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Beyond the ballot box : a social history of the Boston Irish, 1845-1917.

Dennis P. Ryan
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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BEYOND THE BALLOT BOX:
A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE
BOSTON IRISH, 1845-1917

A Dissertation Presented

by

Dennis Patrick Ryan

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 1979
History

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A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE
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A Dissertation Presented

by

Dennis Patrick Ryan

Approved as to style and content by:

Howard H. Quint
(Chairman of Committee)

Paul S. Boyer
(Head of Department)

Milton Cantor
(Member)

Joseph M. Hernon
(Member)

Frank Fata
(Member)

April, 1979

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PREFACE

On a mild evening in March 1912, over eight hundred guests crowded into the main function room of the Hotel Somerset in the Back Bay to participate in the annual dinner of the Charitable Irish Society. Featuring a menu of oysters, brook trout, "Roast Jumbo Squab", "fancy ice cream" and a head table graced by President William Howard Taft, William Cardinal O'Connell and Mayor John F. Fitzgerald of Boston, the occasion was a long way, both in a historical and symbolic sense, from the days of the "coffin ships", which transported the ancestors of many of these very same guests from a famine-ravaged Ireland to the Hub less than three quarter's of a century before.¹

Realizing how little research has been done on the non-political experience of the Irish in Boston between 1845 and 1917, this study attempts to break new ground by investigating the Irish's institutional response to poverty, their learning experience in the parochial school, their difficulties breaking into business and the professions, their relations with other ethnic and racial groups (Jews, Italians, Blacks, etc.) as opposed to Yankees; and finally, but no less important, the roles assigned to Celtic women and the Hibernian's infatuation with leisure activities, as mirrored in their myriad of clubs, fraternities, athletic associations and if it must be said, drinking establishments.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Boston Globe, March 19, 1912; "Program of the Charitable Irish Society Dinner, March 18, 1912", deposited with the Stephen O'Meara Papers, Boston Public Library.

ABSTRACT

BEYOND THE BALLOT BOX:
A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE
BOSTON IRISH, 1845-1917

(Degree Date, May, 1979)

Dennis Patrick Ryan

B.A., Suffolk University

M.A., Northeastern University

Ph.D., University of Massachusetts

Directed by Professor Howard H. Quint

Realizing how little research has been done on the non-political experience of the Irish in Boston between 1845 and 1917, this study attempts to break new ground by investigating the Irish's institutional response to poverty, their learning experience in the parochial school, their difficulties breaking into business and the professions, their relations with other ethnic and racial groups (Jews, Italians, Blacks, etc.) as opposed to Yankees; and finally, but no less important, the roles assigned to Celtic women and the Hibernian's infatuation with leisure activities, as mirrored in their myriad of clubs, fraternities, athletic associations and if it must be said, drinking establishments.

Believing that the best kind of help was self-help, the Boston Irish by 1917 had organized and built an impressive array of social agencies and charitable institutions to care for approximately fourteen thousand of their sick, poor and disadvantaged. A reflection of the Catholic Church's long tradition of pastoral care and the selflessness and generosity of prominent laymen like Andrew Carney, Thomas Ring, and Patrick Donahoe as well as thousands of ordinary, faceless, working-class people, these institutions also mirrored

a certain distrust on the part of the Irish of public and private charitable agencies where proselytizing was not unheard of. Consequently, serving both as physical and spiritual havens, Catholic-run institutions thus provided its clients with the added assurance of being ministered to by individuals who usually shared the same faith and cultural heritage. This world of ethnic and religious kinship would be known to leading Protestant Boston social workers like Robert A. Woods and Frederick A. Bushee. Yet, as outsiders, it would never be fully appreciated nor fully understood by them.

And for a people who at one time measured distance by the number of rosaries that could be said, the Boston Irish, educationally speaking, had also come a long way by 1917. With approximately twenty-nine elementary schools, four high schools, four academies and one college, they could be justifiably proud. Secure within friendly classrooms and corridors, the life sustaining forces of faith and culture were assured of being passed on from one generation of Irish Catholics to the next. As wives, mothers and wage earners, Irish women, on the other hand, would do their part in managing and stabilizing society's most crucial institution, the family.

Even though not taking full advantage of the opportunities available to them in business and the professions, many other Irish still managed to prosper as lawyers, doctors, journalists, or as grocers, liquor dealers, contractors and undertakers. Separated as much from their fellow immigrants by language, customs and manners as they were from native Yankees, the Irish, nevertheless, as power brokers within the Democratic Party, the Labor Movement and the Catholic Church, would moreover play a major role in educating recently arrived Italians, Jews, Poles, etc., on the realities as well as the myths of the American dream in Boston.

While attending to these solemn responsibilities however, they never lost sight of the important fact that life was meant to be enjoyed as much as it was to be productive, in an economic and monetary sense. Consequently, they organized their own parish socials, fraternities, and clubs while leaving a lasting impression on the world of professional sport and theatre. Politics, Irish style, would additionally liberate Boston from the restraints of its Puritan past, where office seekers and holders were expected to be heard but not seen mingling with the masses at ward meetings, picnics, street corner rallies and the neighborhood saloon.

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Chapter 1

THE IRISH AGAINST POVERTY

"Go among the poor yourself, see for yourself, no tongue can tell you one tenth part of what you will realize when you see...the point of the nails and put your finger into the place of the nails that have fastened so many a poor man and woman living in anguish crucified on the cross of poverty."

Thomas Ring, President of the
Boston Particular Council of the
St. Vincent de Paul Society, 1891.¹

To the thousands of poverty-stricken Irish immigrants who passed through Boston's ports during the 1840's the city signified a hopeful if apprehensive beginning. Bewildered, confused and frightened, the newcomers could at least take comfort in the fact that they had escaped the fate of over a half million of their countrymen who perished during the disastrous potato famine. In having decided to emigrate, they had made the desperate choice between the ship or the coffin. Having endured the harsh Atlantic crossing, they were sure that the worst was behind them, for nothing could have been so hopeless as to have remained in Ireland, a country that one Gaelic poet lamented as "a land without stars." Yet the hardships of the most recent past would continue to haunt the Irish in their new surroundings. For in Boston poverty,

sickness and death would not lessen among the Celts.²

The Irish overwhelmed Boston. By the thousands they descended upon a community ill-prepared to receive them. Old Boston that Henry Adams romantically remembered as being Yankee, homogeneous and non-industrial, was undergoing a subtle but ominous demographic change as early as 1845. The city census of that year indicated that foreigners and their offspring comprised over 37,000 or thirty-two percent of the Hub's 114,000 residents. Between 1845 and 1850, the high water mark of Irish immigration to America, Boston and its neighboring towns were overrun by thousands of more new aliens, the bulk of them Irish. By 1855, with nearly thirty percent of its population first generation Irish alone, Boston seemed to some visitors to be more like the slums of Dublin than the proverbial Athens of America.³

In Boston's urban and commercial setting, where one needed a special skill or trade in order to earn a living the Irish were initially economic misfits. For the most part they came from rural backgrounds and were unskilled laborers. Rarely able to procure a decent wage, the newcomer was condemned to live in miserable slums located in the South Cove and Fort Hill sections of the city. In these ghettos flourished vice, crime, intemperance, sickness, and death.⁴

To the Yankee community, the Irish constituted a social blight. Public health officials declared that they posed an outright threat to the community's social fabric. "Pauperism, crime, disease and death, stare us in the face," they wrote in 1850, and, moreover, they had the statistics to substantiate their claim. Foreigners, they pointed out, accounted for ninety percent of

the city's truants and vagabonds, fifty-eight percent of its paupers, seventy-five percent of the prisoners confined to the county jail, and ninety-seven percent of the inmates at the almshouse on Deer Island. Almost equally abhorrent, the immigrants with their ever increasing number of saloons and groceries, were turning the staid and orderly city into one large, brawling urban barroom.⁵

Other public health reports spoke also of Boston's impact on the immigrant's themselves. For many Irish, like the five hundred and nine who perished during the cholera epidemic in 1849, Boston was a mass, ghetto graveyard. Huddled together in the dark subterranean cellars of converted warehouses and buildings, where the backwaters of Boston Harbor often inundated their pitiful living space, the Irish were easy prey for the epidemic. The lamp of life burned but briefly for the likes of Delia McLaughlin, Manus McCarthy and Honora McCawley, and other victims of the epidemic.⁶

By converting an old gunhouse into a hospital, public health officials did their best to combat the dreaded disease. Some brave physicians visited patients in the notoriously wretched quarters located near Half Moon Place. One dying man's abode was literally a floating tomb. While ministering to a man lying on a bed surrounded by water, a doctor observed the dead body of an infant floating about the room in a coffin. By the time the epidemic had spent its course in the fall of that year the death toll, which included many native inhabitants, had climbed to 707.⁷

Among the Boston Irish, poverty in its modern, urban ghetto form thus came of age in America. In struggling to overcome these sordid social conditions the Irish themselves would write the first bitter chapter in the poignant story of immigrant adjustment to American life. Succeeding waves of immigrants,

Italians, Jews, Poles, etc., would add their own grim accounts to this moving human epic. But as in most forms of human struggle, the enemy is especially brutal with those it first encounters. And poverty, the major foe of all immigrant groups, would strike its severest blows against the Irish of Boston, the first of the newcomers.

The plight of the newcomers brought a concerted social response from many of Boston's civic leaders, clergymen, and charity workers. Embued with the humanitarian principles of Joseph Tuckerman and William Ellery Channing, they labored zealously to ease the suffering of the distressed. Much has been written about these Protestant efforts to cope with urban ills, but the same is not true in the case of the Boston Irish. Lack of detailed research on this other side of the struggle against poverty has led to the impression that the Irish themselves were basically indifferent and unresponsive to the social problems of the day. Such was hardly the case, for they too, like the Protestants, took strong initiatives in dealing with the pressing issues of pauperism, intemperance, unemployment, sickness, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, unwed mothers and orphans.⁸

In combating poverty in the city of the Puritan, the Irish benefited greatly from the Catholic Church's long tradition of pastoral care. For centuries the Church, both in Ireland and on the continent, had developed through trial and error a system of orphanages, asylums, and hospitals. The various religious orders that staffed these institutions further provided a dedicated and experienced body of selfless servants. This legacy the Church brought to Boston and adapted it to fit American conditions. It involved a cultural transplant of no small significance.

As early as 1833 the Sisters of Charity had established the Saint Vincent Female Orphan Asylum near the Fort Hill section of Boston. In 1864 the Home for Destitute Catholic Children, administered by the same religious community, opened its doors. Governed by a board of laymen that included Patrick Donahoe, editor of the Catholic weekly, the Boston Pilot, and Charles Francis Donnelly, a prominent attorney from County Roscommon, the home gained a quick reputation for efficiency and thoroughness. After two years it was caring for over two hundred children. However, the directors insisted that the home be but a temporary resting place. The best instrument in making a child a useful, self-sufficient member of society, they believed, was "family and fireside influence", rather than the "hot-house culture incident to public institutions". Once physically, spiritually, and morally renourished, the child was either placed up for adoption or returned to his natural home to participate, like a Horatio Alger character in the "struggles of life".⁹

Admission to the home was limited to the severest of hardship cases. When one Michael Kenny, for instance, applied to have three of his children taken in, Superintendent Bernard Cullen upon investigation, rejected them on the grounds that the father was a "stout able man" and the reputed owner of two houses. Ranging in age from four to twelve, most of the children were either abandoned, neglected, or placed there temporarily by parents unable to support them. The log book of Cullen described intimately the social pathology of certain Irish families. On one occasion he rescued the children of John Shea, a "habitual drinker," who had broken his "wife's breast bone and then deserted" his family. In another instance he provided shelter for a four year old boy, Willie O'Hara, whose father was serving a prison term for murdering his wife.¹⁰

While most inmates eventually were returned to their natural parents, Cullen spent a considerable amount of time and energy trying to find decent Catholic homes for the orphans. Before releasing a child for adoption, the superintendent usually obtained character references on prospective parents from the local parish priest, postman or police officer. Upon receiving custody of a child, the foster parents were required to submit regular reports regarding his schooling and church attendance. Cullen himself frequently checked on the child's adjustment to his new environment. Unable to find suitable foster homes in New England, the institution's annual reports noted that in the course of his inspections Cullen had "crossed the Mississippi a number of times, and has twice reached as far as Dakota."¹¹

Even though most of the children placed out were reportedly as "happy as a clam at high water", the system was far from perfect. Children sometimes were returned for being incorrigible or "saucy". Nor was exploitation of the children as domestics uncommon. Pastors were constantly reminded that before recommending persons as foster parents that they first "inquire into their pecuniary circumstances—and ascertain if their purpose is charity or self-interest". Yet even the best of intentions did not always guarantee a satisfactory placement. A Mrs. Cook, for example, had to endure the wrath of her husband when she volunteered to take in an unwelcomed nephew in 1867.¹²

In addition to aiding Irish slumdweller living along a city byway appropriately named South Marginal Street, Superintendent Cullen spent considerable time in the municipal court acting in behalf of Catholic interests. Frequently appearing before the judge was a stubborn or "intractable" boy or girl. After receiving them on probation, Cullen usually referred the boys

to the House of the Angel Guardian, a home that specialized in dealing with difficult teenagers. Located in the North End, the home had been founded in 1851 by Father George Foxcroft Haskins, a Harvard College graduate and former Episcopalian minister who had converted to Catholicism in 1840. In trying to rescue boys from the "seething cauldron of pauperism or of crime" the home cared for over ten thousand inmates between its inception and 1899. In the overblown rhetoric of Haskins, the home was to be a "moral restaurant", or "temporary" resting place "on the great thoroughfare of life". Long term confinement was considered detrimental to the youth's development since he could fall into a routine "fatal to all ambition and elevation of character, and virtue, and religion." In committing their boy to the home, parents and guardians were asked to pay a token fee. According to Haskins, such a fee "gave them a certain sense of wholesome independence to reflect that they were able to pay something for their children's keeping and teaching." The youth, in turn, would thus come into the house "with something of the pride of the lad who starts for college".¹³

The institution concentrated on providing a common school education. Himself the product of a classical school education, Haskins rejected teaching his charges a manual trade or skill. Moreover, he considered corporal punishment "a relic of barbarism, degrading alike to the child and the teacher". Haskins' disciplinary system was "mild and persuasive, though strict". Upon completion of their religious and common school instruction, the boys were usually apprenticed to farmers, bootmakers, and tailors. In 1853 Haskins claimed that he had placed out more boys than all of the city's most respected institutions combined.¹⁴

For the wayward female there was the House of the Good Shepherd, probably the most intriguing institution within the Boston Irish community. Administered by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the home provided shelter for girls and women with long careers "of sin and misery". As "a refuge from temptation and a sanctuary of sweetness" the Sisters tried to reclaim the "thoughtless and melt the hardened". The inmates were segregated into three classes: the Preservates, the Penitents, and the Magdalens, each receiving special guidance and counseling. The Preservates, between nine and eighteen years of age, were children who had been neglected or "exposed to great moral danger." Along with receiving a grammar school education, they were trained in general house-keeping, embroidery, and needlework. An older group, the Penitents, were mostly women who had entered the home voluntarily seeking spiritual self-renewal. To dramatize their break with a sinful past, they discarded their former names and assumed new and saintly ones. Through incessant prayer and diligent work, they struggled for religious regeneration, some remaining for years, while others, with "regained will-power" returned quickly to society. For the third group, the Magdalens, the outside world was closed off totally. The Magdalens were former Penitents who had "tasted of the bitterness and experienced the deception of worldly allurements", and had chosen to consecrate themselves to an austere life of contemplation and prayer. As a religious community within a religious community, the Magdalens took separate vows and wore a special brown habit, but under no circumstances could they ever think of using their newly acquired status as a "stepping stone" to membership in the order of the Good Shepherd. To belong to this religious elite a young woman had to possess a "spotless character" and come from a family of "blameless reputation".¹⁵

The illegitimate child constituted an additional social burden in a culture

that, ironically, revered the Blessed Virgin. In many respects the Irish community was a diaper-ridden society. Babies were numerous, including those born of what one charity worker delicately called "unnatural parents". The Carney Hospital, founded in 1863 by Andrew Carney, a wealthy merchant and realtor who had emigrated from County Cavan, set aside a ward for abandoned infants and unwed mothers in 1870. This development infuriated Pamela Hazeltine Carney, widow of the institution's benefactor. Not only did she withhold from the hospital her deceased husband's promised financial support in 1874 but also removed his remains from the hospital burial grounds. At that time, Archbishop John Williams, the cultured, Yankee Catholic prelate, purchased a twelve acre estate overlooking Dorchester Bay for the Saint Mary's Infant Asylum.¹⁶

From the beginning the Asylum was plagued by a high mortality rate, financial mismanagement, and internal dissension. Both literally and figuratively speaking, competent child care was still in its infancy. Babies placed in foundling asylums as opposed to foster homes almost inevitably were doomed to early deaths. Children at St. Mary's it was noted, "all died with few exceptions". The high infant mortality (thought by some to be 97 out of 100) especially concerned the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, a non-Catholic agency which, in fact, sympathized with the Catholics' desire to care for their own. Unless drastic improvements were made at the Asylum, the Society threatened to turn over to state institutions Catholic infants coming under its jurisdiction. A nun who visited the institution in the winter of 1893 wrote "we found about 60 of the most forlorn children I ever saw. It seemed to me," she continued, "every one had sore heads, sore ears, and very, weak and sore eyes."¹⁷

These horrible conditions were not helped by the constant feuding between the Sisters of Charity who resided at the Asylum, and the home's board of directors, made up of a diocesan priest and laymen. A point of issue was who would be held legally responsible for the Asylum's seventy thousand dollar mortgage. For their own protection, the Sisters desired a corporation charter that would have explicitly made the Boston Archbishop liable for all debts incurred by the Asylum rather than their own religious order. Such a charter, they felt, would assure them that "the gentlemen (the board of directors) will not slip out and leave the burden on the Sisters." Frequently the nuns threatened to abandon St. Mary's, and on one occasion did so. Were it not for a John O'Brien, a friend of the institution, the Asylum would have surely closed during these turbulent years. Acting as an arbiter between the Sisters and the board of directors, O'Brien negotiated an agreement between them. It guaranteed the Sisters full control over the internal affairs of St. Mary's while the diocese, in turn, accepted overall responsibility for the home's administration and debts.¹⁸

One social problem the Irish did not have was prostitution. According to William I. Cole, a resident at the South End Settlement House, this condition was due principally to the strong moral influence of the Catholic Church. The effectiveness of these religious restraints was further attested to by Bernard Cullen, the Catholic court agent. In 1870 the city police chief had summoned him to the police station to question one hundred and three suspects arrested during a raid on a red light district. Of these Cullen was relieved to find that only fourteen were his "own people." Except for one, all of those convicted of keeping a house of ill-fame, he boasted, "were non-Catholic." When in the winter of 1895 it was reported that "women, flashily dressed," were

trying to recruit as prostitutes Irish immigrant girls at the East Boston docks, the Charitable Irish and St. Vincent de Paul Societies quickly investigated. Over the next five months Miss Nellie McGurty, a special agent, greeted and counseled over two thousand females debarking at East Boston. The investigation proved that not "a trace of the abuse hinted at" was found. For the most part the girls possessed pre-paid tickets and were met by friends and relatives. One innocent girl, though, in being touched by "Cupid's dart" had been duped out of her savings by a man who proposed to her during the crossing. On Miss McGurty's recommendation he was apprehended and deported back to Ireland.¹⁹

While professional streetwalkers were few, scores of innocent working girls and boys might be found walking about the city in search of a decent place to live. To accommodate the hundreds of homeless bootblacks, newspaper and errand boys, Father David H. Roche founded the Working Boys' Home in 1883. Located in the North End, the home and its parent industrial training school in Newton Highlands were together an institutional melting pot, caring for boys of Irish, Italian, German, Russian, French, and Polish background. In this urban outpost, surprisingly enough, there was even an American Indian. To help sustain itself, the institution published its own newspaper, The Working Boy, and formed a band that performed at various social functions throughout the Irish community. Many of these boys would later win acclaim by joining the United States Navy and touring the world as members of a band aboard the training ship, the Prairie. In addition to teaching the boys how to "lead good and holy lives," Father Roche stressed the values of self-help, hard work and sobriety. Encouraged "to take off your coat and make a dust in the world" the lads organized their own temperance society in 1888. According to a regular visitor, John Boyle O'Reilly, the former Fenian and a Boston social reformer, conditions within the home were pleasant

and humane. The younger children, he wrote, were "friendly with one another, unconstrained, happy, and, when questioned, wise, experienced, and thoughtful to a pathetic degree." "The rules are," he observed, "as slight as they can be made; there is nothing irksome, nothing the lads would not voluntarily do." Three square meals a day, a recreation room, a library and white sheeted, warm beds, all helped to save the boys from the moral pitfalls of Boston after dark.²⁰

The Working Girls' Home was located on Harrison Avenue, a South End street dotted with countless numbers of institutions bent on social caretaking and recovery. Under the aegis of the Grey Nuns of Montreal, the home surrounded young Catholic domestics, factory workers, and professional women with "refining influences"; they were also taught how to "work, to gain more wages, to get independent." The girls could come and go as they wished, and attendance at Sunday mass was not compulsory. This liberal policy evidently had salutary effects, for one observer pointed out in 1899 that it was "remarkable how few of the young girls go out evenings for purposes of amusements." Most of the girls found all of the rest and recreation they needed, in either "their cozy rooms or in the companionship of one another in the cheery alcoves."²¹

Along with institutional care the Irish Catholics relied heavily upon the volunteer charity worker. Augmenting the services provided by the institutions, the volunteers perceived their role to be similar to that of "gleaners following after the reapers, finding here and there a few stalks of grain overlooked by the workmen". Most volunteers belonged to the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, which averaged over five hundred fifty members a year during the 1890's. Organized by conferences at the parish level, the society provided the Vincentian

with the opportunity for self-sanctification through the performance of acts of mercy. The Society afforded temporary assistance to the poor usually in the form of food, shelter or clothing. Some members did more. When in 1886, for example, the neighbors of a dead woman refused to assist in burial arrangements, one Vincentian built a casket and "performed all the duties of an undertaker."²²

A fundamental principle of the Society's philosophy was the personal visit to the home of the needy. Close, intimate contact with the suffering was indispensable for one to acquire a deeper understanding of and compassion for poverty. "By a friendly visit," wrote Thomas Ring, the Society's president, "the poor man feels that he is not alone in the world, he has some one to whom he can relieve his mind by speaking of his troubles and misfortunes". Once having gained the confidence and respect of those he had visited, the Vincentian could additionally offer, without fear of being viewed as a meddler, friendly advice regarding employment and the religious upbringing of children.²³

While stressing patience, compassion, and tact in dealing with the indigent, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, like Protestant benevolent agencies, worried about fostering social parasites. Only after thorough, detailed investigation was help given. Cash payments were discouraged because they tended to result in the "demoralization of the poor". Even the distribution of turkeys at Christmastime were monitored closely lest they be "transmuted into cash" by the recipients. One conference in the North End insisted that the poor keep clean houses as a prerequisite for relief. Another conference in the Charlestown parish of Saint Francis de Sales issued food stamps redeemable only at grocery stores that did not sell alcoholic beverages.²⁴

Like other charitable organizations, the St. Vincent de Paul Society had its share of internal squabbles. Difficulties in recruiting young and energetic men led many to view it as an "old man's society". Much to the irritation of Thomas Ring, some conferences discontinued their services during the humid summer months. A sensitive issue was whether women and saloon keepers should be admitted into the society. In Ring's judgment, permitting women to join would only "create confusion and sow dissatisfaction. We should throw cockle among the wheat if we tried it," he warned. The Society's president had little patience or regard for either the consumer or the dealer of liquor. At one public gathering he angrily removed a society badge from the lapel of an individual "who was not in condition to give a consistent temperance sermon that day." Incongruous to Ring was the thought of a saloon keeper wishing admittance to a "society which has to repair so much trouble arising from the intemperate use of liquor." Poor administration at the conference level was not uncommon and was another matter of concern. The society's Mission Church conference disbanded in 1883 when its "generous open hearted" president became dissipated by a "weakness that has spoiled so many a good man". And in a South Boston parish when a priest's extravagant alms-giving practices embarrassed the society financially, Ring threatened to cut off assistance and let the curate relieve the poor through some other charitable agency.²⁵

To perceptive Catholic laymen like Thomas Ring, a prosperous exporter from Dorchester, an effective campaign against poverty required more than just the energies of zealous volunteers. Evident already within Protestant circles in the 1880's were the modern trends towards the professionalization and bureaucratization of charity relief. During these years the amateur volunteer

was gradually giving way to the paid charity official and the trained social worker. As a nine year member of the Boston Overseers of the Poor, Ring was Boston's leading Catholic spokesman on almsgiving. He recognized clearly the benefits to be derived from these modern methods of charitable assistance. The St. Vincent de Paul Society did, in fact, hire Richard Keefe as a salaried agent in 1888 to handle the backlog of children's cases pouring into their Charity Building office. Addressing the National Conference of Charities and Correction at New Haven in 1895, Ring asserted that the trained visitor was "a more judicious and wiser helper than the average volunteer visitor, whose zeal is greater than his experience." Yet within an ethnic group, like the Irish, primary, face to face, personal relationships were highly cherished. Consequently, the "professional altruist", as exemplified by the social worker, was looked upon initially with great suspicion. Almost instinctively the Irish were leery of "charity expressmen" who went about expertly collecting sociological and statistical data on the poor. Such would only lead to what Father Joseph Tracy of Brighton labeled "red tape-ism". Father Tracy was highly reluctant to tolerate the creation of a paper barrier between himself and his suffering parishioners. "Do you suppose I would permit," he declared, "the names of those of my people in need to be card-catalogued and kept on record with all the details of their family life and connections?"²⁶

The Irish community's general reluctance to experiment more fully with these modern techniques of professionalized and organized charity was especially frustrating to men like Thomas Ring who sought to eliminate waste, inefficiency, and duplication. At a meeting of the Catholic Union in the autumn of 1893, Ring presented a reorganization scheme for the city's Catholic charitable institutions and agencies. But his plan was doomed to failure because of the

"religious jealousy" existing among the various superintendents of the institutions. These managers proved stubborn and reluctant in yielding any of their authority to a central committee or governing body.²⁷

Equally trying for Ring were his efforts to improve relations between Catholic and Protestant charity agencies. Not without reason did Boston's Irish harbor deep fears regarding the motives and practices of secular organizations. For whether in court or in city, state and private institutions, the Irish were subject to religious discrimination and proselytization throughout the nineteenth century. As early as 1870 Bernard Cullen had protested against the "obnoxious" police officers who arrested Irish youths in South Boston for petty offenses like stealing pickles from grocery stores. Catholics adopted a cautious policy with regard to leading Protestant agencies like the Associated Charities and the Children's Aid Society. In dealing with non-Catholics, Ring advised his workers "to cultivate friendly relations, be pleasant, and as far as you can do it, be obliging and ready to do a favor." Yet, as in the case of the Associated Charities, Ring warned against "entangling alliances." With this organization, he wrote, "we hold a friendly but not too familiar" relationship. The Children's Aid Society, on the other hand, was considered the "most proselytizing" Protestant agency in Boston. It was distrusted by Ring's organization. Of George Hale, president of the Children's Aid Society, Ring wrote, "I have found him to be a fair spoken man who talks turkey and gives us crow."²⁸

William Henry O'Connell's ascendancy to the archbishopric of Boston in 1907 marked a new era in the history of Catholic charity organization. Vain and pompous, O'Connell was an administrator of unusual talent. He would pro-

vide the dynamic leadership required to bring order to the sprawling charities that had sprung up with little planning during the previous decades under Bishop John Bernard Fitzpatrick and Archbishop John Williams. Thoroughness, efficiency, and consolidation would be the hallmarks of the O'Connell episcopacy. "Religious jealousy" would frustrate but not prevent this aggressive prelate from achieving his goal of centralization. Like a clerical Bismark, he would impose his ecclesiastical authority upon those Catholic superintendents and managers who insisted upon running their institutions like private estates.²⁹

Born in Lowell of humble Irish parents in 1859, O'Connell attended the city's public schools, where he was subject to frequent ethnic slurs and religious discrimination. He entered Saint Charles' College in Maryland in 1876 but withdrew after two years because of bad health. Returning to New England, he completed his education at Boston College. Entering the seminary, O'Connell was ordained in 1884 and later assigned as a curate to Saint Joseph's Church, situated on the less desirable side of Beacon Hill in the West End. In this highly populated area, he mingled daily with impoverished Italians, "Darkies" and of course, hundreds of Irish. The latter were "the best in all the world". O'Connell would serve at Saint Joseph's but briefly for in 1895 he was awarded the coveted assignment as Rector of the North American College in Rome. Clearly he was a comer in the Church. O'Connell loved Rome, its antiquity, its culture, and its clerical intrigues. But especially did he cherish the Church's tradition of papal authority. Fitting comfortably and confidently into perhaps the most sophisticated bureaucracy of the day, O'Connell applied himself diligently and displayed his great talent as an administrator. Upon completion of his duties in the Eternal City, O'Connell refined his administrative skills first as Bishop of Portland, Maine and then as papal envoy

to Japan. In 1906 he returned to Boston as assistant archbishop.³⁰

As Archbishop of Boston O'Connell set out immediately to improve the archdiocese's "very precarious moral and financial condition." To oversee the entire managerial and financial activities of the various charities, he appointed Father Joseph G. Anderson in 1907 as the first director of the Diocesan Charitable Bureau. Readily available to O'Connell now was detailed information pertaining to Catholic charitable institutions: how each was governed, the number of its inmates, its debts, mortgages, and annual receipts. The Archbishop also recognized the critical need for a greater exchange of ideas and information between the splintered Catholic social agencies. In the auditorium of Jordan Hall, O'Connell convened in 1908 the first diocesan conference of Catholic Charities. At this meeting topics like day nurseries, settlement house work, industrial training for boys and girls, and the care of immigrants were thoroughly discussed. As a fund-raiser, O'Connell had few, if any, peers. One of his efforts in 1914 is illustrative. Through direct appeals by his parish priests and through the weekly column of the Pilot, a newspaper that he had taken over, O'Connell raised over a ten day period the astonishing sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for a hospital project.³¹

