in the streets of Montreal, had written:

> ".....the whole row is the work of the orange Societies, backed by the commercial men who desire annexation and the political leaders who want place."[14]

Toronto, at that time with 25,000 inhabitants and 25 Orange Lodges, was the headquarters of this phenomenon. The Grand Orange Lodge of Canada East held its annual meetings in Montreal, and an extract from the Grand Master's address of 1858 would in itself suffice to explain McGee's state of mind:

> ".....Brethern [sic] will no doubt be aware that a Demagogue escaped from just punishment, for seditious practices in the Old Country - tossed about from City to City by his own Priests and Countrymen in the neighbouring States, had, on failing to establish himself there, arrived here, and venturing again on British ground, commenced his appropriate labours of Demagogueism, by making use of our Order as a stepping stone to his own power and fortune in the Province. Making use of the common weapons of his craft, falsehood and misrepresentation, he had endeavoured to arouse the worst passion of his unfortunate and spiritually enslaved countrymen, and instead of urging upon them the moral, social and educational reforms they most need, endeavoured to enlist them in a crusade against the unoffending Members, and the political existence of our Order.....the consequence.....has been the fusion of the two Irish Charitable Societies into one grand political one, under the charge of the Priests, with a charitable name and Charitable pretensions, and the

> borrowing a Deed of Property to give our Demagogue Editor of the New Era, the qualification for a seat in the House of Assembly... .Already has he with characteristic inconsistency, while presiding over the interests of a semi-almonry, semi-political Society of the most secret and exclusive description, inveighed in the House against secret Societies, and denounced our Order as composed of drunkards, thristing [sic] for blood, while he was resisting a just civil claim on the part of our Order for an Act of incorporation, similar to those granted freely every Session to Popish institutions of the most secret kind. It will be your business, Brethern [sic] , to expose and oppose the intrigues of this demagoguish tool of the Roman Hierarchy....."[15]

In all probability the above extract may be taken to represent the aberration, rather than the normal activity, of the Orange Association in Lower Canada. At the Grand Lodge meeting of 1866, comment was made on the happy relations which had existed with their Catholic "fellow subjects" for many years past. In 1860, there were four Orange Lodges in Montreal, with a total membership of 181 - a fraction, no doubt, even of the Protestant Irish in the city, and a still smaller fraction of the "800 separate congregations of sworn and armed men" which the New Era alleged to exist in Canada. In McGee's first summer in Montreal an Orange flag was displayed, for the first time in the city, on the ominous 12th of July, and disturbances followed on the 13th, exaggerated in the press of Upper Canada as "the Griffintown massacre", but this was an exceptional occurrence. In these circumstances it is a little surprising to find the New Era, in the fall of 1857, becoming little more than a tri-weekly anti-Orange diatribe, and so lending some colour to the Grand Master's strictures the following year.

It was probably the Provincial aspect of Orange activities

which alarmed McGee and others. This was a movement with almost as great possibilities of ramification as the Church itself. A New Era article, reprinted in the True Witness of 18th September 1857, put the case:

> "Orangeism in Canada is at this moment a primary political fact. It exists rampant in the western, and couchant in the eastern provinces. It burrows in Quebec, in St. Sylvester, in the Townships, in Montreal, while it exults in conscious power in most of the Ottawa counties, in the western cities, the Peninsula, and throughout the Huron tract.....There are now, by the avowal of Mr. Ogle R. Gowan, 14 members of the House of Assembly who are also members of the Orange Society.....it is by patronage alone they can thrive in Canada."

Above all, to McGee Orangeism seemed to lack that sense of the future which he himself tried earnestly to teach; he states this view characteristically, in the New Era of 21st July 1857:

> "We are here living not on the banks of the Boyne, but on the St. Lawrence. We are new men in a new country. Our affairs are with the Imperial Government and the American Republic, not with James II or William III...."

After the elections, the New Era's attacks greatly diminished.