The chubby faced prelate gave his attention to the smallest of details. In 1909, for example, he demanded an explanation from one of the trustees of a home for unwed mothers as to why board meetings were not held at the institution and for his own convenience, in the evenings. The trustee informed O'Connell that evening meetings tended to run late into the night and added politely, that the sight of men leaving a maternity hospital under the cover of darkness "might be a cause of comment by some evil disposed persons." O'Connell got

the point. On another occasion, a hospital official had requested funds for a sun parlor to help "keep down the death rate." Though sympathetic, O'Connell replied that what was involved was "a matter of dollars and cents". "It is better to wait until you have sufficient funds," he warned, "because an accumulation of debts always results in disaster." Hearing rumors in 1908 that the Carney Hospital was suffering from financial mismanagement that could possibly embarrass the Church, O'Connell requested a financial statement from the hospital officials. Assured that the institution was fiscally solvent, he nonetheless cautioned against incurring new debts before old ones were paid, pointing out that "the way must be clear and Pelion must not be piled upon Ossa".³²

A major source of irritation to O'Connell was the Working Boys' Home in Newton Highlands, which was plagued by what Thomas Ring referred to as "religious jealousy". Seriously jeopardizing the future of the institution was a sixty-five thousand dollar mortgage and the constant feuding between Superintendent Father James Redican, a diocesan clergyman, and the religious community of brothers in residence. The latter insisted upon taking orders only from their Superior General stationed in Belgium. Charges and countercharges of mismanagement were bitterly exchanged. One of the brothers accused Redican of usurping their authority and making them "entirely powerless" with regard to the internal matters at the institution. The situation became so intolerable that three of the brothers left the order. The brothers, in turn, were charged not only with dereliction of duty, but also, more seriously, with sexually abusing the boys. One brother had been expelled, reported a diocesan priest, for "immoral practices with boys in the infirmary"; another had been accused openly by the inmates of "indecently suggestive conversation". Under the circumstances O'Connell had no alternative than to intervene. With characteristic vigor,

he relieved the brothers of their duties, brought in a new religious community to administer the internal affairs of the school, and appointed as trustees a group of laymen who would oversee the general management of the institution.³³

As a Romanist O'Connell adhered to a conservative social philosophy that stressed the Church's traditional pastoral approach to poverty. On major social questions such as intemperance, O'Connell, like most of the Church's hierarchy, favored moral suasion. Even though the Catholic Total Abstinence Union had a Boston membership of 3,500 in 1908, the archbishop cautioned it and similar organizations against using the tactics of the hatchet-swinging, bar-smashing temperance fanatic. On issues involving capital and labor, he favored voluntary arbitration. With regard to state regulation of wages for women and children, O'Connell, who was promoted to Cardinal in 1911, warned against the threatening tendency of the modern state toward "exaggerated organization" and "over-legislation". Yet, during this very period, certain idealistic clergymen within both the Protestant and Catholic churches, were repudiating O'Connell's sound conservatism and insisting that Church leaders take a more assertive and positive role in fighting for social justice. Rejected outright by these so-called Social Gospelers was the fatalistic attitude that "the poor ye shall always have with you." What was required to eradicate poverty they asserted, were not more charitable institutions, no matter how well administered, but rather, greater Church support of the state's police powers to guarantee the rights of workers and to improve the living conditions of the poor.³⁴

As early as the 1880's, Protestant ministers at Andover Seminary and the Harvard Divinity School were addressing themselves to a more relevant and applied Christianity. Students at the schools were as much concerned with such sub-

jects as political economy, sociology, and social statistics as they were with theological questions. They acquired a deeper and more enlightened understanding of the true roots of poverty than most of the already established members of the Protestant clergy. Poverty, they learned, was not divinely ordained, but rather socially created. Consequently it could be alleviated if not completely eliminated by man-made laws relating to the improvement of living standards, wages, and public health.³⁵

Saint John's Seminary, located on the rolling, plush green hills of Brighton, offered the young Catholic seminarians an intellectual and social training markedly different from that of their Protestant contemporaries at Harvard and Andover. Since its opening in 1884, the Seminary's faculty had been dominated for the most part by the Sulpician Fathers, a French order. O'Connell objected to having these Gallicans administering the seminary within his See. On a personal level, the Archbishop's experiences as a young man at the Sulpician-administered Saint Charles' College in Maryland was anything but pleasant. But perhaps more to the point, the Sulpicians, O'Connell felt, had plotted against his appointment as Assistant Archbishop to Boston in 1906. Distasteful to him, too, were the Sulpicians' intellectual sympathies for the liberal social philosophy of Cardinal James Gibbons and Archbishops John Ireland and John Keane. A religious community that looked to France or to the Catholic University of America for guidance on social issues rather than to the ultra-conservative Rome of Pius X was, in O'Connell's opinion, unfit to serve as custodians over the impressionable young minds of future Boston priests.³⁶

In the fall of 1910, O'Connell met with the Sulpicians' Superior General.

Accusing the Sulpicians of being involved in a national plot to form "coteries and cliques against the bishops, especially with regard to their governing of the seminaries", O'Connell singled out the rector at St. John's, a Father Francis Havey, for special criticism. Havey was alleged to have said, "the Roman system was worth nothing". A short while later, the Sulpicians departed the Brighton Seminary grounds. They were replaced by diocesan priests.³⁷

O'Connell's tight control over the intellectual life of his seminarians limited severely their social outlook. Nourished on an outmoded medieval curriculum that stressed sacred scripture, church history, canon law, and dogmatic theology, the newly ordained priest was hardly prepared to offer new solutions to the pressing urban, industrial problems of the day. Due to this intellectual aridity, St. John's Seminary would produce no critic of the existing social order comparable to Father John A. Ryan, a leading Catholic advocate of the Social Gospel.³⁸

Without question, O'Connell was the chief arbiter of social change within Boston's Irish Catholic community. Still, the conservative prelate could not turn his back completely to social change. In 1912 in fact, he directed his Catholic Charitable Bureau to conduct an annual series of lectures on the leading issues of the Progressive Era. Each week hundreds of social workers and civil servants heard leading Catholic men and women lecture on various topics such as immigration, the care of the mentally ill, day nurseries, medical social services, temperance, juvenile delinquency, vocational guidance, industrial insurance and the state supervision of labor and industries. Other prominent Irishmen like Charles Maginnis, an architect, and Charles Logue, a housing expert, were participating in the Protestant-dominated world of the Massachusetts

State Conference of Charities. Still another Catholic, Thomas Leen, a physician at the Carney Hospital, was boldly calling for a national bureau of health. "Taking sickness as a whole," he said, "our national government is entirely oblivious of conditions which cause it." Pointing out that within the Cabinet of the United States there was a Secretary of Agriculture appointed "to safeguard the health of our hogs" and to study plant and fish life, Leen advocated creation of a federal department dedicated solely to the study of human pathology. "If such a public health department would prepare publications on child-culture and infant-management, as well as the Department of Agriculture does on asparagus-culture and pig-management", he said, it would constitute a major step forward in the area of national health care.³⁹

Believing that the best kind of help was self-help, the Boston Irish by 1917 had organized and built an impressive array of social agencies and charitable institutions to care for approximately fourteen thousand of their sick, poor and disadvantaged. A reflection of the Catholic Church's long tradition of pastoral care and the selflessness and generosity of prominent laymen like Andrew Carney, Thomas Ring, and Patrick Donahoe as well as thousands of ordinary, faceless, working-class people, these institutions also mirrored a certain distrust on the part of the Irish of public and private charitable agencies where proselytizing was not unheard of. Consequently, serving both as physical and spiritual havens, Catholic-run institutions thus provided its clients with the added assurance of being ministered to by individuals who usually shared the same faith and cultural heritage. This world of ethnic and religious kinship would be known to leading Protestant Boston social workers like Robert A. Woods and Frederick A. Bushee. Yet,

as outsiders, it would never be fully appreciated nor fully understood by them.⁴⁰

FOOTNOTES

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- 4 Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, 54-123.
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- 10 "The Journal of Bernard Cullen", Superintendent of the Home for Destitute Catholic Children, October 27, 1866; June 14, 1868; April 1, 1870. Deposited at the Nazareth Child Care Center, Jamaica Plain, Mass. Hereafter cited as "Bernard Cullen's Journal".

- 11 Statement of the Work of the Home for Destitute Catholic Children (Boston, 1889), 22-25, 26, 30.
- 12 Ibid., 29; "Bernard Cullen's Journal", February 1, 8, 1867, October 27, 1870; July 13, 1871; Thirteenth Annual Report of the Association for the Protection of Destitute Roman Catholic Children in Boston (Boston, 1878), 11.
- 13 Lord, Sexton, Harrington, History of the Archdiocese, II, 267-268, 632-635; The Life of Father Haskins by a Friend of the House of the Angel Guardian (William Kelly) (Boston, 1899), 69, 78, 151; Rev. George F. Haskins, Annual Report of the House of the Angel Guardian (Boston, 1870), 10, 14.
- 14 Kelly, Haskins, 115; Haskins, Report of the House of the Angel Guardian for the Year Ending May 31, 1852 (Boston, 1852), 16, 17; Annual Report of the House of the Angel Guardian (Boston, 1868), 31; Second Annual Report of the House of the Angel Guardian, June, 1853 (Boston, 1853), 5.
- 15 Lord, Sexton, Harrington, History of the Archdiocese, III, 372-375; The Work of the Good Shepherd in Boston (Boston, undated), 8-18; Boston Pilot, January 29, 1910.
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- 21 Lord, Sexton, Harrington, History of the Archdiocese, III, 371, 372; Donahoe's Magazine, XXVII (February, 1892), 161-162; Illustrated Historical Sketch Marking the Tenth Anniversary of the Founding of the Working Girls' Home in Boston (Boston, 1899), 23-30.

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- 40 The Official Catholic Directory for the Year of Our Lord 1917 (New York, 1917), 44, 45; Fifth Annual Report of the Metropolitan Central Council of Boston (Boston, 1917), 5. In arriving at these figures this author counted only those institutions located within Boston Proper and excluded those catering to specific ethnic groups like the Germans. Also this estimate does not include out-patients treated by Catholic hospitals.

Chapter 2

BRIDGET AND OTHER IRISH WOMEN

"We think the rich, tender, motherly nature of the Irish girl an element a thousand times more hopeful in our population than the faded, washed-out indifferentism of fashionable women, who have danced and flirted away all their womanly attributes, till there is neither warmth nor richness nor maternal fulness left in them."

Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1879¹

Women, like men, have for centuries been on the move. During and after the Great Hunger Irish women were subjected to the physical and emotional trauma of being uprooted. Experiencing along with their men the hardships of the Atlantic voyage, Celtic women became co-partners in the struggle for survival as soon as they set foot in Boston. As with Patrick and Sean the New World environment would compel Bridget and Kathleen to take on new attitudes, roles and functions. How quickly and effectively they responded to these new challenges would determine, to a very great degree, the fate of their men and offspring.

The life that most colleens left behind in the Emerald Isle in the 1840's was one of great poverty. But their life was immensely rich in other respects. Celtic family life was strong, intimate and clannish. Reared for the most part in single, thatched roof cabins where sometimes two or three generations resided, Irish children were surrounded by familial love and affection. The primary social

training ground for the young female was the family. Under the watchful eye of her mother she learned how to cook, sew, keep house, and milk cows. As a young adult her social behavior beyond the family circle was clearly defined by ancient Celtic custom and tradition. Courtship was closely supervised. Pre-marital sex was taboo in communities which took seriously the priest's warnings against the sins of the flesh. And when it came time for marriage, often parents acted as matchmakers in selecting a qualified partner for their daughter. Upon marriage the new bride usually moved in with her husband's family, had children and performed with little variation the same tasks that her mother and grandmother had done before her.²

Few Irish women would know this type of existence in their adopted city of Boston. With the men of the house often unable to earn enough money to support their family, many colleens for the first time in their lives left their loved ones and went to work as domestics in the residences of well-to-do Bostonians. Throughout the nineteenth century, Irish girls had little difficulty or competition in getting this type of employment. Desiring both the comfort and status associated with having maids, the city's large expanding middle class was constantly looking for qualified domestics. The Irish filled this demand almost exclusively, for native American girls generally looked down upon "service" as being menial and beneath their dignity. Later, other immigrant women, notably of Italian and Jewish background, would also reject domestic service for basically the same reasons.³

Forced then by economic necessity, the affable, Irish maid known popularly as "Bridget" became a standard fixture within thousands of Boston homes. Where

upper-class Yankees were dining on codfish and scrod, one could almost be certain that it was being served by steady, dependable female Irish hands. As late as 1895 Irish girls constituted the bulk of the some 16,000 Boston women employed as maids, servants, cooks, and general housekeepers.⁴

Most girls obtained positions as domestics through newspaper advertisements and employment agencies or by word of mouth. Of major importance to these practical, religious-minded Irish working women was that their place of employment be located along a streetcar line and within easy distance of a Catholic Church. Consequently, most of them accepted positions in the 'streetcar suburbs' of Jamaica Plain and Brookline; they tended to shun far-off "rural districts" such as Milton and Newton where few Catholic parishes had yet been established.⁵

When applying for a job, applicants were advised to dress neatly and plainly and to make all inquiries at the side rather than the front door. If hired, maids were usually required to live in. As one homeowner said, this arrangement decreased their chances of bringing "disease or moral contamination into the house." The ideal servant girl was supposed to be "conscientious, truthful, sincere, faithful and obliging." She was to rise at dawn, comb her hair, and above all, thoroughly wash her hands. She was not to display dissatisfaction with her meager wages nor complain about the unsatisfactory cleaning methods of the domestic that may have proceeded her. Remember, she was told, "a new broom sweeps clean." Her approach to housekeeping was to be systematic and thorough; she was to keep a watchful eye for cobwebs and dirty finger stains on door panels. Towards her employers she was to show courtesy and deference, resisting at all times the personal temptation of conducting a "petty" war with the mistress of the house. And under

no circumstances was an Irish maid to expose to any young Protestant charges she might have the heretical teachings of her Catholic priest and clergy.⁶

Hours of employment for domestics were long, arduous, and unpredictable while wages were abominably low. According to estimates, a domestic servant in Boston at the turn of the century worked an average of 85 hours a week and earned a weekly salary of \$4.15 excluding free room and board. One of the worst features of domestic service was its irregular hours. Unlike her friends employed in industry, where quitting time was clearly defined by the sound of the factory whistle, Irish maids had precious little time they could actually call their own. For after a regular workday, which usually started at six in the morning and ended at seven at night, they were required to be on "call" in order to answer the doorbell or serve tea or snacks to unannounced visitors. This exhausting schedule was bound to take its toll; between 1866 and 1869 the Saint Joseph Home for Sick and Destitute Servant Girls alone cared annually for hundreds of women suffering from physical exhaustion and rheumatism.⁷

Overwork and poor wages were not the only problems confronting Boston domestics. During the 1880's the Women's Industrial and Educational Union recorded hundreds of protests registered by domestics against their employers. On numerous occasions the heads of households tried to cheat them out of their wages. Often a servant girl had her pay docked for breaking dishes, or as in one case, for spoiling a dish of prunes. Wendell Phillips, the great emancipator of the Negro slave, once refused to pay his maid when she had left his residence without permission.⁸

Domestics were constantly berated for their "raids on the larder and house-

keeping" items. No doubt, some did pilfer staple products, like butter, bread, and flour. Yet, many were accused unjustly. In 1871, for instance, an Irish domestic had been sentenced to the city's jail for stealing a pencil from a boarding house resident. While incarcerated she was subjected to intensive questioning by a police officer who wanted to know if her priest had put her up to stealing from Yankee Protestants. With the assistance of the well known attorney, Charles Francis Donnelly, the girl was finally proven innocent and released. On another occasion a police officer by the name of Edward Savage was summoned to a city home to inspect "a large, suspicious-looking trunk" belonging to a domestic not surprisingly named Bridget. Her employers believed a great discrepancy existed between the number of apples they had purchased for pie-making and the actual number of pies that had been produced. Bridget, of course, was suspected of pilfering. Taking the policeman and her accusers up to her room, Bridget defiantly threw open the trunk and said, "Sarch me ould duds--- and much may ye find among 'em. But I tell ye, mem (sic) two quarts of yer little pesky wormy apples wont make more than two pies any way." Her good name slighted, Bridget quit a few days later and went to work elsewhere.⁹

Being a domestic had certain advantages, however. If one included their free room and board along with their salary, servant girls generally enjoyed a higher standard of living than their friends in factories or department stores. And even though a certain "social stigma" was attached to their occupation, Irish maids did avoid the sweatshop and the tenement slum. Within their masters' homes servant girls usually found their physical surroundings pleasant. And despite the inconvenience of being on "call", the pace of work was less hectic than that of the factory. In most instances, they were allowed to take a break after having completed their basic duties; then they might read a newspaper or enjoy

a cup of tea. And depending on their length of service and for whom they worked, they were frequently given Thursday and Sunday afternoons off. During this free time they usually went shopping, visited friends, attended church bazaars, or enjoyed a ride on the electric streetcar. And if they worked for very wealthy families, Irish maids did escape the city's oppressive summer heat by accompanying their employers to their seaside resorts located on Cape Cod, the White Mountains or in Maine.¹⁰

Irish maids also derived certain emotional benefits from their jobs. More than likely, many servant girls found in their master's home a kind of surrogate family to replace the one that they were forced to leave behind in Ireland or the tenement slums of Boston. Many employers were genuinely fond and protective of their domestics. As one head of household said, "I want the love as well as the respect of my help." Frequently they went out of their way to make them feel like "one of the family" by listening to their personal problems and by showing them how to shop for clothes and save money. And if the girls wished to entertain their "young blades", they were allowed to do so providing it was in the kitchen or on the back piazza.¹¹

One servant girl, a Bridget Mullen, recalled fondly her unique relationship with her employer, Harold Crump, a prominent Boston Jewish diamond dealer. Born in Ireland in the 1880's, Bridget first worked as a chambermaid in England, where in 1901 she observed the funeral procession of Queen Victoria as it wound through London. Before going to America she returned briefly to Ireland, where her father gave her a pair of rosary beads and his final parental blessing: "Bridget, be a good girl." Bridget was devoted to the Crump family. Mr. Crump himself was a short, stocky, full-bearded man who, according to Bridget, believed only in God

when he heard thunder strike during a rainstorm. With fatherly affection, Crump showed Bridget how to deposit money in a savings account, and during the holidays invited her into his busy office located in downtown Boston so she could view a parade passing below. At the Crump residence she could come and go as she pleased and was allowed to have her accordion-playing companions over for entertainment. When she fell in love with her future husband, Bridget found it very difficult to leave her adopted home at the time of her marriage. "I had it so good," she said. As a wedding gift Mr. Crump offered her all the furniture that was in her room and presented her with a gold locket. Even after having left their employment, the Crumps continued to check up on Bridget to see how she was faring.¹²

For those girls who detested the broom and the apron, there was the factory or the department store. Invariably, ignoring the warnings of their elders to the effect that their morals would be jeopardized by lecherous foremen and bosses, Irish girls by the thousands accepted positions as salesgirls and factory workers: By 1883, for example, they made up a large part of the city's 20,000 females engaged in manufacturing and other non-domestic occupations. As Carroll Wright, the director of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, pointed out in 1884, factory work was for Boston women, both tedious and harsh. According to Wright, the typical factory girl was single, born of foreign stock, and lived with her parents. She worked approximately 43 weeks out of the year for an annual salary of \$269.00, or roughly \$6.23 a week. By the time she deducted her expenses for room and board, clothing and carfare, she had a mere fifteen cents a week left over for pocket money.¹³

Salesgirls in department stores usually worked from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with a half hour off for lunch. Frequently, they were required to stand on their

feet all day, lift heavy packages, and permitted to speak only to customers. Friends and acquaintances were forbidden to visit them during working hours. Working in the factory was much more demanding and hazardous. Women complained regularly of being "packed like sardines in a box", of poor ventilation, and of sharing the same toilets, washrooms, and drinking cups with men. To reach their workbench they sometimes had to climb four to seven flights of stairs. And if tardy for work, some often had their pay docked.¹⁴

Each trade seemingly had its own peculiar occupational health hazard. The seamstress wearing dark blue glasses as a result of severe eye strain, became a common sight on the streets of Boston. Girls working in the fish and food packaging industry were exposed to caustic chemicals which resulted in hand blisters and, more seriously, damaged the lungs of anyone suffering from bronchitis or asthma. Women who took home piece work after closing time frequently complained of fatigue, rheumatism, and cold dinners. Employment in tobacco factories caused numerous females to acquire a fondness for chewing tobacco more so than smoking. Particularly dangerous was the button-making trade, where women's fingers were punctured by plunging needles. (Company officials provided non-trained medical personnel to dress, free of charge, the first three wounds inflicted on a worker. After that, the employee was required to pay.) And finally, the "hacking cough" helped distinguish girls who worked in the strawgoods industry.¹⁵

Participation in the workaday world was usually brief for the majority of Irish women; their chief aim in life was to find a husband and raise a family. To achieve this end, it was necessary that they possess certain personal attributes. Like most American males, Irishmen felt that the ideal woman should be pious, pure, submissive, and domestically inclined. Any woman contemplating higher education,

a professional career, or, worse yet, participation in the women's rights movement was, they thought, either foolhardy or eccentric or perhaps both. As one writer for a Boston Irish monthly put it in 1883, "the testimony of history, and daily experience," was that women were not interested in money, fame or careers.¹⁶

Along the road to marriage eligible Irish young women received regular instruction from their priests and parents on how to select a proper mate. The ideal husband, wrote Father Bernard O'Reilly in his popular book The Mirror of True Womanhood and True Men As We Need Them, should possess the virtues of "goodness, purity of life, honor, truthfulness, temperance, and fortitude." Never, advised another writer for the popular Boston monthly, Donahoe's Magazine, should a girl wed out of desperation or for social status. "It is a thousand times better," he said, "to pass through life solitary and companionless, than to be a discontented partner in a union unblest by love, and not lightened by God's grace." And others warned, "a sound title to position can only be got by merit; never by matrimony." Irish girls also were encouraged to marry within their own religious and ethnic group. Although there were cases of a Julia Leary wedding a Myer Hamburger and Maria Glynn an Otis Stephens, Celtic women generally married their own. As a case in point the Boston Irish community between 1875 and 1879 averaged approximately 50 mixed marriages annually.¹⁷

As a wife, a woman's noblest goal was to "minister to the happiness of her husband". Besides preparing his meals and darning his socks, she was expected to comfort and reinforce him in "moments of professional weariness", or "business difficulties." When her husband spoke his opinion, she was to listen patiently, refraining dutifully from contradicting him even when she thought him in the wrong.

And under no circumstances was she to undermine her husband's exalted position as breadwinner by going out to work. And if her mate drank too much or spent too much time at the local saloon, such behavior was probably due, she was told, to her poor cooking or dreary household arrangements.¹⁸

How an Irish woman responded to her husband's sexual advances was largely predetermined by her Catholic upbringing. The Irish were sexually austere. Profoundly influenced by the ascetic teachings of St. Augustine, the Catholic clergy in Ireland had taught its parishioners that sexual desires were sinful and had to be suppressed if the latter desired to save their immortal souls. This essentially negative view of human sexuality more than likely affected or tempered the most intimate of physical relationships between married Boston Irish couples. Catholic theologians and physicians at the turn of the century were constantly advising them on proper sexual behavior. The purpose of sex, wrote Father Thomas Gerrard in his book Marriage and Parenthood: The Catholic Ideal was to perpetuate the human race, express affection, and calm men's lust or "concupiscence." Sexual intercourse, he said, was to be gotten over with as quickly as possible, since "to let it have its full fling" was "to lessen its keenness, destroy its power, and to render it disgusting." Another priest suggested separate sleeping arrangements occasionally, to control the 'electric charges' generated by people sharing the same bed. Abstinence from sex during the Advent and Lenten seasons was sometimes recommended as a form of penance. And, "common decency", to use Father Gerrard's words, dictated that sexual restraint be practiced during menstruation and the time immediately following childbirth. As for those who liked to drink, they were told not to mix liquor with sex.¹⁹

Because of the Church's rigid stance on birth control and abortion, practicing

Irish Catholics had no choice when it came to the question of unwanted pregnancies. Following intercourse, a woman was forbidden under pain of sin to douche in an effort to prevent conception. Strictly outlawed also was the practice of "coitus interruptus". This practice was not only sinful, wrote one Boston Catholic obstetrician, but could also lead to "serious mental upsets."²⁰

Without effective contraception, childbearing almost became a cultural pastime for Irish women. For many of them though, giving birth to children was an anxious and frightening experience. One observer pointed out that the rate of infant and child mortality among the Irish was almost "suicidal." In one year alone, 1875, Boston health officials reported the death of 4,167 children under 5 years of age. Of these, 2,386, or 76%, belonged to foreign parents, the bulk of them Irish. Various factors contributed to this alarming death rate. In the neighborhoods of the poor, as Dr. W. L. Richardson noted in 1875, children were exposed to unimaginable filth. Because of defective toilets, hallways and bedrooms wreaked with the stench of urine and excrement. Literally unbearable during the summer months, the tenement flat was a natural breeding ground for diptheria. And a less obvious, but as equally potent child killer were the poisonous fumes given off by the so-called "arsenical" wall-paper.²¹

Lack of proper nutrition and diet compounded these environmental handicaps. Social workers and physicians frequently complained of Irish women feeding their newborn half-baked beans, cucumbers, and even beer and gin. Milk, of course, was the main source of nutrition for young infants. Irish mothers generally breast-fed their young on the grounds that it was more natural and healthier. Some believed in the popular notion that extended breast-feeding prevented unwanted pregnancies; consequently they thus nourished their offspring for as long as two

and a half years. Because of physical complications others resorted to artificial feeding. Clean, pure milk was a rare commodity, however, in post-Civil War Boston. Dealers were notorious for watering down their milk or including additives. The lowest grade milk invariably ended up in the poorest sections of the city. There the local grocer mixed the fresh milk with that already on hand and sold it from a large, open, unwashed barrel. Poor nutrition seriously affected the development of Irish children, as Henry Bowditch, a physiologist at the Harvard Medical School pointed out in 1877. In a study of pupils attending the Boston public schools, he discovered that because of inadequate diets, children born of Irish parents on average weighed ten pounds less and were one inch shorter than their American classmates. To provide better health care the Irish themselves later established child care centers, dispensaries, and mothers' guilds. The Columbus Day Nursery, located in the working class district of South Boston, alone cared for nearly 10,000 children in 1907.²²

Irish women had other health worries besides those directly related to maternity. Because of a strong addiction to tea drinking, some allegedly suffered from nervous and digestive disorders. Often viewing physicians as "ignorant, unskilled quacks"—as some doubtless were—and suspecting them of being "overfond of sterilizing women", numerous females avoided medical treatment and consequently endured physical discomforts unnecessarily. Those Irish women who did seek medical attention frequently shocked their doctors by lack of knowledge about their own anatomy. Experiencing vomiting and faintness because of irregularities in her menstrual cycle, one Irish girl in 1871, for example, compounded her problems by drinking too much gin in an effort to increase her menstrual flow. And when one Margaret Moakley of Boston consulted her gynecologist regarding a troublesome tumor, she startled him with her tale of self-treatment. Whenever the tumor fell outside her womb,

she simply placed it back in her vagina.²³

Despite their various infirmities, Irish women were usually able to fulfill what one priest called their "supernatural" duty as mothers and protectors of the family sanctuary. In the 1880's Irish families in Boston averaged approximately 5 to 6 children and were predominantly two-parent households. In trying to run their households in a complex urban setting, Irish women had to take on new responsibilities. With husbands away at work all day, wives assumed a greater degree of control over the upbringing of the children and the family budget. In dealing with their children, mothers were expected to be "consistent", "truthful", "just", "kind". They likewise were responsible for instilling in them the virtues of self-discipline, obedience, and respect for older people. Never were they supposed to punish their children while in a state of anger. And even though some daughters complained that mothers favored their sons, Catholic parents were counseled to treat both impartially.²⁴

As religious guardians, mothers also were to ensure that there was "no contradiction between what the child learns in the school and what he sees in the home". To perpetuate Catholic beliefs, women were encouraged to decorate their homes with pictures of the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Mother, and "a true picture of the Holy Face". No Boston Irish Catholic home was complete without a crucifix, "The Alphabet of Spiritual Knowledge". To cultivate a pure imagination, mothers were cautioned to monitor closely their children's reading habits. Especially hazardous to a child's spiritual well-being were the "literary poisons" found in the dime novel, illustrated weekly, and "Seaside" romance stories. Exposure of teenagers to "sensuous music" or the "carnal pleasure" of the waltz and polka also had to be guarded against, for as one puritanical Catholic said in 1882,

"You cannot lessen a sin by setting it to music."²⁵

What Irish mothers taught their teenagers about sex is difficult to ascertain. Some refrained even from mentioning the subject, feeling that it would be tantamount to dropping "lighted matches in a powder factory". Those Irish parents who did discuss sex with their children more than likely followed the careful guidelines set forth in various Catholic child rearing manuals of the day. Masturbation, it was noted, could cause nervousness or lead to a loss of memory. If a mother discovered her son or daughter practicing the 'solitary sin', or masturbation, she was to make every effort to prevent them from doing it again. In the case of nocturnal emission, or "the relief of nature in the night", this was considered normal so long as it did not result from a youngster "tampering" with himself. The generally acceptable answer to a child's inquiry regarding where a baby came from was the "time-honored stories of the stork and the doctor". And if the lad persisted in his questioning, then and only then was he to be told the facts of life; omitted, however, was any "full and particular description of the sexual act". When a daughter exhibited "the first signs of womanhood" mothers were advised to take their teenagers aside and, using the life of the Virgin Mary as a model, speak to them on the virtues of sexual purity. Personal hygiene was an especially sensitive matter. Mothers were to discourage their daughters from inserting any foreign substance into their vagina. This practice, as Catholic physicians noted, destroyed not only the physical evidence of virginity, but could also serve as a "stimulus to masturbation".²⁶

As in any culture there were those Irish American women who wanted to do more with their lives than simply raise children and master the "mysteries of the kitchen, the dining room, and the parlor". At the turn of the century, various

Boston women of Irish extraction made significant contributions within the fields of labor, women's rights, literature, social work, and education. Mary Kenney was born in Mark Twain's home town of Hannibal, Missouri in 1864. Mary's Irish parents had moved west with the railroads in the 1850's, with her mother working as a cook and her father as a construction gang foreman. Following the death of her father in 1878 Mary Kenney went to Chicago to find employment in order to support her invalid mother. The deplorable factory conditions that she saw there appalled her social conscience. They made her, she later wrote, "hard and bitter" and convinced her that management was an "inhuman octopus". Quickly, she started organizing women workers in the shirt-making and bindery industries and became one of the founders of the National Women's Trade Union League. The tall, blue-eyed, rosy cheeked Miss Kenney refused to be intimidated or bought off by employers. During a strike when one of the owners offered a token settlement, she declared defiantly that they were "out for justice, not charity". Miss Kenney's labor activities eventually brought her into contact with Jane Addams' Hull House. At this early settlement house she came into contact with many of the city's leading social activists among them Clarence Darrow and Henry Demarest Lloyd. There she also met Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor. They took an immediate liking to each other. When in the company of men, one of Mary's favorite practices was to check the inside of their derbies to see if they bore a union label. Mr. Gompers' hat, she discovered on one occasion, contained a bogus union marking. Gompers was properly embarrassed.²⁷

In 1894 Gompers personally selected Miss Kenney to head up an AFL campaign to organize women workers in Massachusetts. While inspecting factories throughout the Commonwealth, she encountered stiff opposition from management and miserable working conditions. Some factory foremen tried to discourage her organizing efforts

by pointing out that their workers were mostly Catholics and consequently had to be "kept in place". At Fall River, while addressing an assembly of female textile workers, she noticed that their teeth frequently were broken or missing. She subsequently discovered that this condition was due to the fact that they were required to break the threads by biting them. During her travels she met and married John F. O'Sullivan, a labor reporter for the Boston Globe. Their home in the South End soon became in Mrs. O'Sullivan's words "like the cradle of a new born movement". There the O'Sullivans discussed problems of labor with such guests as Robert Woods, Vida Scudder, Louis Brandeis, and Andrew Furuseth of the Seamen's Union. Educating Mr. Brandeis, a former corporation lawyer turned social reformer, on the plight of the working man, was no easy task. "He had been thinking on the other side so long", Mrs. O'Sullivan recalled.²⁸

Mrs. O'Sullivan continued on various fronts the battle to improve the working conditions of Massachusetts workers. She successfully organized women employed in the rubber, baking, and sheepskin industries. Moreover, she was instrumental in the passage of a pure milk bill and the installation of safety devices to prevent laundry workers from having their arms and fingers mangled by washing machines. From 1914 to 1929 Mrs. O'Sullivan served as an inspector for the Massachusetts Labor and Industries Board. In 1945, at the age of 81, she died in Medford, Massachusetts.²⁹

As with Mary O'Sullivan, Margaret Lillian Foley's roots were working class and Irish. Born in the Meeting House Hill district of Dorchester in the 1870's, she attended the city's public schools and upon graduation went to work in a hatmaker's factory. Following a brief stay with relatives in California where she earned her keep by teaching swimming and gymnastic lessons, Miss Foley returned

to her old job in Boston and became deeply involved in the trade union movement of the early 1900's. Along with her labor activities she was also an ardent suffragette. If given the vote, women could become a strong moral force for better factory conditions and clean, honest government, Margaret Foley maintained. As a suffragette, the tall and attractive Miss Foley was almost unique within the Boston Irish community.³⁰

A member of the Massachusetts Women's Suffrage Association, she became one of the most articulate and colorful champions of women's rights in the United States. She was a highly effective public speaker. Possessing a refined, eloquent, but forceful voice, she addressed hundreds of public gatherings. As a consequence of her verbal jousts with anti-suffragette politicians, she earned the titles of the "Grand Heckler" and the "arch quizzer". According to legend, whenever local Boston politicians spotted her in the audience, it was not uncommon for them to break up their meetings as if "pursued by a prairie fire". Even male strongholds like Congressman James Michael Curley's Tammany Hall Club felt the effect of her sharp wit and tongue. With over fifteen hundred men present, the handsome and fashionably dressed Miss Foley received recognition from the chair. Speaking through a haze of blue cigar smoke, she challenged one of the club's speakers, Timothy Callahan on his anti-suffrage position. Contending that if government was to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people", she asked how he as a Democrat could be opposed to extending the right to vote to women. Callahan evaded a direct answer but noted that as a member of the state legislature on election laws, he had met a group of suffragettes who were "the most belligerent lot of women I ever saw". After debating back and forth, Miss Foley apparently carried the day. The men in the audience gave three resounding cheers for women's rights and threw their hats in the air. In her plea for women's suffrage Miss

Foley had made, as one observer wrote, "the Tammany Tiger purr".³¹

Margaret Foley's most celebrated campaign was against Louis A. Frothingham, the unsuccessful Republican candidate for governor in 1911. Riding around in an automobile known as the "big suffragette machine", Miss Foley, draped in a yellow flag bearing the inscription "women's rights now", pursued Frothingham throughout the Berkshires. Wherever he spoke, Margaret questioned him on his anti-suffrage stance. Thoroughly frustrated, Frothingham ordered his campaign band to strike up a tune as soon as she opened her mouth. Irritated by this tactic, her supporters on one occasion attacked the musicians, causing one bass drummer to take refuge behind his instrument.³²

"Maggie", as her critics liked to call her, sometimes went as far west as Nevada in behalf of women's rights. The Silver State in 1914 had placed before their male voters a referendum on the women's question. Braving dust storms, riding horseback, and socializing with ranchers and cowboys who frequently asked her to marry them, Miss Foley crisscrossed the state for two months, talking to over 20,000 men. On one occasion she was reported to have donned the trousers and coat of a miner and on another she descended 2500 feet below ground in Virginia City in an effort to persuade "husky, red-blooded men" on the righteousness of her cause. Nevada women obtained the right to vote in 1914, while in Massachusetts they received it six years later. With the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 Miss Foley faded quietly from public life.³³

Writing literature has always been a less controversial pastime for females than championing women's rights. During the 1880's Irish American women, such as Mary Elizabeth Blake, composed numerous sonnets and contributed essays to the

World Peace Society. Others like Katherine E. Conway conducted a literary reading circle, edited two major Boston Catholic newspapers, and wrote various religious books and tracts on social etiquette, notably Making Friends and Keeping Them, Bettering Ourselves, and The Christian Gentlewoman and the Social Apostolate.³⁴

But the lioness among Boston feminine Irish writers was Louise Imogen Guiney who was born in Roxbury, a comfortable suburb located a few miles from Boston, in 1861. Her father, Patrick Robert Guiney, a Tipperary man, had served as a brigadier general during the Civil War and had lost an eye in the Battle of the Wilderness. At a very early age Louise, a precocious and delicate child who suffered from both poor eyesight and hearing, displayed an unusual fondness for nature. Exploring barefoot the banks and meadows along the Charles River, she acquired an abiding love for nature. Later at Elmhurst, a select convent school for Catholic girls, she immersed herself in romantic poetry and literature.³⁵

With little liking for mundane tasks like keeping house, Louise decided to write poetry for a living. However, after leaving Elmhurst she had to support herself by working at a post office outside Boston and later as a cataloguer at the Boston Public Library. In her spare time she wrote poems and short stories which won praise from such literary critics as Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Charmed by her writings, Holmes fondly referred to Louise as his "little golden guinea".³⁶

Not only did Louise Guiney act as a sort of literary ambassador between the worlds of Brahmin and Boston Irish cultures, but she left other deep impressions upon the city's literary history throughout the 1890's. Along with a few other

romanticists she objected vigorously to the pessimistic themes and "wilful sadness" found in the works of contemporary realist writers. Working closely with Fred Holland, a Boston bibliophile and Keatsian scholar, she sought to create a literary revival in the Hub.³⁷

Critical of the "superficial, half-hearted, or mercenary and self-seeking elements in life and letters", Louise Guiney retreated, in a literary sense, to the golden age of seventeenth century England. Then men were like her soldier-father, brave, noble and chivalrous. Using the writings of other romanticists like Lamb, Shelley, and Keats as her models, Miss Guiney wrote numerous poems, essays and books. In her works, especially A Roadside Harp, (1893), one finds a relentless search for a past where life was simple, rustic and heroic. As she wrote,

"The soul hath sight
Of passionate yesterdays, all gold and large,
Arisen to enrich our narrow night."³⁸

Wishing to renew her spirit, Louise moved to England in 1901. Traveling throughout the countryside, she tried desperately to make spiritual contact with the world of Stuart England. Dying on All Souls' Day, November 2, 1920, Louise Imogen Guiney, the Irish American with a "mystical smile", was finally at peace with herself. Appropriately, she was buried at Oxford, beneath a Celtic cross.³⁹

Nursing, charity work, and teaching were among what might be called the "respectable professions" open to Boston Irish women. In 1868, for instance, Frances MacKenzie, a nurse, was a moving force behind the founding of St. Elizabeth's Hospital in the South End. Mary Boyle O'Reilly, daughter of the famous Fenian, opened up a day nursery and served as a member of the Massachusetts

Prisons Commission. Using "cough syrup" bottle banks to raise money, Elizabeth Power was able to set up a Free Home for Consumptives in Dorchester in 1892. For many of the better educated Irish Catholic girls, the religious life offered a variety of unique opportunities by which to demonstrate their leadership skills as nurses, social workers, hospital administrators, and educators. One order, the Sisters of St. Joseph, was particularly successful in attracting such talented women as Hannah Herlihy, Bridget O'Toole, and Delia Curley into their congregation. Of the approximately 159 girls who joined this community as novices between 1877 and 1896, almost one third were born in Ireland, while the rest were predominately of Celtic background.⁴⁰

There were other Boston Irish women who were exceptional but for totally different reasons. Deviant behavior in the form of mental illness, suicide, alcoholism, and crime existed among a small segment of the city's female Irish population. The shock of immigration had emotionally devastated some of the Irish population, according to physicians at the Boston Lunatic Hospital. In 1845 the Irish made up over one third of the 140 men and women committed to this city's asylum. At that time, though, admission procedures and treatment of the mentally disturbed were haphazard and primitive. Individuals were admitted for a variety of illnesses ranging from "religious excitement", "masturbation", "unrequited love" and "delirium tremens". Oftentimes the asylum served also as a dumping ground for the poor and physically disabled.⁴¹

To make ends meet, some Irish females resorted to robbery and pickpocketing. In 1851 Bridget McCarthy was apprehended for "shaking down a sailor for \$2.25". Another colleen tried to pick the pocket of a Mr. Carter as he passed by the Old South Church. And a Mary McGee was caught lifting money from the pockets of a

patron of a drinking establishment located in "Shin Bone Alley". During the last quarter of the nineteenth century women, in general, went to jail for brawling, drunkenness, larceny, nightwalking, adultery, fornication, and for removing headstones from gravesites. The greatest weakness of Irish females was drink, however. Of the 183 Irish girls sentenced to the Women's Reformatory in Sherborn between 1894 and 1896, approximately 155 had been arrested for drunkenness or disturbing the peace while under the influence. Those serving time usually ranged in ages from 25 to 40, were married and illiterate.⁴²

Not all female alcoholics ended up behind bars. The letter of recommendation of a "buxom" servant girl stated that she "is a good domestic, capable of doing all kinds of work, but she will get drunk when opportunity offers". Others, frequented regularly the saloons located along St. Ann's Street, where they "delighted in the society of drunken sailors". And Sarah Quigley, another heavy drinker, was regarded by neighbors in 1869 as the "worst woman in Boston". Too much liquor invariably led to child neglect. While inebriated one Irish mother signed away her nine year old daughter to a black man who allegedly had "a very bad place" in the city's red light district.⁴³

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century Boston shaped a new Irish woman. Usually reared in Ireland's countryside she had to adapt to the Hub's bustling world of factories and tenement slums. The most courageous among them probably were the simple, hard-working servant girls. For by accepting positions in remote, suburban residences they alone among all immigrant women, had to endure emotionally what was in essence a double exile from both their homeland and their immediate families. Isolated from friends, neighbors, and relatives, and dwelling among strangers, Bridget must have been at times a very

lonely person. Possessing no particular skill or trade Irish maids had to depend on their own initiative, determination, and personality in order to survive. And survive they did. For by 1900 they had earned for themselves a popular reputation for being honest, hard-working, and quick witted.⁴⁴

As wage earners, wives, homemakers, and mothers, Irish women were chiefly responsible for stabilizing the family. Beyond the fireplace a small but vocal number of women of Irish background such as Margaret Foley, Mary O'Sullivan, and Louise Guiney made notable contributions to women's rights, the labor movement, and the world of literature. And as nuns, hundreds of dedicated Irish women left an enduring legacy as leaders within the fields of parochial school education, charity work, and community service.

Thus in an ethnic community supposedly dominated by priests and male politicians, Irish women had a profound influence over the course of human events. Like Abigail Adams advising her good husband John, Bridget was constantly reminding Patrick to remember and listen to the ladies. And in most instances, Pat wisely did so.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Our Kathleens and Bridgets", Donahoe's Magazine, I, (February, 1879), 113.
- 2 For background information on Irish family life see Robert Brendan McDowell, Ed., Social Life in Ireland, 1800-45 (Dublin, 1957); Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, Family and Community in Ireland (Cambridge, 1968); and Alexander J. Humphreys, S.J., New Dubliners: Urbanization and the Irish Family (New York, 1966).
- 3 Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, A Study in Acculturation (Cambridge, 1959), 61, 62, 83, 186; Mary Gove Smith, "Immigration as a Source of Supply for Domestic Workers", reprint from the Federation Bulletin, III, (April, 1906), 5.
- 4 Smith, "Immigration as a Source of Supply for Domestic Workers", 1, 5.
- 5 Women's Education and Industrial Union, Bulletin of the Domestic Reform League (March, 1907), pages unnumbered.
- 6 Plain Talk and Friendly Advice to Domestic, author unknown, (Boston, 1855), 15, 17-20, 27, 32, 65-67, 155; Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Thirty-Seventh Annual Report (Boston, 1907), 107.
- 7 Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, "Hours of Labor in Domestic Service", Labor Bulletin, Number 8 (October, 1898), 13, 22-26; Women's Educational and Industrial Union, "Conditions in Domestic Service—Wages", Bulletin of the Domestic Reform League, III (January, 1909), pages unnumbered; First Annual Report of the St. Joseph's Home for Sick and Destitute Servant Girls (Boston, 1869), 15.
- 8 The logbook of the Secretary of the Woman's Industrial and Educational Union covering the years between 1878 and 1894 is deposited at the Union's headquarters on Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts.
- 9 Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Thirty-Seventh Annual Report, 106; "The Journal of Bernard Cullen", Superintendent of the Association for the Protection of Destitute Roman Catholic Children, October 19, December 15, 1871; Edward H. Savage, Police Records and Recollections: Or, Boston By Daylight and Gaslight for Two Hundred and Forty Years (Boston, 1873), 274-276.
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- 11 Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Thirty-Seventh Annual Report, 96-99, 105; "Social Conditions in Domestic Service", Labor Bulletin, Number 13 (February, 1900), 11, 12.
- 12 Bridget Mullen, whose married name is Mrs. Burns, resided at the Marian Manor in South Boston, Massachusetts. Mrs. Burns told this author of her life with the Crumps during an interview conducted in 1976.

- 13 Donahoe's Magazine, XIV (November, 1885), 408-410; XXXVI (July, 1896), 84, 85; Carroll D. Wright, Fifteenth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor (Boston, 1884), 3, 34, 35, 109, 110, 127, 128.
- 14 Wright, Fifteenth Annual Report, 52-54, 57, 66-71, 119.
- 15 Ibid; 71-75.
- 16 Donahoe's Magazine, VI (July, 1881), 22; VII (June, 1882), 511; IX (January, 1883), 5-10; XI (March, 1884), 254, 255; XXI (January, 1889), 46.
- 17 Bernard O'Reilly, The Mirror of True Womanhood and True Men As We Need Them (New York, 1883), 262; Donahoe's Magazine, XXI (January, 1889), 46; XX (October, 1888), 326; these figures were estimated from marriage records deposited at the Boston Chancery Archives, Brighton, Massachusetts. Hereafter cited as BCA. For additional information on intermarriage among the Irish see, Frederick A. Bushee, Ethnic Factors in the Population of Boston (New York, reprint edition, 1970), 135-148.
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- 19 Richard Stivers, A Hair of the Dog, Irish Drinking and American Stereotype (University Park, Pa., 1976), 60-66; Rev. Thomas J. Gerrard, Marriage and Parenthood: The Catholic Ideal (New York, 1911), 84, 85, 88-90, 98; Sacred Heart Review, November 29, 1890.
- 20 Gerrard, Marriage and Parenthood, 96; Frederick L. Good, M.D. and Rev. Otis F. Kelly, M.D., Marriage, Morals and Medical Ethics (New York, 1951), 136, 140, 144. Dr. Good began practicing in Boston in 1916. Although published in 1951, his work represents the traditional early twentieth century Catholic physician's approach to sexual behavior. Also this author was unable to find any information or statistics pertaining to the number of Boston Irish women who may have had abortions performed. Abortion, as Dr. P. O'Connell noted in 1887 was resorted to by some Celtic women in Chicago, however. Abortion, he wrote, "is becoming common among Irish females—I cannot call them women. This detestable sin and most foul form of murder, shockingly prevalent among Irish Americans, is but the natural outcome of the public...school system of instruction without God, and the entire neglect of parental control over the children." Arthur Mitchell, "A View of the Irish in America: 1887", Eire-Ireland, IV (Spring, 1969), 10.
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- 24 O'Reilly, The Mirror of True Womanhood, v, vi, 135-144, 228, 229, 279; Sacred Heart Review, June 1, 1889; June 14, 1890; Donahoe's Magazine, II (December, 1879), 552. Recent studies by social historians have revealed certain interesting facts regarding the number of female-headed families among the Boston Irish, and the size of the Boston Irish family in general. Stephen Thernstrom in The Other Bostonians: 1880-1970 (Cambridge, 1973) disagrees with the common notion that the Irish tended to have larger families than other groups. He contends that "the birth rate of Irish immigrants living in Boston was only a shade higher than that of Scotch and English newcomers, and was lower than the German and Swedish rates"; 166. In the same study, Thernstrom cites research by Tamara Harevan showing that the absentee rate of Irish fathers in the South End of Boston ran as high as 27% in 1880; 213. Three articles this writer found particularly helpful in approaching the study of family life and child-rearing were William E. Bridges, "Family Patterns and Social Values in America, 1825-1875", American Quarterly, XVII (Spring, 1965), 3-11; Edward N. Saveth, "The Problem of American Family History", XXI (Summer, 1969), 311-329; and Jay E. Mechling, "Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers", Journal of Social History, IX (Fall, 1975), 44-63.
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- 27 Donahoe's Magazine, VI (July, 1881), 22; the "Autobiography of Mary (Kenney) O'Sullivan, (1864-1945)", 1, 16-34, 44-48, 62-72, 82, 83, 88, 201. Unpublished manuscript deposited at the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts; newspaper clipping dated February 12, 1933 and filed with O'Sullivan material at Radcliffe College.
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Chapter 3

THE LITTLE GREEN SCHOOLHOUSE AND BEYOND

"No one can get too much education"¹

The Boston Pilot, 1915

One of the most striking anomalies of nineteenth century Boston was how learning and education flourished alongside squalor and human misery. Possessing a rich intellectual tradition that went back to the early years of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the Hub would continue to be the 19th century home of influential publishing houses, reform societies, and literary circles graced by the likes of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson and James Russell Lowell. Of no less importance to the city's reputation as the "Athens of America" was its close affiliation with Harvard College and a highly acclaimed public school system sometimes described as the "richest jewel in New England's crown."²

Migrating from a land where close to fifty percent of the population in 1850 was still illiterate, Boston's Irish immigrants must have been awed if not intimidated by a city so steeped in intellectual tradition and dominated by those doyens of American culture, the Boston Brahmins. Most Irish parents soon came to realize that Boston presented unusual educational opportunities for their school-age

children. It would be in the little red and green schoolhouses, or public and parochial schools respectively, that Boston's first generation of Irish youngsters would receive their educations.³

Social change and upheaval customarily come from grownups rather than children. But with the overnight enrollment of thousands of Irish boys and girls into the city's public school system during the 1840's, one of Boston's most venerable institutions underwent a profound and radical transformation. From a total primary and grammar school population of around 12,000 in 1841, school enrollment skyrocketed to over 21,000 ten years later, a staggering growth rate of 77%. Yet even before the Irish arrived in such large numbers, Boston's public school system was already in some difficulty in trying to meet the educational needs of a community in the midst of a slow but steady urban and population expansion. School inspectors in the 1830's, for example, frequently complained that many of the wooden-framed schoolhouses were overcrowded, poorly ventilated, vulnerable to fire and located in congested, noisy downtown sections of the city where business establishments, hotels, taverns, and "resorts of licentiousness," abounded. On various occasions, the Franklin School served as a makeshift fire and police station, house of worship, and medical supply depot center during a cholera epidemic in 1832. Such bleak surroundings caused Edward Everett Hale, a Boston Latin School graduate, to recall his schoolday experiences as sheer, "awful monotony."⁴

Even though most Irish school children resigned themselves to such conditions, a small but disturbing number would show their defiance of formal education by becoming outright truants. In conducting a special investigation of the truancy problem, city police officials cited 1066 cases of either vagrancy or truancy in 1849; most involved children of foreign or Irish parentage. While some could be

seen hawking newspapers on busy street corners or gambling in alleyways along the waterfront, others might be spotted scurrying about the rubble of a recently demolished building, searching for firewood to heat the family's cold flat or damp basement apartment. Noting that the "Police-man's badge and staff" did not frighten the truants, one official recommended either "penal legislation" or compulsory school attendance laws as a solution to the problem.⁵

Many civic leaders, including the Secretary of the State Board of Education, Horace Mann, were convinced that truancy, juvenile delinquency and other social disorders were reflective of the inability of traditional institutions such as the family and church to cope effectively with rapid, urban, industrial change. They came to rely on the common school and mandatory attendance as the best answer to juvenile social chaos and community disintegration. To ensure that not only incorrigibles but also every individual immigrant Irish child adopted "American feelings" and were completely "morally acclimated to our institutions," Mann and other Yankee reformers successfully lobbied for the nation's first compulsory state school attendance law in 1852. The statute required children between the ages of eight and fourteen to attend school for at least three months annually. Almost immediately the Catholic Boston Pilot criticized the act for giving legal sanction to the dangerous notion "that the education of children is not the work of the Church, or of the Family, but that it is the work of the State."⁶

Who ultimately was responsible for the child's education—the Church, parent or State—was a question which provoked serious and bitter confrontations between the city's Irish Catholic population and Protestant public school officials throughout the nineteenth century. One of the earliest clashes was the famous Eliot School case in 1859.

Accounts vary widely, but apparently in March, 1859 Irish Catholic students attending the Eliot Public School in the North End were required to recite the Protestant version of the Ten Commandments and to read from the King James edition of the Bible. Learning of this practice the parish priest of one of the boys named Thomas Wall, advised him not to comply. Determined not to repeat those "damned Yankee prayers" and motivated perhaps by boyish hopes of an extra day off from school, Wall along with some of his classmates, openly defied their teacher's order to read from Protestant scripture. Singled out as the ringleader, young Wall was beaten by McLaurin F. Cook, a submaster at the school, with the rattan for thirty minutes. According to some accounts, Wall nearly fainted from loss of blood. News of the beating spread like wildfire, resulting in student disturbances not only at the Eliot School but in other sections of the city as far away as East Boston.⁷

John Bernard Fitzpatrick, the Bishop of Boston at the time, succinctly noted privately that "much excitement" had resulted from the Eliot School flareup. But with few parochial schools then in existence, the prelate could only plea with Catholic parents to be patient and return their children to the public schools. Nonetheless, in a letter to the Boston School Committee (reprinted in the Pilot) Fitzpatrick warned that if Protestant teachers insisted upon using the public school classroom as a forum to undermine the Catholic faith, the chances of future accommodation between his flock and the Yankee population would be seriously jeopardized. Meanwhile, the charges of assault and battery brought by Wall's father against Master Cook were dismissed on the grounds that religious instruction, irrespective of alleged anti-Catholic bias, was as much a proper function of the public school instructor as the teaching the three R's.⁸

Some two decades later, in the 1880's, when a new surge of anti-immigrant sentiment swept the nation, the right of Boston Irish parents to control the educational destiny of their children was again seriously challenged. Sharing the same sentiments of those who belonged to the infamous nativist organization known as the American Protective Association, a small but militant group of Protestant zealots saw traditional American values and institutions like the public school, the free enterprise system, and political democracy being subverted by 'Romanist' parochial schools, immigrant-based political machines and labor unions. The Protestant militants were determined to rid Boston of all vestiges of foreign influence. Encouraged by the strong showing of the State Republican party at the polls in 1887, they launched a full-scale legislative attack on their "pet horror", the parochial school.⁹

With encouragement from some anti-Catholic members of the Massachusetts State Board of Education, opponents of the parochial school introduced legislation that would have granted local school committees the unprecedented authority to determine whether or not Catholic or any other private school should be accredited. Even though many dedicated educators saw a genuine need for a more systematic state supervision of school curriculum as well as attendance regulations and teacher qualifications, the real intent of the Inspection bill was to legislate the growing parochial school system out of existence.¹⁰

A series of acrimonious public hearings on the Inspection bill were held in the spring of 1888. The hearings or "Inquisition", as the Pilot referred to them, attracted numerous "cranks and wrong heads" who vilified parochial schools as alien, un-American institutions. But joining Charles Francis Donnelly, the legal counsel for the archdiocese, in opposing the Inspection bill were some of

the Commonwealth's most distinguished Protestant leaders. Recognizing the punitive intent of the bill, President Charles Eliot of Harvard expressed fear that every local school committee election might be turned into a political donnybrook between nativists and Catholics. Even worse, said Eliot, such coercive legislation could backfire by making Catholics all the more determined to go their own separatist ways in the area of education. In another vein, Edward Everett Hale, headmaster at the private Roxbury Latin School, protested against having to submit the fate of his exclusive institution to the whims of school committees chosen by "politicians and liquor dealers."¹¹

But the most eloquent defense of Catholic and private education came from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the grand old man of New England Abolitionism and countless other reform causes. Describing himself as "a Protestant of the Protestants", Higginson poignantly recalled how he took his first lessons in religious bigotry as a child in 1834 when he witnessed a Protestant mob setting fire to the Catholic Ursuline Convent in Charlestown. During the Know-Nothing mania of the 1850's, Higginson remembered how Irish Catholics restrained themselves from violent confrontation with taunting Protestant agitators who paraded in torch-light procession through their Boston tenement house neighborhoods.¹²

As the most objectionable features of the Inspection bill were being deleted in subsequent hearings, a crisis of a much more serious magnitude was coming to a head in the Boston School Committee headquarters. Prompted by complaints of some of his young parishioners who were attending the Boston English High School, Father Theodore A. Metcalf publicly accused one of the school's history instructors, Charles Bradford Travis, of disparaging remarks about the Church's medieval practice of selling indulgences and of quoting extensively from William Swinton's high-

ly biased "Outlines of the World's History". With the twenty-four member School Committee almost evenly divided between Catholics and Protestants, the textbook was dropped in June 1888 and Travis, a zealous Congregationist, was censured and assigned to teaching English.¹³

Yet the Nativist-Catholic controversy did not end here. To prevent alleged "Catholic intimidation" and subversion of the free public school, anti-Papist organizations like the Committee of One Hundred and Loyal Women of American Liberty, accelerated their campaign to purge all Catholics and their sympathizers from the School Committee and other positions of public trust. They proposed to accomplish their objectives in the upcoming municipal elections of 1888. Led by Justin Dewey Fulton, a Baptist minister, who felt personally ordained by God to "rid this planet of Popery", and Margaret L. Shepherd who, like the legendary Maria Monk claimed to be an "ex-nun", the election of 1888 quickly degenerated into what an impartial observer aptly called "The most disgraceful page in the municipal history of the City of Boston". Shepherd, for instance, related to Boston audiences her vivid 'personal' accounts of popish plots and sex orgies between priests and nuns.¹⁴

With the defeat of Mayor Hugh O'Brien and with only a handful of Catholics remaining on the School Committee, the election was a clear cut victory for religious "fanaticism". Politically weakened, Catholics could only protest in vain two years later against another school textbook which, they felt, was riddled with "inaccuracies and fabrications" against their Church. Joseph Fallon, a Catholic School Committee man, resigned his seat and withdrew his two daughters from the public schools. In 1890 after much serious deliberation the Pilot finally implored its readers to "Multiply the Catholic schools".¹⁵

Despite the Pilot's editorial pleas and an earlier Church directive, mandated by American bishops gathered at the 1884 Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, that pastors do everything in their power to erect parish schools, Boston had surprisingly few parochial schools. As with the public schools, inadequate funding, poor physical facilities and a shortage of qualified teaching personnel hampered Catholic schools throughout the nineteenth century. One of the city's first parish schools, St. Mary's, founded in 1849, was sandwiched in between tenement houses, horse stables, and gambling establishments in the North End, where to make matters worse the air wreaked of the smell of stagnant water and rats as big as cats raced about unmolested. Across the harbor in East Boston, approximately a decade later, a small contingent of Notre Dame de Namur sisters attached to the parish of the Most Holy Redeemer conducted their first classes for students in a converted, wooden framed congregational meeting house which afforded little protection from biting east winds.¹⁶

A major point of debarkation for Irish immigrants, numerous parishes, and affiliated schools, were soon quickly established on this East Boston peninsula which jutted like a finger into the sea. Commuting by horse and buggy between three recently opened parish schools and their convent at Holy Redeemer, the Notre Dame de Namur sisters struggled valiantly to keep up with their exhausting teaching schedules, which often included collateral duties such as Sunday school instruction and First Holy Communion and Confirmation classes. The nuns were plagued by overwork, transfers, and serious cases of tuberculosis brought on by poorly ventilated and overcrowded classrooms. As a result, novices, with little practical teaching experience sometimes had to be pressed into service to take up the slack. The living accommodations of the nuns moreover, left much to be desired. Reflecting on the dining facilities at Holy Redeemer convent, one sister

wrote that "unless you were at the end of the table you might as well give up the idea of leaving before the rest of the community as you were hemmed in on all sides, like the Israelites of old".¹⁷

Important to the parochial school movement was the belief among many Boston Catholics that public schools were academically far superior and offered better hopes for the assimilation of their children into mainstream American culture. To counter such ideas and to prevent further Catholic defections to the "godless" public school, parish priests resorted to a variety of measures. When for example, St. Mary's abruptly closed down in the 1850's because of staffing problems, only "entreaties and threats" by the pastor could convince Irish parents to re-enroll their children when his school reopened. And in the Roxbury parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help a Father Augustine McInerney, who was the moving force behind the construction of his parish's school in 1889, sometimes had to resort to the pulpit to persuade parents who felt they fulfilled their obligations as Catholics by sending their offspring to Sunday School classes.¹⁸

Another strong advocate of Catholic education, Father Thomas Scully of nearby Cambridgeport, publicly blamed the slow development of Catholic schools in the archdiocese on his fellow priests. For the most part the latter were graduates of the public schools, and did not share his fear of such secular institutions. And criticizing those Catholic parents who considered the public schools "good enough for them," the Sacred Heart Review, an influential ecclesiastical weekly edited by Father John O'Brien of Cambridge, warned that the 'School Question' was nothing less than a "civil war". At the beginning of each school year, the Review never failed to remind Catholics of their solemn obligation to send their children to their own parochial schools.¹⁹

In propagandizing for more parochial schools, Catholic publications like the Sacred Heart Review gave extensive news and editorial coverage to the construction on new parish schools as well as to their academic accomplishments. A model institution, noted the Review in 1893, was the St. Francis de Sales School located on top of Bunker Hill in Charlestown, not far from the original site of the Ursuline Convent burning in 1834. Constructed at a cost of one hundred thousand dollars, the four story, red brick building, contained spacious hallways and stairways and could accommodate 600 students in its 16 "perfectly lighted, and admirably heated and ventilated" classrooms. To promote the school's success, a pamphlet outlining a curriculum very similar to that in use in the public school was widely circulated throughout the parish just prior to opening day. To dispell any doubt as to the caliber of instruction, the Review noted that many of the sisters assigned to St. Francis previously had taught in public schools.²⁰

Another "elegantly equipped" parish school was St. Augustine's located on E Street in the heart of the working class district of South Boston. As with many parish schools, the driving force behind St. Augustine's was an Irish priest. Born in 1841 in County Cork, the stocky, round-faced Monsignor Denis O'Callaghan resided, as priest and pastor, at St. Augustine's from 1868 to 1913. In the parish his name literally became a "household word." After liquidating a quarter of a million dollar debt on a magnificent new parish church, O'Callaghan, an indefatigable fundraiser, secured an additional 100,000 dollars for the parish school which opened its doors in the fall of 1895.²¹

O'Callaghan closely monitored the educational progress of the students and took particular satisfaction when they outperformed others on competitive examina-

tions. As he grew older and increasingly autocratic O'Callaghan sometimes offended the hardworking sisters who managed his Sunday school. On one occasion, after having heard the confession of some of their charges, he stomped out of his confessional booth muttering, "They were foul all through." Yet when fire razed the school in 1904, the parishoners rallied solidly behind him in rebuilding it. Throughout the entire crisis, not one student, noted a teacher, "left us for the Public School."²²

Even with such noteworthy efforts, the overall status of parochial schools at the turn of the century was, as official reports revealed, still far from satisfactory. Father Louis Walsh, the supervisor of Boston Catholic schools in 1899, noted that certain schools were hemmed in by large tenement houses cutting them off from natural sunlight. He believed that the eyesight of pupils was adversely affected by this condition. Then, too, few playgrounds and recreational areas were available in Boston's industrial sections where so many parochial schools were located; and thus, he added, a "run in the open air" at recess time was a rare treat for parochial school youngsters. Overcrowding caused boys and girls to be "promiscuously placed" together in the same classrooms. Even worse, with single-class enrollments running as high as 130, some sisters simply "pushed on" or promoted children prematurely in order to make room for other incoming students.²³

In an era where business and labor were groping for administrative order, superintendents like Father Walsh further noted how his efforts at centralized administration were frustrated periodically by obstinate pastors, who viewed his personal inspections as an unwarranted intrusion into their parish affairs. Something also had to be done about outdated textbooks and curricula which varied widely, depending on which religious community was in charge of a particular school.