The Irish talent for political intrigue was well established by the earlier 19th century, and it is on this level that one might expect the most typical examples of immigrant Irish interplay with groups already identifiable in Montreal. There was no latitude for the emergence of an Irish party, as McGee pointed out, in city, in Canadian or, at the end of the period, in Dominion politics. In each situation the Irish were, in spite of habitual exaggeration of their numbers, a minority group. Nevertheless, in the years which saw a succession of curious two-headed Canadian Ministries representing successive accommodations, and not a lasting union, between the French and English sections of the

Province, such a minority as the Irish might hope for a part to play somewhere near the point of balance. 1847-1867, also, included a demographically critical period in the relations of Upper and Lower Canada. The populations of the two sections approached equality by 1850, after which Upper Canada's numbers forged ahead until in 1861 they surpassed Lower Canada's in the ration 14:11. These sections could not live, it seemed, politically together or economically apart. If the predestined federal solution were to be attained, a mediator between Upper and Lower Canada was the first necessity; this part McGee was able to play.

For political precept, the Montreal Irish could peruse, or discuss, particularly, the <u>True Witness</u> and the <u>New Era</u>. Clerk's paper, as might be expected, was absorbed in the stale political preoccupations of Catholic Canada. With the approach of each Provincial election, the <u>True Witness</u> is to be found urging its readers to vote what may be called the straight Catholic ticket. The <u>Irish Catholic Voters Guide</u>, reprinted at these epochs in each issue, seldom looked further into the seeds of time than to identify the virtues of Separate Schools for Upper Canada, or the iniquity of Representation by Population - which would abrogate "the sole earthly means of maintaining the religious autonomy of Lower Canada."[16] What, meanwhile, was McGee's message to the Irish electorate? It was delivered in his speeches at political dinners and the like, in a form suitable to one who proclaimed himself "neither a Lower Canadian nor an Upper Canadian":

> "I hold we have no right to intrude our Irish patriotism on this soil; for our first duty is to the land where we live and have fixed our homes."[17]

Addressing the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society at Quebec, he said:

> "A Canadian nationality, not French-Canadian, nor British-Canadian, nor Irish-Canadian - patriotism rejects the prefix - is, in my opinion, what we should look forward to....."[18]

Parliamentary elections, during the period, were violent and corrupt; the Mayor of Montreal was formally complimented if polling concluded without a riot. At the 1844 by-election, gangs of labourers from the Lachine Canal were organised to prevent the supporters of William Molson from voting, and Griffintown was undoubtedly prominent on all such occasions. As the election of December, 1857 approached, the New Era marshalled McGee's supporters and estimated their strength at 3,000, observing with satisfaction that

> ".....the new £7.10s franchise will take in a larger number of their former non-electors than of any other class."[19]

McGee was returned for Montreal, along with Borion and Rose, and was thereafter a member of the Legislative Assembly of the sixth, seventh and eighth Provincial Parliaments, and of the first Dominion Parliament, until his death. Beginning as an ordinary member in opposition, he later became a government man, established easy relations with John A. Macdonald, and served under him in 1864 as Minister of Agriculture, Immigration and Statistics. He was also a member, and sometime President, of the Executive Council. McGee said that if he were elected he would feel it his duty to represent the city as a whole. The strong nucleus of his support lay in St. Ann's Ward, and this, with St. Antoine and St. Lawrence Wards, made up the division of Montreal West which McGee represented from 1861, when the city was thus

electorally partitioned. Others than Irish voted for him, or for the cause he advocated. Clerk's Diary notes in 1857 that McGee is unpopular with the Protestant English; but in 1861 that he is "all powerful in Upper Canada", and in 1867 that "McGee will I suppose get in by English vote....."[20] A remark in a letter from McGee to John A. Macdonald of April, 1867 indicates that the Irish-controlled vote was decisive in all three Montreal constituencies, and this at a time when native Irish did not exceed 16% of the city's population:

> "As to Montreal West, I do not fear any issue I may have to meet there, with any one; but the other two seats in that city can only be secured by actual co-operation of those I can influence, as was shown to Cartier's and Rose's satisfaction last time, and time before."[21]

Almost from the outset of his career in Montreal, McGee was not without rivals, some of whom became bitter enemies; less dangerous, to be sure, than the enmity which followed him from Ireland. The progress of Clerk's antagonism has been described. Bernard Devlin was a brother Irishman who achieved the presidency of St. Patrick's Society a year or two before McGee sought it in vain; Devlin was prominent, too, in the Benevolent and Total Abstinence activities of St. Patrick's, and in two Catholic societies, one of them in St. Ann's. In 1848 he is said to have visited New York to raise funds for an Irish insurrection. This man, hostile to McGee from the start, headed a faction which had reached considerable proportions by 1867, when McGee defeated him in a particularly discreditable election by only 250 votes, and the Irish, according to Clerk, hooted McGee down. The sequel, in Clerk's Diary of 1867, makes one of the less happy political omens of

the newly-founded Dominion:

> "October 2 Wednesday:.....a row between Devlin and McGee on account of letters of the latter in to-day's Gazette. Devlin spat in McGee's face near Post Office. Much talk....."