In altering their course of study to resemble that which was in effect in the public schools, some parochial schools, oddly enough, found themselves losing students because parents no longer felt that there was anything unique about the Catholic school except its religious instruction.²⁴

Moreover, there was always the nagging problem of inadequately trained teachers. Nuns and some brothers provided the inexpensive labor which perhaps more than anything else made the parochial school economically feasible. Prior to the 1890's when religious communities began to establish their own teachers' colleges, most parochial school teachers had little exposure to formal instruction in pedagogic theory. While Walsh encountered many competent instructors when making his official rounds, he also found "a sprinkling of poor teachers." For example, he observed that one novice, pressed into running a kindergarten class at St. Mary's in Charlestown, was too "nervous and too impatient for such active youngsters". After witnessing a poor performance by a sister with over twenty years of classroom experience, the superintendent sadly concluded that she "will never be a teacher."²⁵

Walsh also voiced other dissatisfactions with religious teachers and the rules that governed their community life in particular. The anemic looking appearance and poor health of some teachers was, he felt, directly attributable to out-moded community regulations which, among other things, required its members to rise early in the morning for exhausting prayer sessions that sometimes lasted for two hours. Walsh had a very interesting point. While a solid argument could be made that community living enhanced the possibility of one becoming a first-rate teacher by giving one a sense of mission and esprit de corps, the cloistered, medieval nature of religious life was something of an institutional anachronism.

Unlike their secular counterparts in the public schools, the full intellectual development of teachers belonging to a religious community was hindered in a variety of ways. A sister belonging to the Notre Dame De Namur order, for instance, was not allowed to read any book without first obtaining permission from her superior and in the evening, at recreation time, any mention of current events or other subjects that "savours of the world" was strictly discouraged.²⁶

To upgrade the caliber of instruction and to diminish the "narrowing" influence of community living, various religious orders, as noted, founded their own teachers' colleges or sent their members to the first Diocesan Teachers' Institute held at Boston College in the summer of 1910. With a generally accepted course of study in use, with annual examinations, and with designated members of each religious community reporting directly to the supervisor of schools, Boston's parochial school system was firmly established by 1917. Yet the real test of the parish school would be whether or not it could successfully transmit its values and attitudes to its smallest but most important entity: the individual Catholic student.²⁷

The most striking feature of the parochial school, of course, was its religious atmosphere. Surrounded by holy pictures, statues and crucifixes, the Catholic student was exposed constantly to the "lessons of piety and morality and reverence." Although a few hyperactive youngsters reportedly had to be tied to their chairs, disciplinary problems were kept to a minimum because of the respect for sisters and priests instilled in children by their parents. All lessons on the Catechism were reduced to an easily comprehended level and Christian virtues such as charity and unselfishness were alluded to constantly in Catholic school primers.²⁸

Catholic schools perpetuated the stereotype image of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln as American folk heroes and introduced the salute to the Flag in 1910 in order to "stimulate patriotism" and to quiet the criticism of those who still viewed the parochial school as an 'alien,' 'foreign,' institution. But Catholic educators also saw to it that their students were well versed regarding contributions of members of the faith to America's past. Mentioned frequently in parochial school geography and history books were the early explorations of North America by Christopher Columbus, the Jesuits and Hernando DeSoto. Marquis de LaFayette, the French nobleman and hero of the American Revolution, received his due share of attention.²⁹

Unlike the Boston public school which permitted use of some textbooks to portray the Irish as being "clannish", "deceitful", "licentious", "lazy", "riotous" and "hard-drinking", the parochial school did everything it could to cultivate a strong sense of pride in their Celtic roots among its predominantly Irish student body. Thus a pupil at St. Mary's in the North End could write of Ireland that "tho' we've never seen your shores We do your name revere."³⁰

As a result of this dual cultural identity, Irish-American youngsters perhaps learned as much about the Wicklow Mountains and River Shannon as they did about the Great American West or the Mississippi River. The centuries old struggle of the Irish against "Iron English rule" was memorialized in stirring accounts of peasant uprisings and speeches by Celtic patriots. Nor did parochial school textbooks allow memories of the Great Hunger to fade, thanks to sentimental stories and poems.³¹

Affection for a land three thousand miles away was particularly evident in

schools like St. Augustine's where Monsignor O'Callaghan had sketches of Irish scenery and other reminders of Irish culture painted on auditorium walls and curtains. No graduation ceremony at St. Francis de Sales in Charlestown was complete without Irish music, step dancing and a rendition of the pastor's favorite song, "The Message of The Shamrock."³²

Parochial schools additionally enlightened Irish youngsters as to what to think about their Yankee neighbors and other minorities, especially American Indians and Negroes. Their textbooks revealed a decided preference for northern Europeans over those of Mediterranean, Indian or Negroid stock. These textbooks and other forms of Catholic juvenile literature promoted certain racial stereotypes that varied slightly if at all from those found in works written by Protestant authors. Although reminded regularly of earlier Yankee prejudices against them, parochial school students, nevertheless, learned to respect the nation's Anglo-Saxon Protestants for being, "industrious, sober, enterprising." Next in racial virtue came the Germans and French. Germans, one primer noted, were, "industrious, peaceable, frugal, intelligent, and great lovers of music, in which they excel." The French, on the other hand, were "gay, fond of amusements, polite," and "first in arts and sciences."³³

Avoiding any reference to the opposition of Italian Nationalists to the Vatican State, parochial school teachers generally described Italians as "temperate", "courteous", and "charitable". The Working Boy, a widely read Boston juvenile Catholic monthly, tried its best to offset the popular conception of Italians being the "sworn enemies of soap and water" and nothing but garlic-breathed "peddlers of bananas". After all they came from the homeland of Dante, Petrarch, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. As a group, Jews were usually referred to only in religion classes, where Christ's death was blamed on their

"jealousy" of the Savior.³⁴

The American Indian and the Negro were at the bottom of the racial ladder. Apologizing only half-heartedly for the brutal mistreatment of the Aztecs, Mayas and Incas by early Spanish explorers, most parochial school textbooks presented a dual image of the Indian as a 'Noble Savage' and as "fierce", "war-like", and "indolent". Praised as "quick-witted," "swift of foot", and a skillful hunter who could endure great physical hardship, the Indian, was also however, prone to superstition and violent behavior. He "gorged himself" with food in times of plenty and starved on other occasions. The capacity of certain tribes like the Mohawk or Iroquois to commit savage acts was vividly impressed on every Boston parochial school child by story book illustrations. One, for example, showed a missionary tied to a burning stake. Dancing about him, Indians in animal skins, pulled out the priest's fingernails, ripped open his breast, pulled out his heart, and stuck a red hot iron down his throat.³⁵

Negroes were stereotypically distinguishable by their "very dark" skin, "woolly hair," "flat noses" and "thick lips". While Caucasians were "the most powerful," "active race," Negroes were described as being neither "intelligent or enterprising." And while monthlies such as the Working Boy condemned the use of the derogatory term "Nigger," they also published short stories which reinforced the Blacks' shiftless, "Sambo" image.³⁶

Another pervasive feature of Boston Irish Catholic education was its strong emphasis on the Protestant work ethic. Ambition, thrift, and sobriety were stressed in juvenile short stories bearing titles such as "Be Up and Doing", "Work On", "Learn All You Can", and "Make Your Mark." In the tradition of Poor

Richard's Almanac, aphorisms advised Irish youngsters that "Diligence is the mother of good fortune", "Industry and happiness are inseparable" and "From the beginning to end on yourself depend." And from a poem entitled, "Room At The Top" youngsters learned:

Fancy the world a hill lad,
Look where the millions stop;
You'll find the crowd at the base, lad,
There's always room at the top.³⁷

In a school system supported mainly by working-class people, the careers of self-made men like Cyrus W. Field and Benjamin Franklin, received far more favorable attention than those of labor union organizers such as Terence Powderly or Samuel Gompers. Convinced as any Calvinist of the merits of the free enterprise system and rugged individualism, the parochial school teacher seldom alluded to the exploitation of labor during the Gilded Age. One Catholic school text in use at the turn of the century referred to leaders of the Homestead strike as "anarchists". The Working Boy declared that the solution to the Labor Problem was less legislation and more abstinence from liquor. While laborers "work like horses," it said, they "spend like asses."³⁸

Contending that "competition and friction" bring out the best in individuals, school supervisors like Father Walsh pushed hard for standardized diocesan examinations as a means of promoting academic rivalry among students attending different parish schools. How successful Catholic schools were in rendering unto Caesar the things that were justly his, was ironically borne out by the small number of students entering the religious life. Out of an estimated 816 girls who graduated from the Fitton Grammar School in East Boston between 1870 and 1917, only 23 or three percent, became nuns. Nor could middle-class girls' schools like Notre Dame Academy be

classified as vocation factories. Out of the 462 who graduated from this institution between 1861 and 1917, only 35 entered the convent.³⁹

At upper-class schools such as Notre Dame and the Academy of the Sacred Heart a year's tuition was almost equivalent to an Irish immigrant's entire annual income of roughly 400 dollars at the turn of the century. Student life at such institutions was quite different from that at the proletariat parish school. Situated on a five acre estate in the fashionable suburb of Roxbury, Notre Dame Academy was founded in 1854 and was favored by both Protestants and Catholics desiring a strong elementary and high school education for their daughters. A religious order which specialized in educating children who belonged to the "upper levels of society" conducted the Academy of the Sacred Heart on Commonwealth Avenue in the heart of the Back Bay. It numbered among its alumni the daughters of John Boyle O'Reilly, Hugh O'Brien and Patrick Collins. Taught in small groups, each academy student received a solid classical education as well as instruction in "lady-like deportment" and good manners. To help prepare them for their future roles as wives of middle-class, professional gentlemen, considerable attention was given to the art of pleasing conversation.⁴⁰

Unlike the parochial school which concentrated on bread and butter subjects, Irish culture and good citizenship, the academies offered more sophisticated courses as well as piano and violin lessons. And to smooth out any still remaining rough edges, convent girls like Rose Fitzgerald, daughter of Boston Mayor John Fitzgerald and future mother of President John F. Kennedy, would later go on the European Grand Tour.⁴¹

One advantage the well-bred convent girl did not have over her social inferior

in the parochial school was an understanding of her body and human reproduction. Not until she was near thirty and a Boston social worker did Mary Boyle O'Reilly, a convent school graduate, confess privately about her ignorance of the facts of life. "Modern pagan fads" such as sex education were strictly forbidden in any Catholic school, declared Archbishop O'Connell in 1909. In Physical Culture, the only course mentioning the human body, Catholic youths were fully enlightened on the circulation of the blood, bone structure, proper nutrition, good posture, and the debilitating effects of tobacco, morphine and alcohol. Yet any inquiry as to why one's voice happened to change during puberty and adolescence was dismissed by attributing it to anything except sex hormones.⁴²

At a time when most youngsters left school after the eighth grade or stayed on for two more years to earn their high school diploma, those Irish Catholic students who matriculated from institutions of higher learning like Holy Cross, Boston College or even Harvard, were an unusually ambitious lot. Even though the College of the Holy Cross in nearby Worcester offered the opportunity of boarding away at school, the majority of Boston's first-generation of Irish-Catholic, college-bred young men attended the Jesuit-run Boston College.⁴³

Boston College was founded in 1863 by Father John McElroy, a native of Ulster. Its sole building, squeezed in between a graveyard and the City Hospital on busy Harrison Avenue in the South End was ideally situated, as one student quipped, in case of accident. Serving also as a high school, the college's modest yearly tuition of thirty dollars attracted mostly working-class students. The curriculum stressed a liberal arts education and classes were conducted daily from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., with a short break for lunch. Daily Mass was compulsory as was attendance at the college's annual spiritual retreat.⁴⁴

Students frequently complained of the "mystic fluids" that passed for coffee in the school's canteen and of the lack of adequate athletic facilities. But the greatest source of irritation was the college requirement that every student participate in military drill, an exercise designed to improve a young man's physical stamina and give him "a more manly, graceful bearing." Frustrated by students who deliberately broke their suspender straps holding up the uniform trousers on drill day and by others who conveniently produced notes from their family doctors excusing them from any physical exertion, and by still others who complained about the high cost of uniforms, college officials finally dropped the drill requirement in the 1880's.⁴⁵

Hoping to make Boston College the "greatest Catholic College in America," college officials launched a ten million dollar fund raising drive in 1907. An additional feature of the campaign was the unsuccessful effort by one Jesuit to raise an additional three million dollars for a "Daniel O'Connell Memorial Building and Irish Hall of Fame," complete with a separate museum-like alcove for each of Ireland's thirty-two counties. With strong support from the alumni the college purchased a new campus site in suburban Newton on top of Chestnut Hill. The new buildings were opened to the first class of commuting streetcar scholars in 1913.⁴⁶

As an educational institution Boston College had its fair share of distinguished graduates. Among them was Doctor William Aloysius Dunn, '72, "a leader in his profession" in New England. But, most of all, the college served primarily as a training ground for future priests. Out of 352 graduates before 1898, 156 or 44 percent, entered the priesthood.⁴⁷

Ignoring the clergy's warnings that Harvard College would jeopardize the faith of their sons, ambitious Irish Catholic parents encouraged their offspring to make the great cultural trek across the Charles River to Cambridge. Of the 175-odd Greater Boston students of Irish background who went to Harvard between 1885 and 1910, a large percentage had graduated from the Boston Latin School. Usually their fathers were engaged in the professions, business or other entrepreneurial ventures.⁴⁸

Obviously pleased at the prospect of mingling with "men of higher social position" than those attending the culturally secure but nonetheless provincial Boston College, those Irish Catholics who went to Harvard must have had frequent second-thoughts about the wisdom of their choice. Although there was a Catholic Club on campus and the college paid a nearby parish church for pew space for its Catholic students, frequent public criticisms of Papal doctrine and teaching by President Eliot had to be a source of great irritation to devout Catholic Harvardians. Eliot's outspoken comments on the sacraments, the priesthood and Jesuit teaching philosophy, led, in fact, to the abrupt termination of the pew seat arrangement at the beginning of the century.⁴⁹

And for other students who had grown up in Irish households where grandparents and relatives no doubt often related the horrors of the Great Hunger, the manner in which history was presented by professors such as Albert Bushnell Hart and Edward Channing must have been irritating to Catholic students. Focusing extensively on the evils of slavery and the genius of Anglo-Saxon institutions, Channing rarely mentioned the mistreatment of immigrant Catholics by native Protestants. Equally upsetting, he reduced the causes of the Irish famine to unenlightened English economic policy and an "excess of rainfall." Even worse, ethnic slurs against the Irish sometimes made their way into official student

publications. A cartoon appearing in the March, 1911 issue of the Harvard Lampoon, depicted a man stretched out on a couch dead drunk. The caption read, "The Glorious 17th of March".⁵⁰

Such unpleasanties did not deter some Irishmen from being among Harvard's staunchest supporters. James Gallivan, a local politician and member of the class of '88, predicted that as "the pulse of America's highest intellectual life," Harvard would lead the way towards a greater tolerance of Catholics. Reflecting on his experiences at Harvard in the early 1900's, Boston Attorney James O'Connell remarked that "those were the happy days." William Stanislaus Murphy, an 1885 graduate and subsequently a Boston customhouse employee, showed a lifelong affection for Harvard by willing to it his entire estate of \$53,000 with the stipulation that the money be used to assist any deserving student bearing his surname.⁵¹

For a people who at one time measured distance by the number of rosaries that could be said, the Boston Irish, educationally speaking, had come a long way by 1917. With approximately twenty-nine elementary schools, four high schools, four academies and one college, they could be justifiably proud. Secure within friendly classrooms and corridors, the life sustaining forces of faith and culture were assured of being passed on from one generation of Irish Catholics to the next. But to assert as one Boston educator did in 1915 that the "parochial school idea" was "now firmly fixed in the Catholic mind" was somewhat misleading. For in comparison with cities like Chicago where around 80 percent of the parishes had elementary schools, Boston lagged with roughly 59%.⁵²

Complex factors undermined Boston's parochial school movement. Unlike the

situation in Chicago, where the Church benefited from the fierce rivalries among large numbers of Poles, Germans, and Irish wishing to build their own separate Catholic schools, Boston as a predominantly Irish city lacked this critical ethnic dimension. The only other Boston immigrant group of significant size, the Italians, were no less indifferent than their countrymen in Chicago to the idea of supporting parish schools.⁵³

Paradoxically enough, the parochial school idea was further frustrated in Boston by the growing presence of Irish-Catholic teachers in the public school system. As early as 1905 approximately a fourth of them were of Irish extraction. Consequently, Irish parents less and less looked on the public school as an alien, anti-Catholic institution. Over three-fourths of the city's twenty thousand school-age children of Irish ancestry were attending its public schools in 1908.⁵⁴

Perhaps more than anything else, the need to compete with a public school system enjoying a national reputation for progressive education and academic excellence hindered the growth of Catholic schools. Moreover, there was always the awesome Brahmin intellectual tradition with which to contend. The intimidating effect that Charles Eliot had on Catholic education in general was clearly evident about 1900, when student enrollment dropped significantly at Boston College following the Harvard president's highly publicized criticism of Jesuit teaching methods.⁵⁵

Undoubtedly influenced by this unique historical situation, Church prelates like Archbishop John Williams and Cardinal William O'Connell tended to give more rhetoric than revenue to the parochial school movement. Much to the detriment of Catholic education, they sought social and cultural parity with Yankee Boston

by spending exorbitant sums of money on palatial churches. St. Augustine's for example, cost a quarter of a million dollars. Such an expenditure might have been used more profitably to build the equivalent of two more modern parish schools.⁵⁶

Yet if these facts shed some light on why the parochial school faltered in Boston, they do not explain why, after all this exposure to education, the Irish still found themselves primarily in working-class occupations in 1917. In the professions, as will be seen, the Irish were unquestionably victimized by subtle but no less real discrimination. Even among those Irish who elected to travel the Protestant, secular educational route—Boston Latin, Harvard College, Harvard Law and Medical Schools—only a small handful could really penetrate the prestigious Yankee law firms or medical societies.⁵⁷

Yet it would be folly to attribute the lack of social mobility among the Irish solely to Yankee bigotry. While the comparison may not be completely fair, given the different cultural backgrounds, the fact remains that Boston's immigrant Jews encountered similar prejudice but still managed to outstrip the Irish in the professions and related white-collar jobs. And all this despite parochial school emphasis on the rewards of success and worldly achievement.⁵⁸

Obviously, such forces as family and home acted as cultural brakes on the social aspirations of school-age Irish children. From the slim evidence available, it appears that the average nineteenth-century Boston Irish family drastically underestimated the importance of extended, formal education as a means of getting ahead. Parochial school teachers, for instance, often complained that parents and others at home discouraged completion of student homework assignments.

Thinking in terms of today rather than tomorrow some parents were "over-eager" to have their children quit school and start earning some money in order to add to the family budget.⁵⁹

The unwillingness of the Catholic family to do without added income in favor of extended education was, the Pilot noted in 1915, not so much prompted by severe financial hardship, but rather because it simply wished to upgrade its admittedly modest, but not uncomfortable, standard of living. Noting that the Irish-Americans lacked the "indomitable passion for improvement" characteristic of groups like the Jews, the Republic, a Boston Celtic weekly, maintained in 1907 that the slow progress of the Irish was due principally to "complacency" and a preoccupation with having a "dandy time." Moreover, many Irishmen even neglected the opportunity for educational self-improvement available to any citizen owning a Boston Public Library card. As late as 1907 there was a smaller percentage of library card holders in the heavily Irish wards, three and four, than in ward eight where many of Boston's Jewish immigrants lived.⁶⁰

Any chance of the school's serving as a means for significant upward social mobility was hampered, ironically enough, by the phenomenal success of the Irish in politics and the Boston labor movement. In stressing self-help and individual risk taking, both the public and Catholic schools seemingly made only a minimal impression on Irish students, who heard their fathers at home discussing merits of union employment or how a relative or neighbor obtained a steady paying job on the city payroll by getting involved in politics. And it was this overabundance of security, symbolized by the union card and municipal paycheck, more than discrimination, poverty or weak educational tradition, that proved insurmountable for future generations of bright, but occupationally nearsighted Boston Irish Catholics.⁶¹

FOOTNOTES

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- 3 Donald H. Akenson, The Irish Education Experiment, The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1970), 376.
- 4 Schultz, The Culture Factory, 280-291.
- 5 Ibid., 291-302; Report of the Annual Examination of the Public Schools of the City of Boston, City Document, Number 39, (Boston, 1849), 31-34.
- 6 Schultz, The Culture Factory, 300-306; Report of the Annual Examination of the Public Schools of the City of Boston, City Document, Number 31, (Boston, 1848), 22; Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Education. Together with the Ninth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board (Boston, 1846), 95; Schultz, Culture Factory, 306.
- 7 Robert H. Lord, John E. Sexton and Edward T. Harrington, History of the Archdiocese of Boston, II (Boston, 1945), 587-594; Schultz, The Cultural Factory, 307-308.
- 8 Lord, Sexton and Harrington, History of the Archdiocese, II, 595-599; Schultz, The Culture Factory, 307, 308.
- 9 John Higham, Strangers in the Land, Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New Brunswick, 1955), 62, 63, 81, 83; Lord, Sexton and Harrington, History of the Archdiocese, III, 100, 101, 110, 111; Mary Elizabeth Blake, "The Trouble in the Boston Schools," The Catholic World, XLVIII (January, 1889), 507, 508.
- 10 Lord, Sexton and Harrington, History of the Archdiocese, III, 111-115.
- 11 Boston Pilot, February 11, June 2, March 24, 1888; Lord, Sexton and Harrington, History of the Archdiocese, III, 115-116; Boston Pilot, March 31, 1888.
- 12 Lord, Sexton and Harrington, History of the Archdiocese, III, 117; Boston Pilot, April 7, 1888.
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- 15 Lord, Sexton and Harrington, History of the Archdiocese, III, 124-126; "The School Question", Donahoe's Magazine, XXI (March, 1889), 293; XXV (January, 1891), 15, 16; Minority Report of the Committee on Text-Books, On Text-Books in History in the High Schools, School Document Number 13, (Boston, 1890),

- 5, 6; Sacred Heart Review, June 21, 1890; Boston Pilot, June 28, 21, 1890.
- 16 James W. Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority, Catholics in Chicago, 1833-1965 (New York, 1977), 13, 14; "Memories of Sisters Who Died in Boston," (deposited in the Notre Dame De Namur Novitiate Archives, Ipswich, MA. Hereafter cited as S.N.D.A.); Sister Miriam of the Infant Jesus, S.N.D.; The Finger of God, History of the Massachusetts Province of Notre Dame De Namur, 1849-1963 (Boston, undated), 103-105; "Annals of the Holy Redeemer Convent", Vol. I (1860-1921), 1901; S.N.D.A.
- 17 Sister Miriam, The Finger of God, 106, 108; "Annals of the Holy Redeemer", Vol. I (1860-1921), July, August, 1888; "Annals of Notre Dame Academy, 1854-1868", 1854, p. 7; S.N.D.A.; "Annals of the Holy Redeemer," Vol. I (1860-1921), September, 1893.
- 18 Sacred Heart Review, January 5, 1889, September 3, 1892; Boston Pilot, September 12, 1891; Donahoe's Magazine, XXVI (September, 1891), 211; Sister Agnes, "Sisters of Notre Dame in Boston", 1898, S.N.D.A.; Rev. John F. Byrne, C.S.S.R., The Glories of Mary in Boston, A Memorial History of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Mission Church), Roxbury, Mass., 1871-1921 (Boston, 1921), 134, 135, 138, 141, 144.
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- 22 "Annals of St. Augustine's Convent", II (1903-1927), 113, 108-110, 14-17.
- 23 "Report of the Supervisor of Schools on First Official Visit, January, 1898 to January, 1899: Archdiocese of Boston Parochial Schools" (report is in the possession of the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools, 468 Beacon St., Boston, MA. Hereafter cited as "Walsh Report") 1-23; for reference to premature promotion see: "Catholic School Report of St. Augustine's School for the Year 1908-1909", deposited also at Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools. Hereafter cited A.O.C.S.
- 24 Walsh to Rev. R.J. Johnson, May 19, 1905. Letter deposited at A.O.C.S., "Walsh Report", 26-27, 49-51.
- 25 For background information on training of religious teachers see: Sister Mary of the Holy Angels, Quiet Revolution, The Education Experience of Blessed Julie Billiart and the Sisters of Notre Dame De Namur (Glasgow, 1966), 138-143; "Walsh Report", 54-73. For Walsh's opinion of individual teachers, see his notes in folders on : St. Mary's School, Charlestown, dated October 13, 1904 and St. Columbkille's School, January 25, 1904.
- 26 "Walsh Report", 57, 73; Rules and Constitutions of the Sisters of Notre Dame (Brussels, 1893), 34, 35, 48.
- 27 Sister Mary Neonilla Barrett, S.S.J., "Unification of Parochial School Education in the Archdiocese of Boston", (M.A. Thesis, Boston College, 1949), 12-14, 38-39, 51.

- 28 Sacred Heart Review, February 11, 1893; "Annals of St. Augustine's Convent", II (1903-1927), 65; Report of the Proceedings and Addresses of the 6th Annual Meeting of the Catholic Educational Association, VI (November, 1909), 403-404; Sadlier's Excelsior, Second Reader. By a Catholic teacher. (New York, 1876), 11-13, 21-23; Sadlier's Excelsior, Third Reader. By a Catholic Teacher. (New York, 1876), 80-84. For an exact but incomplete list of textbooks used in Boston parochial schools at the turn of the century, consult individual school reports deposited at A.O.C.S.
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- 30 Schultz, The Culture Factory, 229; "Golden Jubilee Book of The Sisters of Notre Dame," compiled by students of St. Mary's School in the North End, 1890, S.N.D.A., pages unnumbered.
- 31 "Golden Jubilee Book of The Sisters of Notre Dame," compiled by students of Notre Dame Academy, Roxbury, 1890, S.N.D.A., pages unnumbered; "Golden Jubilee Book of the Sisters of Notre Dame," compiled by students of St. John's School, North End, 1890, S.N.D.A., pages unnumbered; "Catholic Columbian Exhibit Book," prepared by the students of St. Mary's School, North End, 1893, S.N.D.A., pages unnumbered; Sadlier's Excelsior, Fifth Reader. By a Catholic Teacher. (New York, 1877), 257-260.
- 32 "Annals of St. Augustine's Convent," II (1903-1927), 27, 28. Graduation exercise programs for the classes of 1912 and 1913 are in the possession of St. Francis de Sales School officials, Charlestown, MA.
- 33 For the best summary of values and attitudes taught in public schools, see Ruth Miller Elson, Guardians of Tradition, American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century (Lincoln, 1964); "Golden Jubilee Book," St. Mary's School, 1890, pages unnumbered; Sadlier's Excelsior, Geography Number One. By a Catholic Teacher. (New York, 1875), 31; Sadlier's Elementary Geography (New York, 1883), 61.
- 34 "Golden Jubilee Book," St. Mary's School, 1890, pages unnumbered; The Working Boy, September, 1888; "Columbian Exhibit Book," St. Mary's, 1893, 48.
- 35 "Golden Jubilee Book of The Sisters of Notre Dame", compiled by students at the Holy Trinity School, Boston, 1890, S.N.D.A.; pages unnumbered; Lawler, Essentials of American History, 22-48; "Golden Jubilee Book," St. Mary's School, 1890, pages unnumbered; Sadlier's Excelsior, Fifth Reader; illustration is inside cover page.
- 36 "Golden Jubilee Book", Holy Trinity School, 1890, pages unnumbered; Sadlier's Elementary Geography, 71; The Working Boy, July, 1886; September, 1887; July, 1895.
- 37 My contention regarding the Catholic stress on the work ethic has been drawn from a close reading of The Working Boy (1885-1900) and the several cited Golden Jubilee Books deposited at the S.N.D.A. For some specific Catholic textbook examples of work ethic see Sadlier's Excelsior, Second Reader (New York, 1876), 44-47; Sadlier's Excelsior, Third Reader. By a Catholic Teacher. (New York, 1876), 40-43; The Working Boy, September, 1885.

- 38 On a diocesan examination in 1908, students were asked to identify enterprising individualists like Morse and Field rather than either Gompers or Powderly. (A.O.C.S.); Lawler, Essentials of American History, 264, 351-356, 359; The Working Boy, January, 1889, February, 1890.
- 39 "Walsh's Report", 40, 90; "Fitton School File", S.N.D.A.; Academy of Notre Dame, Roxbury, Massachusetts, 1854-1954, author unknown. (Privately printed, 1954), 33-35, 44.
- 40 The American Foundations of the Sisters of Notre Dame De Namur. By a member of the congregation (Philadelphia, 1928), 249, 254; William A. Leahy, "Archdiocese of Boston", in William Byrne, Ed., History of the Catholic Church in the New England States, Vol. I (Boston, 1899), 177-180; Louise Callan, The Society of the Sacred Heart in North America (London, 1937), 612-614, 727; Course of Study in the Academies and Parochial Schools of the Sisters of Notre Dame (Cincinnati, 1895) IV, V; the records of the Sacred Heart Convent School show the cost of tuition for certain students in 1908 to be exactly \$396.96; the book with the list of students attending the Academy of the Sacred Heart is in the possession of officials at the Newton Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, Newton, MA.
- 41 Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, Times to Remember (Garden City, 1974), 28-31.
- 42 November 15, 22, 1909; File Number, M-1805 (BCA); Course of Study in the Academies and Parochial Schools of the Sisters of Notre Dame, 35-58, 52-54; Sister Barrett "Unification of Parochial School Education", 20; Joel Dorman Steele, Ph.D., Hygienic Physiology (New York, 1884), 75, 130, 170, 171, 201-203.
- 43 Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, A Study in Acculturation (Cambridge, 1959), 169. David R. Dunigan, A History of Boston College (Milwaukee, 1947), 5, 6.
- 44 Dunigan, A History of Boston College, 8-14, 44, 97-98; Boston College Stylus, IV (April, 1886), 31; Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, 169. In the college's earliest registration book, one can find the name and address of each student's father or mother. Using this data, in conjunction with city directories which list a person's occupation, I was able to draw a fairly good portrait of the socio-economic background of individuals attending Boston College.
- 45 Boston College Stylus, II (September, 1883), 6; II (December, 1883), 18; II (March, 1884), 43; Dunigan, A History of Boston College, 110-114.
- 46 Dunigan, A History of Boston College, 184-202.
- 47 Boston College Stylus, XII (January, 1898), 5; Graduates of Boston College, Boston, Mass. (Cambridgeport, 1897), 24.
- 48 In identifying those of Irish extraction, this author selected only those students whose mother's maiden name and father's name were distinctively Irish. This information is readily available, as is data on the secondary school background of each student, in the various class reports published by Harvard College. Information on the occupational background of parents can be ascertained from the freshmen registration card completed by Harvard students at the turn of the century and deposited at the Harvard College Archives, Cambridge, MA.
- 49 Report of the Proceedings and Addresses of the First Annual Meeting of the Catholic Educational Association (Columbus, 1904), 79; Rev. John J. Ryan, "The St. Paul's Catholic Club", Harvard Alumni Bulletin, January 13, 1915.

(deposited in the Harvard, Radcliffe, Catholic Club folder, Harvard College Archives).

- 50 For what was covered in Professor Hart's class see lecture notes of a Clarence A. Bunker, Class of "89", 1887-1888 (Harvard College Archives); Edward Channing, A History of the United States (New York, 1921), V, 477-480; VI (1925), 131; Harvard Lampoon, LX (March 3, 1911), 15.
- 51 James A. Gallivan, "Catholic Sons of Harvard", Donahoe's Magazine, XXXII (November, 1894), 510; Secretary's Report, Harvard College Class of 1902, Fiftieth Anniversary (Cambridge, 1952), 487-488; Marcia Graham Synnott, A Social History of Admissions Policies at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900-1930, (University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, 1974), Vol. I, 149.
- 52 The Official Catholic Directory for the Year of Our Lord 1917 (New York, 1917), 34-36, 38, 43-45; Rev. Augustine F. Hickey, "A Study of the Growth and Development of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Boston, 1907-1923", 46. (Report deposited at A.O.C.S.) In arriving at these figures and percentages, I have counted only those parishes located within Boston Proper and excluded those parishes designated as ethnic or national parishes. For informational purposes there were 2 Italian, 1 Polish, and 1 German schools. Boston Pilot, September 4, 1915; Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority, 4.
- 53 Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority, 40-71.
- 54 Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Census of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1905, II, Occupations and Defective Social and Physical Conditions, (Boston, 1910), 134; U.S. Congress, Senate, Reports of the Immigration Commission, II, The Children of Immigrants in Schools, (Washington, D.C., 1911), 181, 185.
- 55 Dunigan, A History of Boston College, 168-179.
- 56 Williams went so far as to lend his name publically to a select, private, non-Catholic school. See advertisement on the Chauncy Hall School in The Working Boy, February, 1899.
- 57 Stephan Thernstrom, The Other Bostonians, Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970 (Cambridge, 1973), 131-138.
- 58 Ibid., 152, 160-163.
- 59 "Walsh Report", 19; "Principles of Catholic Faith and Piety: How Best Inculcated in Our Schools". By a Sister of Charity. Report of the Proceedings and Addresses of the 6th Annual Meeting of the Catholic Educational Association, VI (November, 1909), 395-398.
- 60 Boston Pilot, June 19, 1915; The Republic, April 6, June 1, 1907; Fifty-Fifth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston 1906-1907 (Boston, 1907), 94.
- 61 Thernstrom also suggests this interpretation as a reason for the lack of upward social mobility among the Irish. The Other Bostonians, 167, 168. See also John F. Cronan, "The Celt in Boston—Wonderful Progress of Irishmen in All Fields", The Republic, February 22, 1896.

Chapter 4

IRISHMEN OF PROPERTY AND STANDING

"The Irish were just as good at making money as the Yankees."

Abner and Frank Forbes in
Our First Men (1846)¹

Boston throughout the nineteenth century was an excellent place for men with drive, ambition and some luck. With the exception of periodic depressions, it experienced an expanding economic growth. Since colonial days its merchants and traders had looked seaward for their profits. From atop the Merchants' Exchange Building on State Street they could observe the arrival into the harbor of ships loaded down with the treasures of the Far East trade. Success in foreign commerce only tended to whet the profit-making appetite of prominent Yankee families like the Lowells, Lawrences, and Cabots. Later in the 1830's and 1840's these same families would accumulate additional fortunes through astute investments in Massachusetts textile factories as well as in canals, railroads and mining projects in the West.²

The Irish immigrants enjoyed few of the benefits associated with this grand world of Yankee commerce and finance. Employed chiefly as canal diggers, railroad

workers, and day laborers, most of them were discriminated against or ruthlessly exploited. Yet if Boston was a city of despair for thousands of Irish newcomers it was, contrariwise, a place of promise for hundreds of others. Demand has inevitably been the father of opportunity, and by settling in such great numbers in Boston the Irish created almost overnight a new and dynamic urban ethnic marketplace, one which urgently needed more doctors, lawyers, priests, businessmen, journalists, grocers, liquor dealers and, of course, undertakers.

Responding to these needs, many opportunistic Irishmen sought to provide their countrymen with these critical services. All that was necessary, they thought, was initiative, some luck, and plenty of hard work. Those who succeeded as professional people and businessmen would win for themselves, both within their own ethnic community and Boston society at large, the enviable reputation of being men of property and standing.

As early as 1846 Yankee writers were commenting on the "money-making genius" of exceptional Irishmen such as Andrew Carney. Born in County Cavan in 1794, Carney immigrated to Boston in 1816 and worked briefly as a peddler. With a partner he opened a tailor shop in 1830. They were aided by lucrative government uniform contracts and later the invention of the sewing machine. By mid-century Carney had become "one of the wealthiest and most respected Catholics in Boston". Carney was a major benefactor of the Church and often acted as intermediary between Yankee businessmen and the Catholic hierarchy frustrated in trying to purchase property in the city. Through marriage Carney became associated with an old and influential Genoese trading family. Much to his delight, the Italians named one of their clipper ships the "Andrew Carney".³

Few Irishmen achieved financial success in the storybook fashion of Andrew Carney. Requiring very little capital or overhead, Celtic businessmen usually got their start by opening up a saloon or grocery store along one of the congested immigrant thoroughfares in Boston's North or South End sections. Within these bustling ethnic marketplaces, nearly two hundred wholesale and retail grocers were already competing vigorously by 1850 for the patronage of their countrymen from Galway or Kilkenny. To attract customers some relied on word of mouth, campaigned for public office, or better yet, advertised their wares in the Boston Pilot that their store carried, at the lowest possible price, the latest assortments of tea, sugar, flour, coffee, spices, liquors, "Irish High Toast Snuff", and "Segars".⁴

The apron-dressed Irish grocer lived in a world of petty detail. Opening his store early in the morning, he arranged his vegetables so they would be out of reach of the hot afternoon sun, checked the barrel for spoiled apples, and placed stand-up signs outside his doorfront announcing of the latest sale on cornstarch and rolled oats. Above all, he personally scrutinized the wholesale purchase of lamb, pork, and steak, for nothing was as embarrassing as to have a customer return complaining of "tainted meat". Knowing that most of his customers received paychecks only once or twice a month, the grocer paid strict attention to his account books.⁵

The business experiences of the Boston Irish grocer varied widely. While many succeeded others faltered. For example, one of them, Dennis Collins, had accumulated a substantial fortune of \$40,000 in 1872 by running a grocery store and by dabbling in real estate. During the depression in 1873, however, his business slowed down and his credit was "good for 0". By 1880 he was out of

business. In 1858, another grocer, Daniel Kelly, was spoken of by the policeman on the beat as a "steady orderly man". But four years later after marrying a possessive young woman who monopolized all of his time, his business was reported by a reliable source, to be "all run down".⁶

In an urban economy dominated by Yankee Protestants, the Irish grocer and other small entrepreneurs had surprisingly little difficulty obtaining credit to expand their businesses. So long as they demonstrated sound Calvinistic virtues such as thrift, sobriety, and industry, Irish entrepreneurs received unbiased treatment from nineteenth century credit rating agencies like R. G. Dun and Co. According to this firm, many Boston Irishmen were "steady", "industrious", "hard-working", "shrewd", "careful", "upright", and "conscientious". One tightfisted Irishman was so well thought of that his credit was praised as being as "snug as the bark to a tree".⁷

A poor credit rating was generally deserved. When it came time to pay his bills, one Irish storekeeper in 1866 was known to be "Slow when well, worse when sick, a sneak who on plea of sickness gets released from assumed responsibility". Others were accused of liking their whiskey too much and of becoming too "fond of horse flesh" or horsebetting. And on another occasion one Irish druggist jeopardized his business reputation by becoming involved in an abortion case.⁸

With or without credit, the Irish always seemed to have enough money to open up a new saloon or liquor store. As Robert Woods, the settlement house worker, noted at the turn of the century, many of Boston's first well-to-do Irish families made their fortunes in the liquor trade. Despite numerous legislative efforts to limit and prohibit the sales of intoxicating beverages, the Irish by the 1850's

were well on their way towards making Boston a drinking man's paradise. According to a report published by city officials in 1852, over 900 or 60% of the 1500 establishments selling liquor were owned by the Irish.⁹

By satisfying the 'diabolical habit' of his countrymen, a wholesale liquor dealer, James Walsh, was able to earn \$75,000 between 1860 and 1875. Others, such as James Collins, who took pride in flying both Irish and American flags from the rooftop of his liquor store, was estimated to be worth close to \$100,000 in 1869. The Boston's beer barons were James William Kenney, Michael Doherty, and Lawrence J. Logan.¹⁰

Coming to Boston in 1863 Kenney worked for a time in his brother's liquor store in the North End. Learning the intricacies of the liquor business, he soon invested heavily in ale and porter and by 1894 owned a brewery that produced 150,000 barrels annually and which was worth over \$500,000. As social and civic minded as any Proper Bostonian, Kenney was a member of the Charitable Irish Society, the Boston Athletic Association, the Boston Cadets, and the Knights of Columbus. A businessman above all else, Kenney deserted his countrymen's traditional allegiance to the Democratic Party in 1884 in favor of the protectionist-oriented Republican Party. When not relaxing at his "elegant house" in Roxbury, a fashionable suburb of Boston, Kenney, an admirer of fine horses, could be spotted on holidays pacing his steed up and down the boulevard.¹¹

A power broker within the city's democratic machine, and president of a brewery that was "growing stronger all the time," Michael Doherty was described by a contemporary in 1862 as a "pretty shrewd man and influential among his countrymen". Although he himself was prone to drinking and excessive gambling, Doherty never-

theless successfully divided his time between ward meetings and his liquor store, which carried the latest line of Irish brandies, whiskeys, and the celebrated "Royal Dutch Gin." Leaving an estate of \$145,000 in 1883, Doherty's liquor interests were taken over by his son, Cornelius, a "level headed" young businessman.¹²

Lawrence J. Logan, "a very prudent economical" Irishman, also owed his substantial income to family ties to the liquor business. Working first in his brother's store in the 1860's, he always watched "his interests closely", eventually purchased great amounts of whiskey wholesale and hoarded it until prices rose. A trustee of several local banks and a colonel during the Spanish-American War, Logan was the father of a priest, a judge, and a Harvard football star. What more could be asked!¹³

Like the liquor business, construction played a significant part in making certain Boston Irishmen wealthy and reputable. Irish immigrants discovered early that Boston's streets were not paved with gold, but some, as contractors, also found out that fortunes could be made by digging them. Post-Civil War Boston was a contractor's dream. To accommodate a population that had mushroomed from around 93,000 in 1840 to over 560,000 by 1900, new parks, streets, homes, streetcar lines, gas and water works had to be built. Along with additional city services, these building projects caused the city's expenditures to skyrocket from approximately \$4,000,000 in 1865 to \$24,000,000 by 1900. Irish contractors were among the chief beneficiaries of this urban expansion.¹⁴

Following the Civil War, Irish contractors showed a decided preference for doing business with the city rather than with private parties. In home building, they encountered stiff competition particularly from skillful builders who had

migrated from Canada and the Maritime Provinces. Only three of the 59 major builders who helped erect some 22,000 homes in the city's residential areas of Dorchester, Roxbury, and West Roxbury between 1870 and 1900 were known to be of Irish background.¹⁵

Owen Nawn was one Irishman who did exceedingly well for himself in both private and public building. Arriving in Boston in 1851, Nawn first worked as a stable hand and saved enough to purchase horses and enter the teaming business. An "honest energetic frugal man", whose credit was reported to be as good "as wheat", Nawn prospered beyond an immigrant's wildest imagination. By obtaining lucrative contracts and by investing in cheap tenement houses that he rented to his employees, he was, by the early 1870's, worth close to \$200,000. Then suddenly in 1879, things began to go bad. His granite pits and quarries became "idle and his numerous teams only partially employed on transient jobs". To make ends meet, Nawn desperately mortgaged everything he owned. Fortunately, business picked up in the 1880's when he obtained work from private streetcar companies and contracts from the city.¹⁶

At the turn of the century, city contracts would become a major staple for many of Boston's 235 first and second generation Irish contractors, particularly if they had friends in the mayor's office or on the Common Council. The relationship between the politicians and the contractors was unusually intimate and personal. For example, Mr. Nawn's nephew, Harry Nawn, who was also a contractor and recipient of numerous city jobs, was a pallbearer at the funeral of Patrick Maguire, a powerbroker in Boston ward politics in 1896. And the doors of Nawn's mansion in Dorchester were always open to Mayor John F. Fitzgerald, a next door neighbor, who liked to drop in for conversation and, incidentally, peanut butter sandwiches.¹⁷

Fitzgerald's election as mayor in 1906 ushered in what was literally a golden age for Irish contractors. Because of existing statutes governing the granting of contracts, the Mayor was in an ideal position to reward builders who had contributed money to his campaign. According to the law, any contract under \$2,000 could be awarded without public bid at the discretion of the various department heads. Furthermore, those contracts exceeding \$2,000 could be dispensed without advertisement so long as the mayor approved them in writing.¹⁸

A consummate opportunist, "Honey Fitz" found these regulations perfectly suited to his mode of government. He had an especially keen memory when it came to Irish contractors; during his term in office, the list of contractors awarded projects by city departments, such as the sewer division, read like the membership roll of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Of some 162 contracts awarded by the sewer department in 1906, 98 or nearly 61% went to individuals with names like Rooney, O'Brien, and Shaughnessy.¹⁹

That many of these contracts were political payoffs became clearly evident in investigations conducted by the Boston Finance Commission in 1907 and 1908. Uncovering what it called "a lamentable picture of dishonesty and greed," the Commission cited numerous cases of collusion between unscrupulous politicians and contractors. During the mayoralty campaign a contractor named Thomas Welch, according to the Commission, had become acquainted with Fitzgerald's brother. Following the election, Welch went to see the Superintendent of Streets expecting to obtain a lucrative contract crushing stone for the city. The Superintendent, however, balked and a perturbed Welch went to see the Mayor's brother. Quizzed by the Commission as to the actions taken by Fitzgerald's brother, the contractor innocently replied "I don't know, but the result was that I got the crusher".

Welch confessed also to giving \$1,000 to councilman Philip McGonagle in the hopes of landing another "gift" contract. Making part of the payoff in the corridor of the State House, Welch recalled how the politician first felt "delicate" about accepting the money, but after some coaxing, took it.²⁰

The contractor was not the only Irishman making money by breaking ground. The post-Civil War Boston Irish undertaker found ample opportunity for personal advancement by providing burial services for his fellow countrymen. To become an undertaker was a fairly simple process. Prior to 1905, anyone could practice embalming in Massachusetts without a license, and in due time the angel of death guaranteed each patient undertaker his fair share of customers. By 1905, the Irish had a prominent place in the Hub's grim world of caskets and coffins. According to the census of that year, 105 of the city's 252 undertakers were first or second generation Irishmen.²¹

Irish undertakers came from a wide variety of occupational backgrounds. Because undertaking initially was considered only a part time job, many worked primarily as church sextons, graveyard superintendents, street inspectors, sporting goods salesmen, stable hands, state legislators, etc. Thus, in 1857 one Francis Lavery, advertised in the Pilot that he was a resident of South Boston, a graveyard superintendent at St. Augustine's Church, and could provide burial services at "short notice" and a moderate price.²²

Upon notification of a death, the Irish undertaker moved swiftly. With relatives of the deceased often looking over his shoulder, he embalmed the body at the home, notified newspapers, made funeral arrangements with the parish priest, and helped the bereaved select an appropriate casket. A first-class Irish funeral

director paid particular attention to small details. When embalming the body, for instance, he made sure not to remove any of the sacred oils given by the priest during last rites; he always checked with relatives to make sure that the deceased's hair was parted in death as it was in life.²³

To avoid the embarrassment of not being able to fit an occupied casket through a doorway, the entrance to a home was closely scrutinized and measured. With chairs, candles, and crucifixes all in place, the undertaker withdrew to the background while the Irish waked their loved ones with rosaries, food, ale and porter. Before sending a carriage to pick up the priest on the day of the funeral, the undertaker inspected his drivers to see that they were properly attired in dark suits and tall hats. Lest the pall-bearers "bungle the funeral", he gave them final instructions. After making sure that no one in the funeral party had been stranded at the cemetery and that all the tools of his profession had been removed from the home of the deceased, the Irish undertaker could at last relax.²⁴

To solicit business and to dispell the notion that he was "different from others", the Irish undertaker often engaged in politics and other social activities. One of the city's leading undertakers, Patrick J. Brady campaigned vigorously for Mayor Fitzgerald and attended the Democratic National Convention in Baltimore in 1912. Another Irish undertaker, Frederick J. Crosby, was a member of the Boston Athletic Association, Knights of Columbus, Massachusetts Catholic Order of Foresters, Roxbury's Businessmen's Association, and the United Fifty. Small wonder that he found time to bury anyone at all.²⁵

Judging from the credit records of R. H. Dun & Co., Boston's nineteenth

century Irish undertakers were usually sound, dependable businessmen. In 1878, for instance, John McCaffrey was praised for paying his bills promptly and for being "careful" and "shrewd", while Frederick Crosby won high marks for being "an honest, young man" who took "good care" of his business. Generally passed on from father to son, undertaking frequently provided its practitioners with excellent incomes which allowed some of them to speculate in real estate. McCaffrey was able to accrue an estate worth over \$42,000 before his death in 1900.²⁶

On occasion an undertaker was accused of benefiting unfairly from the Irishman's "passion for splendid funerals". Moreover, the extravagance and rowdiness of Irish funerals must have been at times a source of great embarrassment to him. In 1854, a Boston reporter observed a hearse followed by some 25 shabby hacks carrying boisterous, hard-drinking Irishmen with "bloated faces." Noting that Irish women also "filled the air with their jangling and horselaughter," the writer declared "it was one of the meanest displays of human beings that has ever taken part in a funeral procession in Boston."²⁷

Criticized by the clergy for either allowing or encouraging such displays and for milking the poor for all burial insurance money, the undertakers replied that the bereaved often disregarded their suggestions for "moderation". John D. Fallon was one Irish undertaker who seemingly did not take unfair advantage of his customers. A parish church sexton and funeral director for nearly 40 years, he literally saw many of his parishioners come and go in life. Regarded as a "smart", "capable", "honest" undertaker, Fallon had an active business. In one year alone, 1907, he buried over 170 people at costs ranging from \$6 for an infant to \$384 for some adults. Fallon's account books reveal him to have been an extraordinarily meticulous and compassionate man. Not only did he itemize the cost

for the casket, hearse, embalming, candles, chairs, newspaper notices, and long distance phone calls, but he also recorded in his ledger a physician's interest in a particular case. When shipping a body out of state, he noted whether or not there was "an undertaker at the other end". Rarely did Fallon pressure his customers for payments. At times he waited ten years to collect a debt of less than \$200 while allowing payments in installments as small as \$1 and \$2. If an individual had no cash, Fallon readily accepted coal in payment. And even though certain patrons owed outstanding sums from previous funerals, he seldom turned down their request for his services when death visited them a second and third time.²⁸

While undertaking was a step up from a working-class occupation, there were other Irishmen who were determined to become "brain-wage" laborers or members of the professional class. Ever since the 1840's when James Egan became the first Celtic born member of Boston's Suffolk County Bar, the Irish steadily filtered into the legal profession. Of the some 1300 individuals practicing law in Boston at the turn of the century, an estimated 254, or 20%, were first or second generation Irish. To be admitted to the Massachusetts Bar in the nineteenth century was, by modern standards, ludicrously simple. After either reading law in a practicing attorney's office or upon graduation from a law school, a candidate usually presented himself for examination to a state supreme court judge or starting in 1876, was required to pass a written test consisting of forty questions.²⁹

Like the grocer or undertaker, the fledgling Irish lawyer looked to his own ethnic group for clients. To attract business a few resorted to advertising in the columns of the Pilot. Following the Civil War, one lawyer went so far as to promise Pilot readers that he would give his special attention "to the collection

of Bounties, Pensions, Prize Money, Arrears of Pay, applications for State Aid, and all Army, Navy, and other Government Claims".³⁰

The young Irish lawyers were overwhelmingly general practitioners. Trial work consumed much of their energies. Attorney Thomas Riley, who lived on Beacon Street and was married to the daughter of a well known Irish architect, found trial work challenging and rewarding. Speaking with a "nice Doric brogue", Riley charmed, moved, and persuaded courtroom juries; by 1900 he was worth over \$100,000. Thomas J. Gargan, son of a Boston Irishman who helped slaves escape via the underground railroad, was another attorney who moved men and made money. Gargan enjoyed a large private practice. In 1885 he was the first Irish Catholic to deliver Boston's official Fourth of July address. Gargan played a prominent role in defending his co-religionists against the bigoted attacks of nativist organizations like the American Protective Association in the 1890's.³¹

Charles Francis Donnelly was Boston's most esteemed Irish Catholic lawyer. Born in County Roscommon in 1836, Donnelly spent a few years in the Maritime Provinces and Rhode Island before coming to Boston in 1856 to work in a Yankee law office and to attend Harvard Law School. Almost immediately on entering the legal profession, he demonstrated first-rate legal ability. When a group of Protestant residents of the South End approached Donnelly's employer, Ambrose A. Ranney, with regard to taking legal action against Catholic officials who wished to purchase property for a church in their neighborhood, Ranney instructed Donnelly to draw up the necessary legal documents. Donnelly, who at one time had contemplated becoming a priest, "respectfully" refused to do so, and Ranney, admiring the young lawyer's grit, told the Protestants to take their business elsewhere.³²

For over forty years Donnelly, a handsome, well dressed man who avoided marriage until he was nearly sixty, divided his time between his practice and public service. He was never as well off financially as Riley or Gargan. According to a friend, he was "habitually neglectful" about collecting fees. Also, as a devout Catholic and public servant, he donated much of his time and professional talents to the betterment of his fellow man. As chief legal spokesman for the Catholic Church in Boston between 1867 and 1907, Donnelly performed a multitude of important functions: handling real estate transactions, drawing up numerous charters for Catholic institutions, securing the legal right of Catholic priests to visit patients in state institutions and defending the parochial school system against questionable inspections by public officials.³³

Lawyers like Donnelly constantly were giving free advice to Irish Americans contemplating a career at the bar. To succeed, according to Donnelly, one needed to be honest, hard-working, possess a good formal education, and have some exposure to the "modus operandi of law" as a lawyer's apprentice. Other attorneys gave their opinions on sensitive topics such as fees, the handling of divorce cases, and participation in politics. When billing a client, charge "a fee and not an extortion," Judge John W. Corcoran remarked in 1899. The very thought of making money off the "great national wrong", divorce, was both ethically and morally repugnant declared Boston attorney James T. Connolly in 1911. And Corcoran, who himself owed his appointment to the bench to political connections, ironically warned additionally against the "alluring voice of the siren, politics". "The shamelessness of intrigue and the selfishness of office seeking", he asserted, could destroy the best of well-intentioned lawyers.³⁴

The lure of politics was irresistible for many Boston Irish Catholic lawyers.