The scene is submerged in the atmosphere of farce, immanent in so much Irish history; yet an issue was at stake of the first consequence, the emergence of Canadian citizens from Irish immigrants.

For this principle McGee gave his life. He was assassinated in Ottawa in the following year, it was supposed by a Fenian. The organisation which thus tracked him down appears, on the international stage, as ludicrous as the enraged Devlin in Montreal. The Fenian Brotherhood was an Irish-American revolutionary secret society, founded in the United States by John O'Mahony in 1858. As a secret society, it was arraigned by McGee in the same terms as the totally different Orange Association, namely as repugnant both to Canadian law and the Catholic Church, and towards the end of his life he threatened to denounce individual Fenians by name. The Brotherhood suffered a schism in the United States, and the plan of O'Mahony, who was said to have been insane, namely a direct invasion of Ireland, seems in fact a little less unreasonable than that of his rival, W.R. Roberts, who proposed to subjugate Canada first, as a stepping-stone to the British Isles. This enterprise led to frontier skirmishes in the summers of 1866 and 1870. Perhaps the chief upshot of what has been well called the "Fenian Flurry" was to awaken Canadian patriotism and to strengthen the federation movement, notably in 1866 in New Brunswick. Out-

lying and undefended communities were not disposed to underrate the menace of Fenian marauders. In Montreal itself, from March, 1866, volunteers and Home Guard stood to arms, and Mayor Starnes pointed out to the public the folly of removing deposits from the City and District Savings Bank, of which he was a director. There were Fenians, or perhaps what a later age knows as "fellow-travellers", in Montreal before 1866: the Gazette of 1864 reports that on St. Patrick's Day a Fenian group of about 100 dined at the Exchange Hotel, a counterblast to the huge and loyal gathering of St. Patrick's Society on the same occasion:

> "We do not believe that these Fenians form any considerable proportion of the loyal Irishmen of Montreal."[22]

It may be wondered that Montreal, and McGee, could take "these contemporary pagans" so seriously (in 1865 Archbishop Connolly, of Halifax, denounced them not merely for atheism but for "table turning and rapperism").[23] Their reason may be that British America saw behind Fenianism the incalculable influence of the new, post-war United States, many of whose "veterans" entered the Fenian ranks. For McGee, the Brotherhood epitomised nearly everything he had striven to shake off - revolutionary Ireland, irreligion, the Know-Nothing aspects of the United States. His warning to the Canadian House of Assembly in 1865 is well known:

> "Let us remember this, that when the three cries among our next neighbours are shoddy, taxation, blood, it is time for us to provide for our own security."[24]

In his Letter of 1866 to the Irish editors, already cited, McGee denounces fearlessly the organisation whose personal

threats he was receiving:

> "This very Fenian organisation in the United-States, what does it really prove, but that the Irish are still an alien population, camped but not settled in America, with foreign hopes and aspirations unshared by the people among whom they live?.....It is because the active spirits are conscious that, being Irish, they have no hopeful public career in the land of the 'Know-Nothings', and the rank and file feel that while their stomachs are filled their affections are starved in that hard and fast new state of society, that all this weak and wicked yearning after the impossible has developed itself in both classes."[25]

The Fenians might have found, in Canada, but for D'Arcy McGee, not a spontaneous resistance but, in the cant of our own times, a "fifth column".

The pervading Fenian danger, of exaggerated because unknown import, gave a special flavour in 1866 to the Montreal celebrations of St. Patrick's Day. The Montreal Transcript of March 19th preserves a good account of the proceedings. St. Patrick's church was crammed. The Rev. Fr. O'Farrell, after what the newspaper very wisely summarises as "a long historical retrospect", spoke up for loyalty:

> "Loyalty was ever characteristic of the Irish people. It was for clinging to their chiefs, in days gone by, that Ireland had been most celebrated, and they must cling to their adopted country now, where their faith was protected, where they enjoyed the fullest civil and religious liberty - under whose laws they were safe and rested secure.....Give the hand of fellowship to those not of our faith, and be at peace with them."