Of the 105 better known attorneys of Celtic ancestry practicing between 1865 and 1917, approximately 62 or 59% either held elective office or were in one way or another involved in politics. Irish lawyers divided their time between the brief and the ballot box for basically two reasons. First, the publicity gained by running for office frequently helped new lawyers attract clients. And second, the chances of a Boston Irishman, or any other ethnic lawyer for that matter, winning a position with a prestigious corporate Yankee law firm was almost nil. Of 88 attorneys hired by one State Street law office between 1865 and 1917, only 2 were of Irish heritage.³⁵

The rough and tumble world of politics paid off for Irish Catholic lawyers, frequently in the form of municipal judgeships. Rewarding one's supporters with judicial appointments, of course, has long been an accepted practice in American politics. And with the creation of ten new inferior city courts after the Civil War, the Irish starting in 1874 received their fair share of these judicial plums. Of Boston's 37 municipal court judges at least 15 would be of Irish extraction by 1917.³⁶

Boston's first Irish Catholic judge was Joseph Daniel Fallon who came to Massachusetts in the 1850's, attended Holy Cross College, and after briefly teaching school, began to study law in the office of a retired judge in Salem. Opening his own law office in the Hub, Fallon soon turned to politics and in 1864 was elected the first Irish Catholic member of the Boston School Committee. Nine years later he was appointed by a Democratic governor to the South Boston District Court. Fallon earned the reputation for being a "thorough, but considerate, fearless and kindly judge". Fond of children, he was highly successful in halting the dangerous practice of youngsters stealing rides on streetcars. And as a

devoted family man, he was especially stern with wife-beaters, nonsupporters, the "despoiler of domestic happiness", and storekeepers who tried to sell adulterated food and watered-down milk. After over forty years on the bench, Fallon died in 1917.³⁷

Though dominating Boston's courtrooms, the Irish had little success in gaining seats on the state's higher courts. Prior to the election of David I. Walsh as Massachusetts' first Irish Catholic governor in 1914, appointments to the Superior and Supreme Judicial Courts went almost entirely to Yankee patricians. Of the 65 jurists appointed to the Superior Court between 1865 and 1913, only 6 were of Irish background. And during the same years, none of the twenty-eight appointees to the Supreme Judicial Court were Irish Catholic.³⁸

This lack of ethnic representation on the Commonwealth's highest tribunals was due principally to a "secret religious cabal" against Irish Catholics according to Joseph F. O'Connell, a former congressman and practicing Boston attorney. Declaring that judges were much like the grave in that "they never give up anything," O'Connell called on the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention in 1917 to make the judiciary subject to the initiative and referendum process, a process which could have ultimately led to the popular election of magistrates. His plea was unsuccessful.³⁹

Working in a stratified, cast-ridden legal system, the Boston Irish lawyer was victimized, as O'Connell contended, by subtle but nonetheless real forms of ethnic and religious discrimination. A Kelly or an O'Toole, to repeat, rarely rubbed legal elbows with a Cabot or Lodge in Yankee law firms. And the possibility of any Irish Catholic or any other minority lawyer winning admission to the then exclusive Boston Bar Association was about as good as an immigrant's chance of

becoming president of the Society of Mayflower Descendants. At the turn of the century the Irish constituted, as stated, roughly 20% of the city's legal profession. But as one Irish American newspaper pointed out in 1904, only 25 or 3% of the Bar Association's 811 members were of Celtic extraction.⁴⁰

A more serious point of contention between Irish Catholic and Yankee Protestant was the matter of access to formal legal education. Before the election of Charles Eliot as Harvard president in 1869, anyone with "good moral character" and financial means could attend Harvard Law School. All this changed, however, when Eliot, to quote one faculty member, turned everything over like a "flapjack". Concerned as many bar associations were over the inadequate training of young lawyers Eliot, as president, raised admissions requirements, introduced a grading system, and expanded the course of study. Eliot's new admissions policies eventually led to a confrontation with the Jesuits at nearby Boston College, an undergraduate training ground for many future Irish lawyers.⁴¹

The Harvard Law School in 1893 had decided to admit, without examination, undergraduates of certain select colleges. With rare exceptions, students enrolled in Catholic institutions such as Boston College were required to present themselves for examination. If accepted, moreover, they were designated as "special" students and were required to maintain a fifteen point grade average higher than that of other students. This arbitrary classification, which stigmatized their graduates with a second class status, infuriated the Boston College Jesuits. Giving way to their vehement protests, President Eliot rescinded this policy in 1898 only to reintroduce it shortly thereafter. A full scale academic battle quickly ensued between Eliot and the Jesuits.⁴²

Eliot justified his actions on the grounds that Boston College graduates had performed poorly at the Law School. Out of nine attending the school, all, he said in 1899, were "close to the lower borderline" in their classes. That they were hindered by inadequate undergraduate preparation was all too apparent to the Harvard president who had already earlier publically criticized the Jesuits for clinging to a classical course of study which, he claimed, neglected the modern natural sciences and had remained almost unchanged for nearly 400 years.⁴³

Suspecting Eliot of trying to discredit Catholic education by contrast with his acclaimed elective system, the Jesuits responded vigorously. In a 32 page pamphlet Father Timothy Brosnahan compared the course of instruction offered undergraduates at Jesuit institutions and at Harvard College. At a Jesuit school a student was required to divide his time evenly among courses in Latin, Greek, philosophy, English, mathematics, modern languages, and the natural sciences. This curriculum contrasted sharply, noted Brosnahan, with Eliot's elective system, wherein it was possible for an undergraduate to receive a bachelor's degree without taking any natural science courses whatsoever. Criticizing Eliot for trying to eliminate uniformity in college education and of overemphasizing "individuality", Brosnahan insisted that young students needed intellectual guidance. Eliot's elective educational system might turn out many experts but few well rounded human beings.⁴⁴

Brosnahan's arguments had validity, and one must conjecture whether Eliot's disagreement over the quality of Jesuit education was a mere facade for other and possibly less admirable motives. Harvard Law School, after all, was still accepting the "gentleman's C" student from non-Catholic colleges up until Eliot's retirement in 1909, and it seemed strange that Catholics and not others were

singled out for poor academic performance. And if Eliot was as concerned as he said he was over the inadequacy of Jesuit education, especially in the natural sciences, he might have concentrated his attention on the medical rather than the law school where a strong background in the sciences was more critical.⁴⁵

One suspects that despite his defense of parochial schools and his praise of certain Boston Irish politicians, Eliot feared that Harvard-trained Irish lawyers could pose a serious threat to the status quo. Unlike the Harvard-educated Irish Catholic physician, graduates of the Law School could possibly alter drastically the commercial and financial world of Yankee Boston. And Eliot, an elitist, tough-minded Brahmin, who skillfully disguised his true feelings behind a gentlemanly, scholarly exterior, probably never was insensitive to this important fact of life.

When Suffolk Evening Law School petitioned the Massachusetts State Legislature in 1912 for the right to grant degrees, the Crimson and the Green again clashed over the explosive issue of legal education. Ever since the Civil War American evening law schools had come to represent an important avenue of social mobility for ambitious sons of immigrant working-class parents. In 1906 Gleason L. Archer, an enterprising young lawyer from Maine, founded the Suffolk Evening Law School in the living room of his Roxbury residence in Boston. Among those attending his first classes on torts and contracts were students of Irish, Italian, Jewish, and Norwegian backgrounds. Archer's dream of "uplifting" the working-class students won little sympathy from the members of Boston's legal establishment. Attempting to make attorneys out of them was "like trying to turn cart horses into trotters," one of them remarked.⁴⁶

Opposition to the Suffolk Law School bill came chiefly from the Yankee-dominated State Board of Education, the Boston Bar Association, and from Harvard University. Their spokesmen argued that law schools like Suffolk tended to turn out second-rate lawyers and, furthermore, that there was already an overabundance of attorneys. Archer and Martin M. Lomasney, a renown Irish politician from the mixed immigrant West End section of the city, vehemently denied such allegations. Accusing Harvard of trying to monopolize legal education in the state, Archer called the university an "educational octopus". And in an emotional speech in the State Legislature, Lomasney, the self-styled "champion of the masses", shouted "Don't let the lawyers of this body make a trust of legal education in Massachusetts". But Lomasney and Archer saw their bill vetoed on two separate occasions by Governor Eugene N. Foss, a trustee at a rival evening law school. With David I. Walsh in the governor's chair in 1914, the charter giving Suffolk degree granting powers was finally signed into law.⁴⁷

Within another profession, medicine, the Irish Catholic encountered far less serious discrimination than at the bar. In their associations with the immigrant, Brahmin physicians were a remarkably generous and compassionate group of men. They were instrumental in establishing and staffing numerous Catholic hospitals and some, like Oliver Wendell Holmes, the eminent Harvard Medical School professor, went out of their way to advance the careers of promising Irish medical students, among them Michael Freebern Gavin.⁴⁸

Migrating to Boston in 1857, Gavin worked in his brother-in-law's apothecary shop where he obtained a sound knowledge of drugs and medicines. Entering Harvard Medical School in 1861, he quickly won praise from Dr. Holmes as "an

intelligent and very industrious student". Holmes was largely instrumental in helping the twenty year old Gavin obtain a highly prized house residency at the newly opened Boston City Hospital in 1864. Following a brief period of study abroad in 1865 and 1866, Gavin returned to South Boston where he entered into private practice. Within no time at all Gavin was able to inform a friend, he had "almost more patients than I can attend to". He made 30 to 40 house calls daily. A highly able and considerate physician, Gavin reportedly never allowed his carefully timed schedule to be upset by idle gossip with his patients. "He was punctuality itself". It was said that the driver of his carriage could tell to a minute just how far to let his horse trot down the street on a cold day before turning it about to meet Dr. Gavin emerging from his house call.⁴⁹

For the average Irish Catholic physician without Gavin's talents or connections, establishing a satisfactory medical practice was often difficult. Like the beginning lawyer, many Irish doctors advertised in immigrant newspapers in order to attract patients. In 1848, one Doctor Hodnett, a former resident of County Cork and a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, informed Pilot readers that he would give special attention to those suffering from eye infection, fever, and complications caused by incompetent midwives.⁵⁰

A close look at the professional lives of most nineteenth century Boston Irish Catholic physicians like Dr. Hodnett revealed certain unique career patterns. Unlike their counterparts in law who usually enrolled at Boston University, Irish Catholic physicians generally attended Harvard Medical School. After graduation they most likely began general practice in a city neighborhood like Roxbury or

Dorchester. To augment their regular income, they frequently served as medical examiners for insurance companies, and fraternal organizations or had staff positions at one of Boston's many Catholic hospitals or charitable institutions. Political connections sometimes added to a doctor's income. Whereas a day laborer earned less than \$500 a year at the turn of the century, a physician like Thomas Shea could increase his earnings by \$2500 through serving on the Boston Board of Health.⁵¹

The professional lives of two Irish Catholic physicians, William G. McDonald and Sampson Aloysius Callanan, were typical. McDonald, who had been an undergraduate at Boston College, graduated from the Harvard Medical School in 1884. Since then, he said, his life as a physician had been "uneventful". He practiced in nearby Chelsea, worked as a city health inspector, and was a dermatologist at a local Catholic hospital. Another alumnus of Boston College and Harvard Medical School, Callanan, developed a very good general practice in Roxbury. In addition he served as medical examiner for the New York Life Mutual Insurance Company, the Knights of St. Rose, the Royal Society of Good Fellows, and several chapters of the Massachusetts Catholic Order of Foresters.⁵²

Besides their regular duties, Boston's Irish doctors also inherited special Catholic moral and religious responsibilities. Under no circumstances, did they perform therapeutic abortions or sterilization operations. Nor would they disseminate information on birth control. A highly sensitive task was giving the lecture, "de sexto," to students attending a pastoral theology class at the local seminary. Fortunately, observed the seminary rector in 1912, a Dr. Thomas Harrington was able to bring "to this task not only the science of the medical man, but the delicacy and reverence that is called for in our circumstances."⁵³

As community elites, the Irish Catholic physician frequently participated in local and civic affairs. To assist the sick and disadvantaged, some established outpatient clinics, child care centers, and visited the homes of the destitute as members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Other Irish physicians participated in politics chiefly as members of the Boston School Committee. Two of the most prominent of these men were William Aloysius Dunn and John George Blake. Dunn, a bachelor, in particular served with distinction on the School Committee during the difficult days of the American Protective Association's crusade against Catholics and immigrants in the 1890's. John George Blake was a School Committee man for 16 years. He was born in County West Meath and attended Harvard Medical School in the 1850's. The father of eleven children, Blake as a school committee member championed military drill, manual training, and regular sanitation inspections of school facilities. A skillful real estate man and stock investor as well as a physician, Blake was worth over \$200,000 at the time of his death in 1918.⁵⁴

Although successful as businessmen, politicians and neighborhood physicians, Irish doctors were still having difficulty penetrating the inner sanctums of Boston's medical establishment at the turn of the century. Of the Hub's 1,972 physicians in 1905, 239 or 12% were either first or second generation Irish. Yet they were greatly underrepresented in the membership of prestigious associations such as the Boston Society for Medical Improvement. Founded in 1828 for the express purpose of social and intellectual exchange among its members, the Boston Society was, in the words of one member, "exclusive" and influential in controlling the "medical fortunes" of the community. Not surprisingly, then, approximately only 4 of the 278 individuals admitted to this Society between 1865 and 1903 had Irish surnames. The problem of exclusion from another prominent

medical organization, the Massachusetts Medical Society, was of a different nature. Established in 1781, the Society usually admitted any qualified Irish Catholic physician as a general member. But being elected an officer of the Society was quite a different matter. Of the 93 physicians who were officers in the Society between 1865 and 1917, only one was Irish.⁵⁵

Other professional prizes such as positions on the faculty or staff of the Harvard Medical School or the Massachusetts General Hospital also eluded Irish doctors. While only 16 of 519 persons appointed to the Medical School faculty and staff between 1865 and 1917 were Irish, just 5 of the 224 assigned during the same period to the hospital were of Irish background.⁵⁶

Did exclusion of Irish Catholics from these select institutions and organizations mean that Boston's physicians were determined to keep down the ethnic physician? Such a surmise, of course, would be difficult to prove, but the statistics speak for themselves. However, one Irish Catholic doctor, John C. Bossidy, declared that discrimination simply did not prevent his fellow ethnics from advancing professionally. Bossidy, in fact, claimed there was some substance to a non-Irish doctor's contention in 1896 that the Irish Catholic physician was a "second class practitioner" because he seldom attended medical meetings, wrote original papers, or engaged in new research.⁵⁷

There was some truth to these allegations. Irish Catholic physicians rarely contributed articles to the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, a leading medical journal of the day. And graduates from predominantly Irish Catholic institutions, like Holy Cross College, were usually not among the best students at the Harvard Medical School. John T. Bottomley, a noted

Catholic surgeon and instructor at the Medical School, informed the president of Holy Cross in 1911 that the scholastic performance of his undergraduates was most disappointing and "very disgraceful". Of the 15 failures in his anatomy and histology class, 9, he noted, were Holy Cross men. Pointing out that the poor showing of Holy Cross graduates was the subject of much comment at the Medical School, Bottomley attributed these difficulties to "lack of ambition" and too much card playing.⁵⁸

While Boston Irish Catholic doctors attended to the physical needs of their people, other members of the faith as priests were concerned with their spiritual well-being. The priesthood as a profession attracted young men for a variety of reasons. Being a clergyman symbolized an individual's total unwavering commitment to follow Christ and to administer to His flock. In less high-minded terms the priesthood not infrequently served those coming from working-class backgrounds as a road to significant upward social mobility.

With the opening of St. John's Seminary in Brighton in 1884 the practice of sending candidates for the priesthood to Paris, Montreal, or Baltimore for study came to an end. Starting with a class of 32 students, the enrollment at St. John's would swell to 125 by the turn of the century. In comparison to some Boston law and medical schools, entrance requirements to St. John's were high. Generally candidates had to have the equivalent of two years of undergraduate study and pass a written or oral examination in Latin, English, and Mathematics.⁵⁹

During his first days at the seminary, the young Irish American student, in cassock and biretta, must have felt he had entered a medieval world. He

was expected to master the virtues of "humility, unworldliness, industry, solitude and assiduous prayerfulness". Rising before sunrise, he said his morning prayers, tidied up his small room, went to morning mass and breakfasted in a group. Throughout the day he was kept incessantly busy with prayers, rosaries, spiritual readings, examination of conscience as well as with classes on canon law, church history, theology, and preaching. To foster humility and self denial, every seminarian took turns serving in the dining hall, and abstained from reading newspapers, smoking or talking in the dormitory. To let his "Irish-American children in Christ" unwind, the rector allowed some free time for ice-skating, billiards, baseball, and family visits on Sunday.⁶⁰

During their 6 year stay at St. John's, seminarians were closely evaluated with regard to their character, intelligence, health, attention to duty, reading and preaching abilities. These future priests were a mixed lot. In 1910 the rector described some of them as being "obsequious", "self-centered", "docile", "retiring", "weak-willed", and "boyish". Yet some of these same students were found to be "pious", "serious", "well-bred", "cheerful", "capable", and "studious". In preaching or reading sermons the seminarians were frequently criticized for poor organization, "monotonous" and "muffled" deliveries, and "high-pitched", "shrill" voices.⁶¹

Seminarians on occasion balked at various aspects of their highly regimented professional training. Grumbling was often heard against being required to listen to long spiritual readings at supper time and of being compelled to meditate for nearly an hour. Independent-minded students criticized as infantile, the practice of having to walk in groups while off the seminary grounds. Some

rebellious seminarians went a little too far: In 1910 a student named O'Keefe had returned from a picnic at a nearby beach "noisy" and "shaky", from drinking too much "liquor in the spirit of bravado". Just before the opening of fall classes he was informed that he had been expelled. Pleading for reinstatement, he was told to undergo a "period of trial in the world". Consequently, he went to New York, taught school, attended mass, confession, and communion regularly, and even took the pledge. Promising to study harder and use his talents for the "glory of Christ's Church", he reapplied for admission after one year but was still turned down.⁶²

Those fortunate to make it beyond ordination day were usually assigned to a local parish. If a young priest demonstrated leadership skills as a parish organizer or fundraiser, he usually was promoted to pastor within 10 years. He would clearly be fulfilling his obligations effectively if his parishioners were neatly dressed, industrious, contributed regularly to the support of the parish school, avoided gossip, and remembered what he had said during his Sunday sermon.⁶³

Journalism, like the priesthood, was another step up the social ladder. Judging from a 1905 Boston census, the Irish loved writing words as much as they did saving souls. At the turn of the century first and second generation Irish made up over one fifth of the city's some 500 newspapermen. Two of the most prominent of Boston's Irish journalists were Patrick Donahoe and John Boyle O'Reilly.⁶⁴

Donahoe, born in County Cavan on St. Patrick's Day, 1811, came to Boston with his father in 1821. After attending public school where he was sometimes

taunted by Protestant classmates who tried to chalk the sign of the cross on his back, Donahoe soon found employment in a printing shop. Donahoe rose quickly as a journalist taking over the Boston Pilot in 1839. He conducted an extensive national subscription campaign that increased the newspaper's circulation from 7,000 in 1844 to over 100,000 two decades later. As publisher of "the Irishman's Bible", Donahoe assisted his fellow immigrants in a variety of ways. Along with providing them with information on naturalization procedures, missing relatives and employment opportunities, he helped shape public opinion on political matters both in the United States and Ireland. An avid supporter of Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Movement of the 1840's, Donahoe appeared on Boston streets wearing a green coat and a badge demanding "Repeal". During the Know-Nothing movement in the 1850's he attacked "the foul breath of Nativism". At the same time and less admirably, he sharply criticized the "puritanical fanatics" who supported abolition. He feared that emancipated Negroes would compete with Irish workers for jobs and this would jeopardize their already precarious economic status. But after the attack on Fort Sumter, Donahoe threw his support behind the Union and personally helped recruit Irish regiments for the war.⁶⁵

Misfortune stalked Donahoe after 1865. His plant was burnt out in the Great Boston Fire of 1872; he tried to publish his newspaper on two other occasions only again to be thwarted by fire. When his other banking, real estate, and shipping interests were severely affected by the Depression of 1873, Donahoe imprudently used customers' deposits from a bank with which he was associated. Forced into bankruptcy and disgraced, Donahoe, now 65, sold his newspaper to the Archbishop of Boston and John Boyle O'Reilly.⁶⁶

In an ethnic community dominated by conservative priests and petty ward bosses, O'Reilly, as a former Fenian, poet, and sparring partner of John L. Sullivan, became the city's first legitimate Irish folk hero. Exiled to an Australian penal colony in 1867 for plotting revolution against the British Crown, O'Reilly made a daring escape and eventually made his way to Boston in 1870. Donahue employed him as a reporter and later editor. Almost immediately O'Reilly's poems, essays and criticisms on the themes of racial and social injustice won him praise not only from the Irish community but also from Brahmins like Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Invited to deliver the main oration at the dedication of Plymouth Rock in 1889, O'Reilly had truly arrived.⁶⁷

O'Reilly's editorials hit hard at the exploitation of the working man. Commenting on a mill strike in Lowell in 1884, he asked "How long...will the very many who toil consent to accept the terms of their labor from the very few who reap all the profits of toil?" He declared that corporations had "large pockets but no souls", and described Andrew Carnegie as a "mock philanthropist" and Jay Gould and Cornelius Vanderbilt as "colossal robbers". O'Reilly thought of himself as a Jeffersonian Democrat. He feared both big government and big business. More positively, he championed the rights of unions, development of the American West, and when necessary, state regulation of railroads and mining.⁶⁸

Other Irishmen besides Donahoe and O'Reilly owed to journalism their reputations as men of property and standing. Boston's first Irish mayor, Hugh O'Brien, had operated a business journal, and Patrick Maguire, prominent in post-Civil War Boston politics, published a weekly called The Republic. The

professional Celtic newspaperman came from a diverse background; some were ex-Fenians while others were former railroad foremen, law and medical students, seminarians, telegraph operators, politicians, and even baseball managers.⁶⁹

The Boston Globe was a major employer of Irish reporters. Recognizing that a large part of his reading audience was Irish, editor Charles H. Taylor began in the 1870's to cater to the immigrants' interest in politics, labor, sports and local neighborhood events. While several nineteenth-century American newspapers were going yellow, the Globe, under Taylor, had a distinctive Celtic green coloration. Thus, while Michael Curran wrote extensively on the Irish home rule issue, others with names like Sullivan and McGrath reported on labor and murder trials. In sports James O'Leary, "a lovable, big, smiling Irishman", was the Globe's expert on baseball, while the enterprising Lawrence Sweeney covered the city's first marathon on a bicycle in 1897. And for the latest political news from the State House, Globe readers came to depend on reporters Michael Hennessey and William Murphy, the latter "a born diplomat of Chesterfieldian manners".⁷⁰

By broadly surveying those who had become Irishmen of property and standing, certain different perspectives on the immigrant experience in Boston emerge. Obviously, despite one contemporary's contention that the Irish were no less skilled at making money than the Yankee, the former were denied equal access to opportunity in such important fields as law and medicine. Also, for a variety of reasons, including prejudice, they would make little headway in other Yankee strongholds like banking, real estate, insurance and stockbroking. Yet we must not conclude that Boston was a city infested by convent burners, Know-Nothings, and "Irish-need-not-apply" advertisers. Some Irishmen, as demonstrated, found

plenty of opportunity to prosper as businessmen and professionals.

Disregarding the factor of discrimination, it is puzzling that more of Boston's Irish did not succeed. After all, the expense and educational requirements to become, say, a doctor or lawyer were not always insurmountable obstacles. Yet, as already noted by 1900 the overwhelming majority of Boston's Irish still held blue collar and manual labor jobs. Maybe, as some historians have suggested, the Irish as a group were destined to wear the laborers' overalls because of poverty or certain cultural values. But to reiterate, one suspects, however, that they were hampered less by poverty, education, and a lack of entrepreneurial skills than by the success, ironically, of their politicians and labor leaders.⁷¹

Boston's Irish politicians in particular rarely challenged their people to reach for the stars. Eager to win elections and to satisfy their supporters' immediate impulse "to make men's pay", the ward boss channeled generations of potentially bright young Irish Americans into secure, but financially dead-end jobs such as city clerks, firefighters, and policemen. In 1896 John F. Cronan, a Boston attorney, noted how Irish politicians were unwittingly crippling the ambitions of an almost entire ethnic group. Referring to the large number of Irish American youths holding city jobs, Cronan charged that they were "stalled for life, as they attain the poor maximum salary in a few years, and then, with no chance of advancement, stagnate for the balance of their lives." Real opportunity, he insisted, lay beyond the pale of government service.⁷²

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- 6 R.G. Dun & Company, Credit Reports, Massachusetts Volumes 76, pp. 48, 49; 73, p. 175.
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- 14 Charles Phillips Huse, The Financial History of Boston From May 1, 1882 to January 31, 1909, (Cambridge, 1916), 350-351.
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- 16 Dun & Co. Mass. Vols. 80, pp. 176, 177; Boston Evening Transcript, November 12, 1901.
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- 19 The Finance Commission of The City of Boston (Boston, 1909), III, Appendices.
- 20 The Finance Commission of the City of Boston (Boston, 1908), I, 462-465, 469, 480.
- 21 First Annual Report of the Board of Registration in Embalming for the Year 1906, (Boston, 1907), 1; Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Census of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1905, II, Occupations and Defective Social and Physical Conditions (Boston, 1910), 146, 147.
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- 24 Habenstein and Lamers, The History of American Funeral Directing, 406, 409; Callaway, The Art of Funeral Directing, 17-19, 32-36, 95-102.
- 25 William H. Porter, Jr., "Some Sociological Notes on a Century of Change in the Funeral Business", Sociological Symposium (Fall, 1968), 39, 41; Langtry, Metropolitan Boston, V, 217-218; Boston Evening Transcript, August 7, 1895.
- 26 Dun & Co. Mass. Vols. 74, p. 200; 90, p. 343; Suffolk County Probate Court, Boston, Mass.; Docket Number 116933.
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- 28 Sacred Heart Review, February 22, 1890; Dun & Co. Mass. Vols. 77, p. 370. The ledgers of John D. Fallon are in the possession of Ronald K. West, proprietor of the Brady and Fallon Funeral Home, Jamaica Plain, Mass.
- 29 William T. Davis, Bench and Bar of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Boston, 1895), I, 429; Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Census of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1905, II, Occupations and Defective Social and Physical Conditions (Boston, 1910), 132-133; Hollis R. Bailey, Attorneys and Their Admission to the Bar in Massachusetts (Boston, 1907), 40-46, 65-78; Robert Grant's "Bench and Bar in Massachusetts (1889-1929)" in Albert Bushnell Hart's Commonwealth History of Massachusetts (New York, 1930), V, 103-104. How easy it was to become a lawyer in Boston was attested to by Charles Francis Adams. After some "desultory reading" in a law office Adams in 1850 went to see his neighbor and family friend, Judge George T. Bigelow, and requested an examination.

Invited to the judge's courtroom he was handed a letter size piece of paper with a few questions scribbled on it. Answering some of them, Adams later confessed knowing "absolutely nothing" about the rest. Meeting the judge a few days later at a railroad station Adams was informed he had passed. Excited as any young lawyer would be Adams still noted that he was no more fit to be a lawyer "than a child". Lawrence M. Friedman, A History of American Law (New York, 1973), 565.

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- 43 Marcia Graham Synnott, A Social History of Admissions Policies at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900-1930 (University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, 1974), I, 236-240; Hawkins, Between Harvard and America, 187.
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Chapter 5

THE IRISH AT LEISURE

"The Hibernian is first,
last and always a social being."

An observation by Boston social workers, 1902.¹

Man has always been torn between the need to work and the wish to play. The Irish who settled in Boston during the nineteenth century were no exception. They not only worked hard but also played hard in a city whose reputation as a funseeker's paradise was well established long before they arrived in great numbers in the 1840's. But the types of entertainment, not to speak of the inhospitality, found in Yankee theatres, music halls and society in general, were as alien and remote to the Irish newcomers as the prayer books and hymns sung at Park Street Church.²

Improvising as they had done with their parochial schools and charitable institutions, the Boston Irish went about developing their own unique outlets for social diversion and leisure. Not surprisingly, they turned to their local parish church where opportunities for recreation were numerous. As a case in point, members of the progressive parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in the

Mission Hill section of the city had several social outlets. In accordance with a mandate from the bishops at the Third Plenary Council in 1884, every pastor in the city was ordered to develop programs for "innocent amusement and recreation". The clergy at Our Lady's subsequently organized athletic teams, drama groups and finally a marching band whose blue uniforms and "manly appearance" won the parish national fame. A popular organization catering to "rational amusement" was its Saint Alphonsus Association for young men over eighteen years of age founded in 1900. Occupying a two story building that housed a library, gymnasium, bowling alley, billiard room and auditorium for lectures and stage productions, the Association also had a boathouse on the Charles River which served hundreds of canoeists and rowers during the summer months.³

As early as the 1850's crews of "hardy" Irishmen rowing in boats, christened the Maid of Erin and the Shamrock, participated in annual racing regattas on the Charles River. After losing a close race to a Harvard College boat team in 1858, one crew of intrepid Irishmen challenged the victors to a rematch over a six mile rather than three mile course. The Harvardians accepted and before throngs of spectators lining the shores once again defeated their challengers as well as six other opponents. In good sportsmanlike manner, the Harvard crew split the prize money with its Irish rivals. However, one Crimson supporter sought to immortalize the victory with rhymes one of which had one Irishman boasting to another before the start of the race:

Arrah, me Patsy! Jist look at the College boat:
Niver afore did ye see so much knowledge float.
Shure it's a shame that their arms is n't bigger now,
For it is muscle, not brains, that will figure now.⁴

The fondness of the Boston Irish for other sports like rifle-shooting, Gaelic football, elbow-wrestling, boxing, and track and field events found expression in 1879 with the organization of the Irish Athletic Club of Boston. Although harshly criticized by some non-Irish because of its roughness, hurling, the national game of Ireland, enjoyed such a resurgence among second and third generation Irish in Boston in 1886 that the Pilot felt obliged to devote one of its columns to explaining the rules of the game.⁵

The staging of the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896 saw the amateur Irish American athlete from Boston come of age. Tommy Burke, "a fleet-footed" runner and nephew of attorney Thomas J. Gargan, captured first place in the 100 and 1400 meter races while Arthur Blake, son of an Irish physician, placed second in the 1500 meter event. Denied a leave of absence from Harvard, freshman James Brendan Connolly went to Athens anyway and despite arriving twelve days late and twelve pounds overweight won the gold medal in the contest known as the "Hop, Step and Jump".⁶

Irish American athletes won additional laurels when colleges and universities began to expand their athletic programs after the Civil War. At Harvard, for instance, James Ambrose Gallivan, class of "88" was "a crack second baseman" on the baseball team and Daniel W. Shea was a well known figure on campus at about the same time because of his exploits in boxing, rowing and football. And given the fact that the two opposing team captains in the Harvard-Yale football game of 1904 were of Irish extraction, one Irish American sports writer boasted that the "Celtic mastery" of the collegiate gridiron was a fait accompli.⁷

In the early 1880's after much protest from undergraduates who used pen names like "Cripple" to dramatize the plight of student athletics on campus, the Jesuit administrators at Boston College reluctantly gave their blessing to such sports as track and baseball. Confident of returning "with the scalps" of their arch rival Holy Cross, the Boston College Nine journeyed to Worcester in the Spring of 1887 only to lose 7-1 before a record breaking crowd of four thousand fans.⁸

Yet if the officials at Boston College had been won over to the merits of baseball they, like many other educators throughout the nation, had serious reservations regarding the worth of football. The game was enthusiastically endorsed by student bodies and a general public weaned on the Darwinian notions of competition, rugged individualism and survival of the fittest. But college administrators, on the other hand, often accused football coaches of undermining academic standards, of unsavory recruiting practices and of condoning violence and danger of serious injury by allowing kicking, punching, gang tackling and bone-shattering plays like the notorious "Flying Wedge".⁹

As a sport on national trial, football at Boston College underwent serious growing pains. Beaten consistently by opponents who allegedly used "ringers", Boston College had to cancel its scheduled game with Dartmouth in 1895 because of severe injuries inflicted on its players by previous rivals. But four years later Boston College rooters had plenty to cheer about. Led by the "bull-like rushes" of fullback Tim Murphy, the team posted an impressive eight and one record. Falling out of favor with school administrators, however, football was soon dropped and was not revived until 1908 when under a new president it enjoyed a revival,

climaxed by the dedication of a new stadium in 1915.¹⁰

In the more lucrative world of post-Civil War professional baseball, the preponderance of players of Irish extraction led some observers to conclude that the Sons of Erin possessed a "peculiar talent" for the game. With the likes of John Haggerty serving as the head groundskeeper of the playing field in the South End and Patsy Donovan managing the Red Sox, Irish influence over the fortunes of professional baseball in Boston at the turn of the century was literally in evidence from the diamond up to the front office. On the playing field itself, Irish fans had a chance to observe the spectacular outfield play of Tommy McCarthy or to root for the pitching talents of the Kerry-born Charles Curry Foley and James Sullivan, who got his start playing baseball in a parish temperance league in Charlestown in the 1880's.¹¹

Perhaps the biggest drawing card in Boston's early professional baseball history was outfielder, Mike (King) Kelly. Nicknamed the "\$10,000 beauty" because of the extraordinary sum of money involved in procuring his contract from the Chicago White Stockings in 1887, Kelly, "when in condition", had few rivals among his contemporaries as an athlete and showman. A good natured young man who loved to tease Irish Catholic fans around the league by whistling Orangemen tunes like "The Boyne Water", Kelly's innovative idea of leaving his feet and sliding into a base on a close play won him not only a place in the annals of modern baseball history but also a lasting niche in the hearts of his many admirers who turned out to cheer him on with chants of "Slide, Kelly, Slide!"¹²

As prize fighters other Irishmen seemed to excel in knocking out opponents with the same facility that Mike Kelly drove in runs. Like football, though,

boxing had its detractors who denounced it as a form of "human butchery" supported chiefly by a "lazy, worthless, gambling class of loafers" who patronized saloons, poolrooms and other such "gilded haunts". That the Irish dominated the fight game embarrassed the middle-class monthly, Donahoe's Magazine. It often spoke out against the spread of "The Prize-Fighting Curse". In 1888, for example, when John Boyle O'Reilly published a book exalting the merits of pugilism, the magazine sharply reprimanded him for endorsing such a "barbarous" pastime and insinuated that he was catering to mass popular tastes for purely, selfish, pecuniary reasons.¹³

Such criticism did not faze O'Reilly, and he, Mayor Hugh O'Brien, and thousands of other lesser known Boston Irishmen went on enjoying the so-called manly art of self-defense. After all, the ring exploits of local favorites like Paddy Duffy, Billy Melody and the incomparable John L. Sullivan gave the ethnic-conscious Irish something to boast about. John L. was born in Roxbury in 1858. He attended college briefly and worked at odd jobs as a teamster and a plumber's assistant before stumbling upon his life's vocation one evening in 1877. Attending a local opera house where pugilists put on boxing exhibitions between regular shows, Sullivan accepted the challenge of one fighter to take on anyone in the house. After sending his adversary flying into the orchestra pit with a mighty right blow to the head, the brawny nineteen year old upstart from Roxbury sauntered to the edge of the stage and addressed the audience. "My name's John L. Sullivan," he said, "and I can lick any sonofabitch alive!" The career of America's first legendary sports hero was tumultuously launched.¹⁴

Other victories soon followed and with shrewd coaching of his new trainer and promoter, William Muldoon, Sullivan quickly rose to national prominence by defeating Paddy Ryan for the world heavyweight championship in 1882. Accused by

some of being a bully, drunkard and wifebeater, Sullivan's distain for middle-class Victorian proprieties made him an immediate hero among less pretentious segments of American society. Here indeed, was the embodiment of the self-made Irish American, and over three thousand Bostonians turned out in August 1887 to honor John L. with a ten thousand dollar belt adorned with diamonds, gold and emblems of Ireland and the United States.¹⁵

But serious trouble loomed on the horizon for the easy going "Boston Strong Boy" after a bruising, seventy-five round, bareknuckle victory over Jake Kilrain in 1889. Now in his thirties and twenty odd pounds overweight he was but a shadow of his former self when he tried to defend his title in New Orleans three years later against a soft-spoken "dude" from the West Coast named Jim Corbett. Breathing "like a huge porpoise" Sullivan was an easy target for the quick-hitting Corbett who pummeled him into submission in twenty-one rounds.¹⁶

Wireservices flashed the news of the downfall of the "World's Wonder" to a country already stunned by the loss of another, albeit different kind of national hero, John Greenleaf Whittier. Many newspapers welcomed the downfall of the "idol of the barrooms", but in Boston there was only the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" among Sullivan's backers, according to one observer, as they bemoaned the fall of their hero on old age, poor coaching, or simply too much liquor and "fast" living. Whatever the reasons, Sullivan's personal fear that his supporters would abandon him in his moment of defeat proved unwarranted as hundreds turned out to greet him on his return to Boston. Spending his last days acting on stage and lecturing on behalf of temperance, John L. Sullivan, both the most vilified and beloved sports figure of his era, died in 1918.¹⁷

Almost if not equally as popular as Sullivan among the Irish masses was Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, the "musician of the people." Getting his start in the entertainment business by working as an end man in Boston minstrel shows during the 1840's, Gilmore, a native of Galway, eventually organized his own marching band. A born "hustler", he played at countless Irish socials, picnics and church gatherings. During the Civil War, he lent his services to the Union cause by becoming an Army bandmaster. He was the composer of the popular wartime ballad, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home."¹⁸

Considering "the mission of his life," to commemorate the restoration of peace and prosperity following Appomattox, Gilmore staged "the grandest Musical Festival the world had ever known" in Boston in the summer of 1869. An ingenious promoter, he convinced businessmen, newspaper editors and other "solid men" of Boston to fund the construction of a colosseum that could accommodate fifty thousand people and the purchase of a gigantic organ and drum that measured nearly twenty feet in diameter. Featured by a one thousand piece orchestra and a chorus of ten thousand which presented all kinds of musical arrangements including one in which scores of firemen rhythmically pounded hammers on anvils, the week-long festival attracted thousands of spectators including President Ulysses S. Grant.¹⁹

Criticized for lowering the standards of good music by such "monster concerts," Gilmore, nevertheless, sponsored still another extravaganza in 1872. Importing the "king of waltz-makers," Johann Strauss, and several bands from western Europe, Gilmore's grand scheme fell far short of his expectations. Nonetheless, thousands of spirited and sentimental souls turned out to hear "O Erin My Country" and other Irish melodies played by a band from Dublin.²⁰

Many considered Boston to be "the best show town in the country", and nineteenth century Irish actors and entertainers gave the city's theatregoers much to applaud and laugh about, even when at the expense of their own culture and heritage. As early as the 1850's the so-called "stage Irishman" was rapidly displacing such traditional butts of American national humor as the happy-go-lucky, watermelon-loving Negro, the conniving Yankee trader, and tall-tale telling western frontiersman.²¹

The stage Irishman was usually named Pat, Paddy or Teague and he spoke with a heavy brogue. Almost without fail his props included a shillelegh, clay pipe, knee britches, tall hat, ragged coat, and whiskey bottle. The stock and trade of the stage Irishman was his gift of blarney, inflated oratory, propensity for fighting and drinking, and an inexhaustible wit and humor in the face of adversity and hard times.²²

Supported not only by a general public curious as to how its new immigrant neighbors supposedly lived but also by many of the Irish who longed nostalgically for anything from their Hibernian heritage regardless of how inaccurate it might be, melodramas and farces like "The Irish Free Lover," "The Irishman's Shanty" and "The Exiles of Erin" were tremendous box office attractions in Boston. The portrayal on stage of Irishmen as eccentric, sentimental buffoons sometimes drew severe disapproval from the city's Irish press. During his tenure as editor of the Pilot, Patrick Donahoe refused to review such productions and advised his readers to attend lectures instead. And even though he was acclaimed in some circles as the "Irish Shakespeare" Dion Boucicault, the Dublin-born playwright and actor, was criticized at the time of his death in 1890 for overemphasizing in his theatrical productions the worst features of Celtic character.²³

With the customs and idiosyncrasies of newer immigrant groups like the Jews and Italians providing fresh material for writers of popular drama in the 1880's, the stage image of the Irish was gradually modified; it became more positive, romantic. In addition to reviewing popular American productions, the theatre critic for the Boston Irish Republic began giving favorable reviews to those plays which revealed "a charming, refined, ideal picture of Irish life" or which had as their overriding theme the heroic struggle of the defiant Irish peasant against the oppressive landlord. Economically and politically more secure by the 1890's, the Boston Irish were even able to appreciate the humor found in "Sport McAllister," a comedy which traced the rise of an Irish politician in New York and "Mrs. B. O'Shaughnessey" which poked fun at an Irish family's difficulty in adjusting to the world of society following its inheritance of a large fortune.²⁴

Accepting this new romantic stereotype of themselves and their ancestors, the Boston Irish underwent a severe identification crisis when John Millington Synge's "The Playboy Of The Western World" made its debut in the Hub in the fall of 1911. The play, which had already provoked riots at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, was set in a small village in Mayo where a stranger, Christy Mahon, had thrown some of the local inhabitants into a state of frenzy by his bold admission that he had murdered his father. After using religious expressions such as "Oh, glory be to God!" to indicate their initial shock, the villagers soon take a liking to this rogue who has supposedly liberated himself from the yoke of parental authority and defied the norms and mores of civilized society itself. Infatuated with his newly acquired status as hero, Mahon himself is caught off guard by the sudden appearance of his father. In an effort to regain his lost popularity, he tries to kill the old man but fails, and then by a curious turn of events, ultimately ends up reconciling his differences with his "da."²⁵

Like a fire company so bent on answering an alarm that it forgets to take notice of the location of the conflagration, few of the Boston Irish bothered to pay any attention to Synge's inciteful probes into human conduct and character. Instead, they lashed out at the play as an attempt by an Anglo-Irishman to demean the Celtic character and to resurrect the ghost of the stage Irishman. A past president of the Charitable Irish Society, Michael J. Jordan claimed the play was "gross," "vulgar," "demoralizing" and "a glorification of murder." The Pilot sent a priest who reportedly had a "profound knowledge of the Irish character and language" to review the production. Objecting to religious expressions coming from the "lips of ruffians and murderers", he concluded that the play was an outright "insult to the Irish race." Under pressure from other Irish organizations which sought to ban the production because it was "replete with swearing and offensive to morals," Mayor Fitzgerald sent the city censor to study the play. The latter did so and decided to allow it to run. He asserted that the protesters had overreacted and were "Blind to the Irony" in Synge's masterpiece.²⁶

If the Irish had ambivalent feelings over who they were theatrically, they were troubled even more over the matter of social drinking within their community. As a form of escapism, social intercourse, and rites of passage to manhood, the heavy consumption of alcoholic beverages was sanctioned culturally for centuries not only in Ireland but in other parts of the British Isles as well. Drinking was a fixture at weddings, wakes and celebrations marking either an individual's acceptance into a guild or an oldest son's takeover of his father's farm. Additionally, liquor served to suppress, one suspects, the sense of economic and sexual frustration felt by many of an Irish household's junior male members,

who because of the customs determining land inheritance, were never financially independent enough to marry and raise a family of their own.²⁷

The products of a culture where alcohol served as a sort of all purpose social lubricant, the Irish had a difficult time in Boston living down their well-publicized reputation for drinking. Police department surveys in the 1850's often noted gloomily how the proliferation of Irish-owned barrooms and saloons were transforming the physical face of the Hub and the large number of Irish arrested for drunkenness lent some credence to the idea of the "Wild Hibernian".²⁸

To offset this serious but often exaggerated problem, the Irish community developed its own strategies to minimize excessive inebriety. On the eve of Saint Patrick's Day the Pilot habitually cautioned celebrants to avoid drowning the shamrock in liquor, and when some disregarded such advice and ended up in jail, the newspaper properly admonished them. John Boyle O'Reilly advocated construction of gymnasiums as an alternative form of recreation to the saloon. The parish bulletin of Saint Francis de Sales in Charlestown criticized the Irish custom of "Treating," whereby an individual's hospitality and generosity were measured by his willingness to buy free drinks for his friends. Irish temperance societies lobbied zealously against the sale of intoxicating beverages in public parks, liquor advertisements in Catholic newspapers and the especially annoying custom of saloon keepers flying Irish flags over their establishments on Saint Patrick's Day. But the temperance societies enjoyed only a modicum of support among a community that essentially felt that the question of drinking should be left up to the individual.²⁹

In attempting to discourage the Ancient Order of Hibernians from serving alcoholic beverages at its regular meetings, temperance advocates triggered the famous "Sunday beer socials" controversy in 1899. In a letter to a pro-temperance Catholic newspaper, one Irish reader who was opposed to "dry" meetings reassured critics that the A.O.H. was not "going to the dogs" because of drinking and maintained, moreover, that the fraternal organization owed its immense popularity to the fact that it did serve spirits at its gatherings. But the forces of sobriety ultimately triumphed within the Order. Overcoming initial "abuse and vilification" from their fellow Hibernians, the temperance advocates believed, perhaps overoptimistically, that they had put to rest the popular notion that drink was "essential" to "Irish sociability."³⁰

On a more positive note Irish temperance societies never underestimated the importance of entertainment as a deterrent to the bottle. In one of their lecture series a Sioux Indian chief spoke through an interpreter of the tragic effects of "the white man's firewater," on his people. They sponsored parish baseball teams and marching bands whose flags were inscribed with such statements as "Keep Cool" and "Give me this water that I may not thirst." In 1909 temperance proponents organized a "Monster Field Day" which drew over forty thousand people to Franklin Park for a full day of games, dog shows, music, juggling acts, ice cream, soda water and candy. During the course of the day, fifteen thousand youngsters took the pledge. They went home carrying a picture of Theobald Mathew, the temperance priest, and a message warning their parents against the evils of demon rum.³¹

In trying to combat the popularity of the local neighborhood saloon among the working-class Irish, temperance forces were fighting a dubious battle. As

firmly rooted in the Irish past as the parish church itself, the saloon, as a social institution, fulfilled more than a customer's longing for a cold beer or shot of whiskey. With its informal setting of wooden chairs, cardtables, sawdust covered floors and soft lighting illuminating perhaps a mural of John L. Sullivan or Mike Kelly, the saloon acted as a community social center where the Irish could congregate to discuss union matters or to exchange the latest bit of news from the old country while enjoying a five cent beer and a "free lunch," (mandated by law) consisting usually of bread, crackers, pickles and beef stew.³²

And if members of the Yankee community preferred to gather at town halls to discuss matters of public importance, many Irish, on the other hand, found the noisy and convivial atmosphere of the saloon ideally suited to their peculiar brand of democracy known as ward boss politics. Saloon keepers themselves were frequently officeholders and consequently had little fear of going out of business as long as they could provide patronage jobs for their customers in return for their votes on election day. A high point in the social life of the saloon was when the "prince of jolliers", or the ward boss himself, made an appearance. Treating the house to a "free" round of drinks, his reputation as a storyteller was usually well-deserved, as he enthralled his listeners with accounts of the latest intrigues at City Hall or made predictions on an upcoming election.³³

With the average work week declining steadily after 1900, Irish politicians moved swiftly to exploit the growing desire of their non-drinking constituency for recreation and leisure. To make up for the "lack of social life" in their district a group of ward heelers in Roxbury founded the Eustis Club in 1903 and furnished it with a reading room, billiard tables and cafeteria that was said to

be a "model of neatness and comfort." Among the most successful promoters of leisure activities were James Michael Curley and his Tammany Club. Along with providing toys, clothing and entertainment at Christmas time for the underprivileged children of Ward Seventeen, the Tammanyites became reknown for their annual balls and picnics.³⁴

Picnics were the highlight of the summer season. Leaflets announcing an upcoming picnic invited young and old alike to come "To The Woods For 12 Hours' Solid Pleasure." Often such picnics attracted crowds as large as twenty thousand. Parents and children spent the day variously listening to the overblown oratory of the "Big Chiefs" of the Democratic Party or by watching or participating in track and field events, baseball games, piano-smashing contests, "greased pig chases" and "old folks dancing" which featured the music of genuine Irish pipers. Accounts of the picnic in the next morning's newspaper attested to the overwhelming success of the Irish politician as a recreation director. They itemized the exact amounts of ham, hot dogs, rolls, ice cream, peanuts and lemonade consumed by his constituents.³⁵

The Boston Irish enjoyed political speechmaking and oratory as an art form in and of itself. Here again was a carryover from the old country, for among Ireland's national heroes were such master orators as Robert Emmett, Henry Grattan and Daniel O'Connell. But on a more subtle and important level was the fact that without a national theatre to satisfy the desire of the masses for diversion and with the shanachie or local village storyteller vanishing from the countryside, the nineteenth century Irish politician, with his penchant for flamboyant rhetoric, vivid metaphors, witty anecdotes and often personal invectives, assumed as if by

cultural default, the added burden of entertaining a people, who reared on a rich oral tradition, came to value how a public figure said something almost as much as what he stood for.³⁶

Around election time the average Boston Irish politician never overlooked the opportunity to provide "good theater" with his campaign antics and speech-making. From the moment nomination papers were filed, all kinds of excitement was generated as candidates scrambled for key endorsements and freely accused one another of engaging in "dirty politics" such as employing hecklers or using sneezing powder to disrupt campaign meetings. An heir to Daniel O'Connell's legacy of mass participation in the democratic process, the individual Irishman in Boston relished the fanfare and excitement of the political rally.³⁷

In 1910, for example, thousands turned out with torches, placards and banners to support mayoral candidate John F. Fitzgerald. Assisted by the newly invented automobile, "Honey Fitz" made a triumphant "Whirlwind Tour" throughout the city's twenty-five wards on the night before the election. Crossing over a bridge into the Irish district of South Boston he was escorted out of his auto and into another drawn by a hundred "Rope Pullers" who towed the machine up the main avenue in a fashion reminiscent of the days in the old country when admirers of O'Connell hand pulled his stagecoach through every Irish village.³⁸

Often carried to the podium on a sea of shoulders, the candidate's speech was, of course, the climax of any campaign rally. Whether it was delivered by accomplished orators such as Curley, Fitzgerald, Lomasney or just some "local spellbinder," Irish political speechmaking had, like any crowd pleasing spectacle, certain noticeable features. Similar to the new politicians of the Jacksonian

Era who were fond of contrasting their humble log cabin beginnings with that of their elitist opponents, Boston's Irish politicians often compared their modest, tenement house origins with those of their opponents, who as often as not were Harvard-educated, Back Bay-bred, Protestants.³⁹

And as in Ireland where John Bull was clearly perceived as the villain and the defiant peasant as the hero, champions of the underdog like Curley and Fitzgerald instinctively grasped the practical as well as theatrical significance of having so recognizable an adversary as the Yankee Brahmin to lampoon. Playing shrewdly on these economic and social tensions, they could illicit a round of applause from their audiences by claiming that if elected the Minots and Matthews would pay their taxes like every other ordinary citizen. And a minute later they could evoke a gale of laughter by maintaining that patrician officeseekers such as James Storrow could not identify a pair of workingman's overalls if his life depended on it.⁴⁰

Once in office Irish politicians had much to say over what constituted legitimate recreation and what did not. At one time or another before 1917, both Curley and Fitzgerald condemned smoking in public buildings, nude bathing by the "L Street Brownies," a group of local eccentrics; and modern dance crazes like the tango, turkey trot and "grizzly bear". The fight film showing negro Jack Johnson demolishing his white opponent Jim Jeffries for the heavyweight championship in 1910 was the source of serious racial disturbances in other parts of the country. But Fitzgerald banned its showing in Boston because of its "brutality". Irish politicians, on the other hand, lobbied faithfully for more public playgrounds, parks, zoos, golf courses, music concerts, and "high-class" operas. And despite

strong opposition from Catholic church officials and other religious groups, Fitzgerald and Martin Lomasney led the legislative battle in 1911 against the Blue Laws forbidding the playing of baseball on Sunday.⁴¹

Another outlet for the Irish recreationally was the world of "Society and Clubdom." Organizations like the Tipperary Men's Association brought the "exiled sons of Gallant Tipperary" together while others such as the Knights and Ladies of Saint Brendan helped to strengthen the bonds among those from the County Kerry. A very conspicuous organization among the Irish was, of course, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a fraternity whose origins could be traced all the way back to medieval Ireland. At first suspected by some American prelates of being a subversive, revolutionary organization bent on provoking violence between management and labor, the A.O.H. could boast of over eight thousand members alone in Boston's Suffolk County by 1900. Providing its brethren with inexpensive life insurance and ample opportunity to socialize, the Order was divided into local divisions or chapters named in honor of famous Irish heroes like Wolfe Tone and Brian Boru. A.O.H. parades, with marchers in full regalia and often carrying swords, were always a principal feature of Saint Patrick's Day celebrations.⁴²

Two of the most prestigious social organizations were the Charitable Irish Society and The Catholic Union. Founded as early as 1737 to combat poverty among their fellow immigrants, the Charitable Irish Society by the 1850's had evolved into an essentially wining and dining club for middle-class Irish professionals. Holding its annual Saint Patrick's Day dinner in Boston's most exclusive hotels, where prominent Yankees often were guests, Society members took special pride

in the fact that they represented the oldest Irish society in America. They would also boast that they were placed close to the "blue bloods" from the Historical and Geneological Society during the public ceremony commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1875. The Catholic Union, on the other hand, was an association dedicated to articulating and defending church interests in Boston. The Catholic Union counted many Irishmen among its "elite" membership of some 400 in the 1870's. Besides sponsoring a lecture series on topics of current interest, the Union's "commodious clubhouse" located in the fashionable South End had a library, billiard room and bowling alley, where anyone accompanied by a female guest on Friday evenings was automatically given preference over all others waiting to try their luck at tenpins.⁴³

The proliferation of such organizations reflected not only the natural wish of the Irish to socialize with their own but also their social ostracism from Yankee society at large. The chances of an Irish Catholic gaining admission to such Brahmin strongholds as the Somerset and Algonquin Clubs were virtually non-existent. Out of 600 members belonging to the Somerset Club in 1917 only three, at the most, had Irish surnames. And at "The Country Club" in nearby suburban Brookline where other Yankee patricians congregated to play golf, tennis, polo, curling, and to watch horseracing, the same pattern of social discrimination existed. Denied access to these clubs, only a handful of Irish were listed in the Social Register, the true hallmark of full acceptance into white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Boston society.⁴⁴

To a less extent, the same type of social segregation that marked Irish-Yankee relations in the city carried over into summer resort areas around the

Hub. The Yankees tended to vacation in the North Shore towns of Nahant, Marblehead and Beverly while prominent Irishmen like O'Reilly, Donnelly, Gargan and Fitzgerald summered in communities south of Boston and on Cape Cod. With the summer vacation as much a symbol of middle-class respectability as the white-collar, other moderately successful Irish Catholics such as Thomas Ring took advantage of the low cost excursion fares offered by railroad companies to escape to the scenic mountains of either New Hampshire or Vermont.⁴⁵

A few of the Irish even made it all the way back to the old sod. Monsignor Denis O'Callagan, a native of Cork and pastor at Saint Augustine's, returned on at least two occasions. Likewise, the respected Boston journalist Stephan O'Meara traveled to the land of his father's birth in the winter of 1906. O'Meara was touched by the Irish's hospitality and stoicism in face of losing their loved ones to the continuing curse of immigration. But other visitors from America frequently complained of having "to dole out small and large silver at every step" to hotel servants and proprietors who assumed that all American tourists were rich.⁴⁶

On March seventeenth any disagreements over the old country were temporarily put aside as Irishmen all over Boston joined in commemorating Saint Patrick's Day. Having dispelled much of the popular suspicion surrounding their allegiance to America by their patriotism during the Civil War, the Boston Irish, after Appomattox, asserted their new sense of belonging by turning their patron saint's feastday into more of a secular than a religious occasion. Some chose to mark the day by attending temperance banquets where toasts to Erin were made with "sparkling water," while others celebrated at parish socials, music concerts,

local saloons and commercial theatres which featured Irish plays and skits all month long. A parade which wound its way through downtown Boston and the outlying neighborhoods of Charlestown, South Boston and Dorchester drew thousands of spectators, many of whom had decorated their residences and business establishments with portraits of Saint Patrick and banners exclaiming, Erin Go Bragh (Ireland Forever) and Cead Mile Failte (A Hundred Thousand Welcomes).⁴⁷

With few hands to greet them when their ships docked on the piers in East Boston in the 1840's, the famine Irish successfully relied on their own resourcefulness and imagination in making life worth living in more than a material sense. Using the parish church as a starting point, they organized their own fraternities, social clubs and amateur athletic teams. In the world of professional sports, the likes of Mike Kelly and John L. Sullivan helped revolutionize the games of baseball and boxing as much as Andrew Carnegie affected the steel industry. With second generation Irish alone making up over fifteen percent of the entertainment profession in Boston by the turn of the century, the Sons of Erin would additionally leave a lasting imprint on popular drama, music and comedy. And if aloof, old time Yankees looked upon public officeholding as a solemn duty that had to be performed with the least bit of fanfare and input from the masses, the colorful, earthy Irish politician felt otherwise, as he humanized, and sometimes corrupted, the electoral process itself by catering to every voter, whether at picnics, rallies or simply in the neighborhood saloon.⁴⁸

FOOTNOTES

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- 46 "Saint Augustine Convent Annals"(1903-1927), 7, 117; O'Meara papers, February 17, 1906; Ring papers, undated.
- 47 Boston Herald, March 16, 18, 1871; March 18, 1872; March 17, 1873; Republic, March 12, 1892; Wittke, The Irish in America, 199, 200. Contending that William of Orange's defeat of King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 was "a victory of light over darkness, and of truth over wrong", some 3,000 people from around Boston turned out for public festivities marking Orangemen's Day in July of 1893. British-American Citizen, July 22, 1893.
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Chapter 6

THE IRISH AND THE MELTING POT

There are no classes
or races, but one human
brotherhood; There are no
creeds to be outlawed,
no colors of skin debarred;
Mankind is one in its
rights and wrongs—one
right, one hope, one guard.

John Boyle O'Reilly, 1884¹

The greatest threat to any struggling minority group is another struggling minority group. Beginning with hostile encounters with Boston's Negro population during the 1840's, the Irish thereafter were to compete fiercely for jobs, housing and educational and political opportunities with recently arrived Jews, Italians, French-Canadians, Germans, Poles and Lithuanians. Residing primarily in the fashionable Back Bay or Beacon Hill sections, Proper Bostonians were geographically isolated from these newer immigrants. The working class Irish, on the other hand, lived in the inner city and found themselves caught in an ethnic whirlpool of strange languages, dialects, customs and manner. Inevitably they came into close, and not always friendly, contact with these different ethnic groups at the factory, school, union hall, parish church and neighborhood political ward meeting.

To a great extent, then, the real struggle to uphold the democratic ideals

of respect for racial and ethnic diversity took place not in the culturally homogeneous society of Harvard Yard or in the secluded drawing rooms of comfortable Yankees but rather in the variegated immigrant world of the North, South and West Ends. And by functioning as an intermediary between native, Yankee Boston and the newer immigrants, the Irish would in turn pretty much determine whether America's cherished melting pot would melt or shatter.