After the blessing of the Church, that of the Governor-General. A procession of thousands paused before St. Lawrence Hall, and "Hon. Mr. McGee and Lt.-Col. Devlin, President of the St. Patrick's Society," entered. Ceremonial necessity made

strange bedfellows. From a window His Excellency launched at the Fenian Brotherhood the bolt which the audience clearly expected:

> "... ..I do not consider this magnificent demonstration as one of personal respect to myself. I accept it as evidence on your part of loyalty to our gracious Sovereign, and of attachment to the institutions of our land; and further, as a protest on your part against the principles and designs of Wicked men who would disgrace the name of Irishmen by their conduct, who have threatened to desecrate the day sacred to our National Patron Saint by a wanton attack upon this peaceful, prosperous, and happy community (Cheers)."

After some cries for "McGee", the procession moved on, to the corner of the Haymarket and Craig Street, where the serious secular oratory of the day was delivered from the site prepared for the building of St. Patrick's Hall. Devlin spoke first, followed by the Mayor. "Some remarks were also made by the Presidents of the St. Patrick's Benevolent Society and the St. John Baptiste, and other gentlemen."

It was McGee's turn to speak. He had himself come far, and not only in politics. He was a B.C.L. of McGill, whose library has some of his works with presentation inscriptions to the College and to Principal Dawson. He was a Member of the Royal Irish Academy, Corresponding Member of the State Historical Societies of New York and Maine, and a member of sundry learned societies in Canada. He now made a rapid survey of the Irish achievement in Montreal, in far the best of the day's recorded speeches. It was warmly received, by a gathering which had already been talked at for hours. He spoke of the numbers of Irish in the Province, with his usual statistical optimism. A fortnight earlier, he made a more cogent and accurate reckoning of the Montreal Irish, when he

wrote:

> "At St. Patrick's, our principal church, between the middle of December and New Year's day.....15,000 persons received holy communion, or very nearly every man and woman of an age to approach the Blessed Sacrament."[26]

He spoke of the assessed value of Irish property in Montreal - nearly $3,500,000. - of the Irish share in municipal and parliamentary representation, of the true lesson of St. Patrick's life - a gospel of peace, not of hatred. A sentence from the earlier part of the speech will serve to sum up the matter:

> ".....you are now here to receive from the Mayor of the city the gratifying acknowledgment, that Montreal looks upon you, not as step-children or as foreigners, but as children of her own household, whom she does not distinguish unfavourably from any of her other children."

[1]McGee, T.D., Speeches and Addresses, 1865, p.7: The Policy of Conciliation, 1861.

[2] - , History of the Irish Settlers in North America, 1851.

[3]Handlin, O., Boston's Immigrants, 1941, p.144.

[4]Skelton, I., Life of McGee, 1925, p.166.

[5]1857, October-November.

[6]1869, p.24.

[7]quoted Skelton ut supra, p.269.

[8]reprinted as The Irish Position in British and Republican North America, 1866.

[9]Clerk, G.E., Diary, 13th January 1856 (unpublished).

[10]McGee, T.D., Poems, 1869: Biographical Sketch, p.31.

[11][Montreal] True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 4th December 1857.

[12][Montreal] New Era, 25th May 1857.

[13]True Witness, August, 1864, passim.

[14]Elgin-Grey Papers, 1846-1852, 1937, Vol. I, p.350.

[15]Loyal Orange Association: Report of the Proceedings, Grand Lodge of C.E., at the Annual Meeting at Montreal, 1858, pp.8-9.

[16]True Witness, 14th June 1861.

[17]McGee, T.D., Speeches and Addresses, 1865, p.8: The Policy of Conciliation, 1861.

[18]ibidem, p.35: American Relations and Canadian Duties, 1862.

[19]New Era, 1st December 1857.

[20]Clerk ut supra, 4th December 1857, 12th January 1861, 6th June 1867.

[21]quoted Skelton ut sup., p.530.

[22]Montreal Gazette, 19th March 1864.

[23]McGee, The Irish Position ut supra, Append. B.

[24] - , Speeches and Addresses ut supra, p.274.

[25] - , The Irish Position ut sup., pp.6-7.

[26]ibidem, pp.12-13.

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