Like the Pilgrims encountering their first American Indian, the Irish who landed in Boston during the 1840's had no prior historical experience in dealing with Negroes, their chief rivals for jobs. Crowded into a rundown section behind the State House known as "Nigger Hill," Boston's Black population numbered around 2,000 in 1850 and was employed principally as waiters, dishwashers, chimney sweepers, longshoremen and warehousemen. Competing for these menial jobs, the Irish and the Blacks almost immediately became arch enemies. Negroes joined Yankee Protestants, in condemning the Irish for being priest-ridden, paupers, drunkards and rioters, and in an effort to protect what little property they owned on Elm Street, some of them in 1850 signed a petition to keep the Irish from encroaching on their neighborhood.²

Talk of abolition only intensified the antagonisms already existing between these two groups. While opposed to slavery in principle, the struggling Irish laborer understandably recoiled at the possibility of having to compete with four million freedmen for employment. Besides the economic factor, however, the Irish also had legitimate reservations regarding the motives and sincerity of the Abolitionists. Some Abolitionists, or "Nigger-worshippers", as the Boston Pilot preferred to call them, were known to have been militantly anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant.³

Equally disturbing if not hypocritical, was the fact that while Abolitionists vociferously championed the rights of slaves hundreds of miles away in Dixie, they maintained a sphinx-like silence regarding the New England factory system that oppressed and brutalized the Irish worker. Moreover, The Pilot pointedly asked how could Abolitionists like Harriet Beecher Stowe address anti-slavery societies in England and remain unmoved by the anguish and suffering across the Irish Sea. In a country that unequivocally championed white over black people, the Irish in Boston paradoxically found themselves in a community that seemingly preferred Negroes over immigrant, Catholic Caucasians.⁴

Understandably, then, any attempts to improve the status of the black man with respect to the immigrant drew caustic remarks from Boston's Irish press. In 1854, for example, when Boston's Abolitionists physically threatened to attack police authorities in order to prevent the return of Anthony Burns, a fugitive slave, to his southern master, the Pilot condemned them as lawbreakers. Commenting on the new suit that Burns was wearing for his trip back home, the Pilot reported him mumbling to himself, "By Golly, my old sweetheart won't know dis child when he gets back, he looks so nice." When the Boston public schools were officially integrated in 1855, the Irish again were less than enthusiastic about their children sharing classrooms with Negroes. They were particularly critical of wealthy Yankees, Abolitionists included, who, enrolled their offspring in private schools or the highly select Boston Latin School. The old question as to whether black children possessed the mental ability to compete successfully with white students was questionable, concluded the Pilot. And when John Brown tried to capture the arsenal at Harper's Ferry in the fall of 1859, the Pilot was relieved to learn that not one Irishman was implicated in the raid. The only Irishman at the scene

of the attack the newspaper boasted, were marines like Sergeant Quinn who lost his life in trying to recapture the arsenal.⁵

So long as the American Civil War was being waged to preserve the Union rather than to free the slave, the Boston Irish enthusiastically supported the northern cause. But when President Lincoln started talking about emancipating the slave, the Pilot, changing course, declared that the slaves themselves would reject the President's proposal because, "they love their masters, as dogs do, and servile plantation life is the life nature intended for them." And later, in 1863 when the Army of the Potomac contemplated forming all-Negro fighting units, the Pilot remarked with typical nastiness, that the body odor emanating from twenty thousand marching black soldiers would be a dead giveaway to Confederates ten miles away.⁶

Involved in a war that they thought was being fought ostensibly to preserve the Union rather than to free the slave, the Irish adamantly opposed a federal conscription law passed shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Unlike some of the most avid Abolitionists who escaped military service by furnishing a substitute or by buying an exemption outright for 300 dollars, the Irishman and other native-born poor working class whites were prime candidates to fill the depleted ranks of the Northern army. Infuriated at the blatant inequities in the law, the Irish reacted violently.⁷

In New York City, four days of rioting against the draft in July of 1863 left over seventy people dead. While these outbursts were going on, Irishmen in Boston congregated on street corners or in saloons and tenement house flats to exchange

the latest bit of news or to discuss rumor that their countrymen in New York were being slaughtered. To make matters worse, some of Boston's Irish priests who themselves were liable to conscription, were reportedly using language that tended to "inflame the mind" of their parishoners. At one Irish parish in the North End, an anti-draft meeting broke up noisily with "cheers for Jeff Davis." To vent their frustrations, mobs soon took to the street. They assaulted hapless Negroes and ransacked stores along State Street in an effort to procure firearms to resist federal marshals issuing draft notices. Protecting an armory from these "Mobocrats", as Garrison called them, the State militia finally fired on the crowd, killing 6 people, 3 of whom had Irish surnames.⁸

Meanwhile, a short distance away at the Cathedral rectory, James A. Healy, a Black Catholic priest, recorded his impressions of the disturbances in the Episcopal register. As fate would have it, Father Healy, son of an Irish, southern plantation owner and a Mulatto slave woman, had been placed temporarily in charge of the Boston Diocese while Bishop John Bernard Fitzpatrick was out of town. He faulted Archbishop John Hughes of New York for inciting his parishioners to violence with inflammatory speeches, but praised Father Robert Brady, who was stationed in Boston's North End, for pacifying his congregation during the riots with a "well-timed admonition." Identifying more with his role as a representative of the Catholic Church hierarchy than with his Irish and Negro heritage, Healy himself aided in preventing any further disturbances in Boston by issuing a diocesan circular condemning violence and cautioning Catholics to avoid "factious assemblies."⁹

After the surrender at Appomattox and the appointment of John Boyle O'Reilly as the Pilot's editor in 1876 relations between the Boston Irish and Negro communities improved considerably. To honor an Irishman and a Black who were killed

during the Boston Massacre in 1770, both groups worked closely together in 1887 to overcome strong Brahmin opposition to erecting a monument on the Boston Common commemorating individuals, whom they considered nothing less than "hoodlums, rioters, and ruffians." Unlike most Irishman, O'Reilly had some previous exposure to people of color before arriving in Boston in the winter of 1870. While in exile in Australia, the ex-Fenian had come to admire the spiritual temperament of the aborigines, particularly their love of music and nature. As editor of the Pilot, he gave considerable coverage to Negro social and cultural activities, praised the appointment of Blacks to public office, and even condoned racial intermarriage.¹⁰

Nonetheless in the early years of Reconstruction, O'Reilly declared that Negroes should seek advancement gradually first by obtaining an education and later by demanding social and political equality. But with the passage of time, the South's harsh treatment of the freedmen forced him to greater militancy. Following the murder of some Negroes in Mississippi in 1886, O'Reilly advised Blacks to mobilize politically. "If I were a colored man" he asserted, "I should use political parties, as I would a club or a hatchet, to smash the prejudice that dared to exclude my children from a public school, or myself from a public hall, theater, or hotel."¹¹

Anti-Negro demonstrations above the Mason-Dixon Line were no less repugnant to O'Reilly. He criticized eight Indianapolis white students who protested against sharing a graduation platform with a Black classmate and condemned New York policemen who threatened to strike rather than allow a Negro to join the force. When O'Reilly denounced the Franklin Typographical Society of Boston in 1877 for refusing

membership to a Negro printer, one reader cancelled his Pilot subscription and accused him of attempting to mongrelize the white race. O'Reilly responded: "We are sorry that such sentiments should come from one who boasts of belonging to 'the faithful Irish.'" He added: "There is nothing Irish about his principles; and we are glad to receive the 'stop my Pilot' of such a man."¹²

In 1890, when Clement Garnett Morgan, a Negro, was the Commencement Day class orator at Harvard, O'Reilly used the occasion for another attack on American racial hypocrisy. "When his oration was ended" he wrote, "and Morgan stepped out of Harvard and into the world, he ceased to be a "gentleman" and an equal, and at one descent fell to the level of "the Nigger," who could never be invited to one's house or proposed at one's club, who would be refused a room at nearly all leading hotels, even in the North, and who would not be tolerated even in church in the half-empty pew of polite worshippers."¹³

O'Reilly's sudden death in the summer of 1890 stunned Boston's Negro community. For a full day, both black and white mourners solemnly filed past the former Fenian's bier in St. Mary's Church in nearby Charlestown. And on the coffin lid, just above the shamrocks on O'Reilly's chest, lay palm branches placed there by the city's Black population. They had lost perhaps their greatest friend in Boston since Wendell Phillips.¹⁴

The Irishman and Negro would continue, of course, to mingle at Catholic churches like St. Mary's, for at the turn of the century, about one thousand or 10 percent of the city's total black population was Roman Catholic. One well-known Negro convert to Catholicism was Robert Morris, the first Black to be admitted to the Boston Bar. Morris, up until his death in 1882, enjoyed a highly

successful law practice made up mostly of Irish clients. He took an eager, bright-eyed, Irish-faced altar boy named Patrick Andrew Collins under his wing. He brought Collins, a future mayor and congressman, to work in his law firm as an officeboy. To a certain extent the melting pot had truly melted.¹⁵

Within the Catholic Church hierarchy itself, the careers of two black priests, James and Sherwood Healy, would, in turn, be greatly enhanced by their close association with Irish American prelates like John Bernard Fitzpatrick, the bishop of Boston from 1846 to 1866. An intimate friend of the family, Fitzpatrick persuaded Michael Morris Healy, a wealthy Georgian Irish planter, to send his sons to Holy Cross College in Massachusetts from where they eventually entered the priesthood. The Healy brothers were assigned to Fitzpatrick's diocese in the 1850's and the paternalistic bishop closely monitored their ecclesiastical progress. In 1865 when the possibility arose that Father Sherwood would be granted a prestigious rectorship in an upstate New York seminary, the bishop intervened to discourage the move, claiming that the black priest was too inexperienced for the position. Anticipating problems over his racial background, Fitzpatrick informed seminary officials that "he has African blood and it shows distinctly in his exterior."¹⁶

Father James Healy was indispensable to Fitzpatrick. Suffering from poor health, the bishop relied heavily on the talented, aristocratic looking, Healy for advice and assistance in administering to his sprawling Boston archdiocese. In reward for his faithful dedication, Healy was appointed pastor of the newly built church of St. James in 1866. Although Healy was of light complexion, the fact that he was colored was a subject of great discussion among the predominantly Irish congregation. For nine years, before being appointed bishop of Portland, Maine in 1875, Healy went about his priestly duties of saying Mass, hearing con-

fessions and preaching sermons on "Humility", "Human Respect" and "Hell and Damnation." Addressed as "Father James" by his flock, the black priest evidently felt perfectly at home at St. James. Privately, he said that he had learned his lessons well on how to "tame" and "rule" an Irish parish from his mentor, Fitzpatrick.¹⁷

In the post-Civil War era the Catholic Church in Boston took a variety of steps to meet the special needs of its black brethren. Catholic charitable institutions, supported principally by Irish donations readily accepted Negro orphans, and in 1889 the St. Vincent de Paul Society established a parish conference to deal directly with Black poverty. The conference was named in honor of Peter Claver, a Negro saint. Consisting of 30 charter members and under Black leadership, the conference faltered almost from its inception and accomplished little. By 1897, only one black still belonged to the Society. Nevertheless, he was encouraged by its president, Thomas Ring, to "keep the flag flying."¹⁸

At the turn of the century black Catholics usually worshipped together with their white coreligionists. But in the fall of 1898 Negroes attending an Irish parish in the South End sought permission from Fitzpatrick's successor, Archbishop John Williams, to hold their own separate religious services. What prompted this unusual request is not clear. But they were granted permission to do so in the unpalatial basement of the Cathedral. And by 1908 Negro Catholics in Boston finally received their own house of worship. Abandoned by its former Irish parishoners who had migrated to more desirable sections of the city and suburbs, the church, old, delapidated and constructed of wood, was ironically named Saint Patrick's.¹⁹

Irishmen and Negroes also met in the rough and tumble secular world of Boston ward politics. Although small in number and traditionally tied to the party of

Lincoln, the Negro voter was nonetheless wooed by Irish American politicians such as mayors John F. Fitzgerald and James Michael Curley. Barnstorming on the night before an election in 1907, Fitzgerald took time out from his busy schedule to address a black audience at a Faneuil Hall meeting called to protest President Theodore Roosevelt's dismissal two years earlier of five Negro soldiers from the United States Army for their involvement in the controversial Brownsville, Texas incident. Fitzgerald was cheered wildly when he condemned the President's actions as being arbitrary and discriminatory.²⁰

Praised by the city's leading Negro newspaper, The Guardian, as a man "free from all color prejudice," Fitzgerald remained throughout his public life astutely sensitive to the political aspirations of Black people. In 1910, for example, he appointed Edward Everett Brown, an attorney and one of his most trusted Black supporters, to head the City's Weights and Measures Department. And when some of the department's personnel protested their new boss, Fitzgerald publically accused them of prejudice and ordered them to resign. At other times, the mayor tried to use his good offices to avoid racial conflict generated by the showing of derogatory, anti-black plays such as "The Clansman". At a special meeting held in his office in July of 1910, the Mayor brought together representatives of the play and Negro protestors. During the confab, however, Fitzgerald offended one Negro present by referring to the Blacks as "you people." After admonishing the protester that he was one not to be dictated to and that his expression was perfectly proper, the Mayor persuaded the producers to remove the play from Boston.²¹

Less successful in relating to Black people was "Honey Fitz's" successor, James Michael Curley. Even though he appointed some Negroes to high municipal

posts, named a city street in honor of Frederick Douglass, and championed the right of a Black soldier to be interred in Arlington National Cemetery while in Congress, Curley alienated thousands of Negroes by his attitude in the "Birth of a Nation" movie controversy in 1915.²²

Briefly, the film grossly distorted southern life under Black Republican rule during the Reconstruction Era. Some of the scenes depicted Negro politicians, for instance, sitting in state legislatures with their feet up on the desks, puffing away on long cigars. Another caption showed a lecherous looking black man chasing a young white girl across an open field to the edge of a cliff, where after hesitating momentarily, she finally jumped to her death to escape the clutching hands of her pursuer.²³

If D. W. Griffith's movie pleased white supremacists, it outraged militant young black leaders like William Monroe Trotter. A Harvard graduate and editor of The Guardian, Trotter and others implored Curley to use his influence to prevent the showing of this racially incendiary film. Curley refused to do so, however, claiming censorship authority rested with a three man committee consisting of Stephen O'Meara, the Police Commissioner; Thomas H. Dowd, the City's Chief Justice; and John Michael Casey, a retired burlesque show musician and Boston's official censor. Curley, however, eventually did apply pressure and had a forced marriage scene between a black man and a white girl and part of the chase episode censored as well as the opening lines of the movie that declared, "the bringing of the African to America in the seventeenth century planted the first seed of disunion."²⁴

Still not placated, Trotter resorted to legal and extralegal methods to

thwart the movie's showing. But wherever he turned, he was frustrated by a city bureaucracy and power structure dominated by Irish American officials. Hoping to disrupt the showing of the movie on opening night, Trotter and some of his supporters went to the Tremont Theatre, just across from the Boston Common. However, anticipating trouble, Police Superintendent Michael Crowley had strategically placed 50 plainclothesmen throughout the movie house and in the theatre lobby. At the box office, meanwhile, a ticket agent had recognized Trotter and refused to sell him a ticket, asserting that the performance was sold out. Trotter was incensed, and heated words were exchanged. And Dennis Harrington, a policeman standing nearby, intervened and ended up hitting Trotter on the jaw and arresting him.²⁵

Unsuccessful both at the theatre and in the courtroom where Judge Thomas Dowd refused to ban the movie, the determined Trotter persisted. At a Faneuil Hall rally attended by prominent Brahmins like Moorfield Storey and a past president of the Charitable Irish Society, Michael Jordan, Trotter bitterly criticized Curley. "Where is the valiant Jim Curley of old", he asked, "the friend of the people...lovable Jim Curley, whom we Colored People supported for the mayoralty against the advice of some of our white friends? If this were an attack on the Irish race" Trotter concluded, "he would find a way pretty quick to stop it."²⁶

Taking his case to the State House, Trotter met with Governor David I. Walsh, who publically stated his sympathy with the Black editor but had no jurisdiction over the matter. At public hearings held shortly thereafter to debate stricter censorship laws, tempers flared. A state legislator, Richard Callahan, who once had been assaulted by Blacks, testified amid hisses and boos that Negroes were

looking for trouble and were "likely to get it." Despite strong opposition from Irish Catholic Democrats, a stronger censorship law eventually was passed. But as Trotter pointed out, Curley was in "no hurry" to enforce it. After a lengthy six month run, "the Birth of a Nation" ended. Boston's greatest racial irritant since the Civil War was at last over.²⁷

Inasmuch as Curley generally sympathized with minorities, his behavior throughout "The Birth of a Nation" flare-up is perplexing. Taking into account that he was acquainted with some of the promoters of the film from his days as a congressman in Washington, it is just possible that the mayor might have promised free publicity for the movie by inciting controversy in exchange for campaign contributions. Or perhaps he was annoyed by certain Brahmins who sided resolutely with the Negro throughout this dispute. After all, were not these the same Protestant Yankees who had employed his mother as a maid for niggardly wages? Whatever his motives, Curley had his way to the detriment of Black-Irish relations.

No less of a problem for Boston's Irish were the newly arrived Jewish immigrants. Fleeing from Czarist oppression, over 24,000 Russian and Eastern European Jewish refugees found their way into the Hub between 1880 and 1905. For the Irishmen standing around Donegal Square, puffing deliberately on their dudeen pipes, the sight of these exotic looking strangers moving into their already congested North End tenement house neighborhood must have been disquieting. After all, were not these people the descendants of the biblical Christ slayers? And what was one to make of their unintelligible dialects, bizarre eating habits, strange dress, Oriental looking beards and, supposedly, radical political ideas.²⁸

As far apart culturally and socially as Dublin and Jerusalem, altercations

between these two groups were inevitable. A sensitive issue was housing. Searching desperately for living accommodations in a city already taxed by a chronic housing shortage, the Jews inadvertently caused rents to skyrocket. Unable to pay the new rent increases, some working-class Irish families in the North End attributed their misfortunes directly to the intruding Jews when they were forced to move or were evicted. Another related aspect of this problem were the hard feelings caused by the alleged "Jewish passion for the unearned increment" or real estate speculation. Writing in his diary in 1894, a Jesuit priest Francis Casey, noted that Jewish landlords were "encroaching upon our domain" in the North End. And two years later when Hebrew realtors approached his religious superior about buying the land on which the parish school stood, Father Casey worriedly asked, "and what may 10 or 15 years bring about in the North End."²⁹

Like housing, limited recreational facilities further intensified animosities between these two competitive ethnic groups. The summer of 1911 in Boston was an unusually oppressive one. During a heat wave that killed over 20 people, Jews along with thousands of other city dwellers, sought relief at the L Street Bath and Beach located in South Boston. With locker space and bathing suits issued by the city at a premium, regular bathers, who were mostly Irish, became incensed at seeing their neighborhood facilities invaded by Jews, Italians, Lithuanians and other "foreigners" from the suburbs. On one part of the beach an elderly Jewish man was thrown into the water by youths. Luckily he was rescued, noted the Jewish Advocate, by a "liberal minded person." Two years later, in 1913, another Jew was pushed off a raft by young Irish toughs and then beaten up with stones wrapped in a wet towel. Summoned to the scene, bathhouse superintendent Michael Kelley ordered two of his men to undress and swim out to the raft. They arrested

one Joseph O'Keefe for assault and battery.³⁰

Irish policemen and public officials were not always as considerate towards Jews as Superintendent Kelley. In the early 1900's, for example, Jewish peddlers and pawn shop dealers regularly complained of being harassed by patrolmen for violating the Sunday Blue Laws and of being discriminated against before licensing boards. Particularly annoying was the police department's practice of breaking up Jewish weddings on the pretense that union-paid musicians violated city ordinances prohibiting work on Sunday. Commenting on one such police raid in 1906, the Jewish Advocate pointedly advised Captain O'Lalor and his "merrymen" to use their time more effectively by raiding brothels and liquor rings flourishing in their precinct.³¹

Regarding education almost with reverence because it represented a way out of poverty and a means to a better life, the Jewish community resented Irish efforts to politicize the Boston Public School system. As a case in point, the Irish led by the Knights of Columbus, in 1905 succeeded in pressuring the Boston School Committee into making the study of Irish history a part of the grammar school curriculum. In responding to those who justified the new course on the grounds that Boston was essentially a Celtic city and that the contribution of the Irish to America had been largely ignored, the Advocate observed drily that a background in Irish history was useful only to those contemplating careers as political ward bosses. And again, a year later, when an unsuccessful attempt was made to introduce Gaelic into the public schools the Advocate caustically asked, "When will it End?"³²

Saved from having to adjust their Yiddish accents to fit Gaelic consonants, Jewish students attending the public schools nevertheless had to listen to Irish

Catholics and Protestant Yankee classmates singing carols at Christmas time. Contending that carols such as "Silent Night" and the "First Noel" were offensive to their religious beliefs, Jewish leaders in 1916 filed a formal complaint with authorities. But John Sullivan, the chief legal counsel for the City, dismissed the complaint on the grounds that the songs were intended primarily as a form of "vocal exercise" rather than as a religious ceremony.³³

For the young Jewish scholar trying to obtain a teaching position in a school system manned heavily by Irish bureaucrats and administrators, there were also difficulties. Critical of a system where "pull, favoritism, and chance" rather than merit usually determined whether one was hired or promoted, the Advocate singled out two school officials, Julia Duff and Walter L. Harrington, for special criticism. Mrs. Duff was accused of anti-Semitism because of her opposition to employing Hebrew interpreters in the evening adult education centers. Also in a political campaign against David Ellis, who was Jewish, she permitted the circulation of pamphlets asking, "Is it Julia or the Jew?". Mrs. Duff was finally defeated in her bid for re-election to the School Committee in 1906.³⁴

Mrs. Duff's brother, Walter Harrington, was the principal at a West End school where the majority of the student body was Jewish. He also came under severe fire in 1905. Led by an attorney, Robert Silverman, Jewish civic leaders accused Harrington of misappropriating school funds, of arbitrary grading and of discriminatory hiring practices. (None of the 45 faculty members were Jewish). Following several months of acrimonious public hearings, personal law suits and counter law suits, Harrington was finally dismissed. And with the appointment of Benjamin J. Hinds as headmaster, the Jews got what any other ethnic group would have wanted: one of their own.³⁵

In spite of these difficulties the Irish and the Jews did cooperate on occasion in a spirit of compassion and magnanimity. In the 1880's, for example, when some Jewish immigrants were illegally detained, Owen A. Galvin, a prominent Irish American attorney, obtained their release, and when the Boston City Hospital refused to admit Hebrew patients because they were aliens, the Catholic Carney Hospital unhesitatingly accepted them. Jews, in turn, assisted at fund raising affairs conducted by the Sisters of Charity at the Carney and openly praised the Irish as a highminded and "indomitable race."³⁶

And as Frederick A. Bushee, a settlement house worker noted at the turn of the century, the Sons of Erin and Zion learned how to break bread together politically. An informal political alliance between the two groups was possible for a variety of reasons. Because of their tendency to enter the professions and the business world, the Jews were never regarded by the Irish as a serious threat to their control over the city's Democratic Party machinery and related blue collar patronage jobs. And of course, there was also the human factor. Removed only a generation or two from the Great Hunger and the Crossing, the Irish undoubtedly harbored beneath their tough exterior a grudging respect and admiration for a people, who like themselves, suffered dearly for their religious convictions and way of life.³⁷

An important human bridge between these two alien cultures was the Irish politician. Free from any rigid, preconceived political ideology, the affable, practical-minded local ward boss had a face for every occasion. In catering to the Jewish voter, he could look just as happy eating Kosher food as he did corned beef and cabbage, or appear as equally solemn in a synagogue with his hat on as he did in a Catholic church with his head uncovered. A consummate professional, the Irish politician never took the small, but articulate and well organized

Jewish vote for granted. In a close, hard fought campaign between warring factions of the city's Irish Democratic Party, the Jewish vote could often prove decisive. And while rabbis liked to deceive themselves by complimenting their congregations for being discerning, independent-minded voters, other Hebrew leaders knew otherwise and consequently used the power associated with ethnic bloc voting to wangle concessions and recognition from shrewd and seasoned campaigners such as Martin Lomasney, John Fitzgerald and James Michael Curley.³⁸

To the thousands of Jews residing in his political fief known as Ward Eight, Representative Martin Lomasney was both something of a despot and something of a modern Moses. Of medium height, bald, and sporting a drooping mustache that accentuated an already pugnacious looking jaw, Lomasney could be found almost any day at his headquarters, the Hendricks Club, dispensing jobs, money, and political favors to his immigrant constituency. Carrying an umbrella and preferring to walk always on the shady rather than the sunny side of the street because as a boy he had traumatically witnessed the death of his father from a heatstroke, Lomasney, late in the day went on a six mile tour of his district, stopping now and then to listen to Jewish pushcart dealers complaining of problems with the neighborhood police or to landlords seeking a favor from the City's Building Inspector's Department.³⁹

One Jew, Finklestein, rejected Lomasney's paternalism and tried to break his stranglehold over the West End by running for office himself. Making a creditable first showing, the confident Finklestein boasted to Lomasney that in the next election he would have no alternative but to support his candidacy. Unruffled, Lomasney informed the young upstart that he would defeat him with an ordinary newspaper boy. As predicted, Finklestein lost out to Louis Orenberg,

a fellow Jew and Lomasney's handpicked newsboy.⁴⁰

Although sometimes accused by the Jewish press of fence sitting on certain issues, Mayor John Fitzgerald, like Lomasney, had a generally good rapport with Boston's Jewry. During elections, the Advocate carried front page Fitzgerald advertisements that ironically exclaimed, "The People, Not the Bosses, Should Rule" Boston. Like any other minority, the Jews were not adverse to seeing one of their own awarded a political plume. But in 1910, when "Honey Fitz" was reportedly toying with the notion of appointing a rabbi who could barely understand English to the City's Children's Department, the Advocate politely discouraged the mayor out of fear that he would probably embarrass everyone involved by failing the Civil Service examination. With a large number of their children in the public school system, Fitzgerald appreciated the Jewish community's desire to have one of their own on the Boston School Committee. And in spite of charges by Yankee Protestants that he was giving official sanction to a quota system by asserting that one of the five positions on the School Committee should go to a Jew, Fitzgerald, nevertheless succeeded in helping Isaac Harris win election to the School Board in 1913.⁴¹

Primarily because of James Michael Curley's strenuous opposition to immigration restriction while serving in Congress, over 85 percent of the Jewish vote reportedly went to him in his first campaign for Mayor in 1914. Assisted by his close and personal friend, Marks Angell, the Jewish "Junk King" of Boston, Curley ingratiated himself with his Jewish supporters by speaking at gatherings of the Young Men's Hebrew Association and at anti-immigrant restriction rallies. Moreover, he posed for official photographs with a Boston Jewish delegation bound for Atlanta, Georgia, in 1915 to protest the patently unfair trial of Leo Frank,

a Northern Jew convicted of murdering a gentile girl who worked in a factory which he managed. And at a national convention of the B'nai B'rith held in Boston in 1916, the Mayor was thunderously applauded when he described Louis Brandeis, a recent appointee to the Supreme Court of the United States, "as able an American as has ever breathed the breath of life." Significantly Brandeis' appointment had been strongly opposed by Boston's legal establishment. In the same year when a city planning board blamed the deterioration of housing in East Boston on Jewish families residing in the neighborhood, Curley again quickly defended the newcomers by condemning the report as a "flagrant insult" to the Jewish people. Asserting that poor housing was related more to one's lack of income rather than to his ethnicity, the mayor subsequently ordered city printers to delete the derogatory remarks from the official report.⁴²

Interaction between Irish Catholics and Jews would produce some interesting anomalies such as David Goldstein. Born in London in 1870, of Orthodox Jewish parents who came to Boston by way of New York City in the 1890's, Goldstein at first worked as a cigarmaker. Possessing what he called a "propaganda spirit," the impressionable, young Goldstein soon became immersed in the Socialist movement and was the Socialist Labor Party's nominee for Mayor of Boston in 1897. But around 1903, Goldstein suddenly did a complete turnabout. Disenchanted, he dropped out of the Socialist movement and turned to Christianity. He was baptized a Catholic in the spring of 1905.⁴³

With Cardinal O'Connell's blessing, Goldstein, a gifted speaker, took to the podium to protect Boston's Catholics from the twin evils of socialism and birth control. For four straight Sundays, for example, he lectured in parish churches throughout the diocese, warning workingmen about the godlessness and

economic pitfalls of socialism. Six years later, after having heard Margaret Sanger address a Boston audience on contraception, Goldstein turned to combating the ideas of the woman who, he felt, would turn America into a modern "Sodom and Gomorrah." Writing in the Boston Pilot, Goldstein accused Mrs. Sanger and her followers of seeking to violate the laws of nature and of encouraging sexual promiscuity. And to those who contended that married life was enhanced by having fewer children, the Jewish convert pointed out that Washington, Napoleon, Carlyle, Rembrandt and no less than the Cardinal himself, had all come from large families.⁴⁴

The new Italian immigrants were even more difficult for Boston's Irish to understand. While there was a small colony of "Prominenti" from northern cities like Florence and Genoa, the majority of some 20,000 odd Italians who settled in Boston between 1880 and 1905 were from Sicily and the poverty-stricken Mezzogiorno region of Southern Italy. An exploited, landless, illiterate, peasant people, the Italian immigrants who anxiously made their way past customs officials in East Boston had little time to reflect upon their newly won freedom from virtual serfdom. For almost immediately, they found themselves pitched against fellow ethnics, rather than native Yankees, when they went looking for employment, housing and political recognition.⁴⁵

Moving into the North End the Italians first had to defend themselves against some of their unfriendly Irish neighbors. Genoese parents, for instance, complained frequently of having to accompany their children to school in order to protect them from Irish classmates. Italian fishermen pulling into port along the Boston waterfront after dark often chose to remain on board until morning rather than risk being assaulted by roving Irish street gangs. When the Sicilians introduced Irish youths to the stiletto the number of attacks diminished dramatically

but there were still, as Father Casey noted in 1895, isolated cases of fist-fights between these two groups. Commenting on the large crowd that had congregated near his rectory in the North End to watch an Irish lad beat up an Italian opponent, the priest exasperatingly noted in his diary that he "could not attract so many to a sermon."⁴⁶

Giuseppe and Pat turned out to be incompatible pew partners in the Catholic Church. Along with feeling out of place in an English-speaking church administered mostly by Irish Catholic clergymen, some Italians also took strong issue with the hierarchy over the questions of the trustee system and financial support of local parishes. Accustomed in Italy to an ecclesiastical arrangement that granted laymen a greater voice in parish affairs, the Italians in Boston were far less predisposed than docile Irish churchgoers to accept without question the dictates of the pastor or priest. And migrating from a country where the financial upkeep of the Church was borne principally by the State, the Italians were additionally bewildered at discovering that in Boston the priest looked directly to his parishoners for personal contributions. Having to donate to the offertory basket and forced to pay fees for baptisms, marriages and funerals in order to defray the costs of parish heating bills and the like, Italians understandably viewed the Irish pastor as being "money-mad". The distrust fostered by these misunderstandings would, in turn, cause some Irishmen to conclude that the Italian immigrants were essentially anti-clerical and Catholic in name only.⁴⁷

On a much more subtle level, these two groups further alienated one another by their different styles of religious worship and devotion. An informal, highly emotional peasant people, the Italians during church services were generally far more demonstrative and expressive than the more decorum-minded Irish. No

Irishman, for instance, would have ever entered a church wearing a hat and puffing on a cigar as some Italians in the North End reportedly did. Equally annoying, as one Irish writer pointed out in 1899, was the tendency of the Italians to lament their errors passionately while lying prostrate before a crucifix or Station of the Cross. And still another small, but irritating problem for the patriarchally reared Irish Catholic priest was that of trying to train the matriarchal oriented Italian family to focus its spiritual attentions on the all male Holy Trinity rather than the Madonna and Child.⁴⁸

To alleviate the tensions caused by mixed congregations and to end the humiliating practice of forcing the Italians to hold some of their services in the basement of Irish churches, the hierarchy in 1873 and 1888 established two North End parishes which eventually evolved into Italian ethnic churches. Serving as a spiritual haven from the alien Yankee and Irish world the Churches of the Sacred Heart or Saint Leonard of Port Maurice provided Italian immigrants with places of worship in a way familiar to their Mediterranean temperament and way of life. Free at last from having to listen to Irish priests preaching on the problems of Mother Ireland and the Land League, an Italian churchgoer could now light as many candles as he wished to his favorite village saint, listen to hymns sung in the memory-filled, cantilene fashion of the old country, and most of all, be consoled in his greatest hour of need by a priest bearing a name like Vencentini rather than O'Sullivan.⁴⁹

In combating poverty Boston's Italian immigrants were forced on occasions to seek assistance from Irish Catholics who usually were far better off financially. In 1897, for instance, a delegation of Italians approached Thomas Ring about starting a Saint Vincent de Paul Society conference in their North End neighborhood.

Inviting them to the Catholic Union, Ring later recalled how his guests felt ill-at-ease until they noticed a picture on the wall of Dom Bosco, an Italian saint, which had been hung by coincidence only the day before. The delegation was allowed its own conference. Several years later in 1911, the Italians received aid in fighting poverty and saving souls from the Catholic Immigration Bureau which had the strong endorsement of Cardinal O'Connell. The Bureau's executive committee was comprised of Yankee Catholics, Italians, and Irish Americans like Edward Francis O'Dowd, an evening public school principal, who had the reputation of possessing "an extensive knowledge of the immigrant problem." Along with providing various religious and social services, the Bureau sponsored a cadet corps in the hope of inculcating discipline among Italian youths and of drawing them closer to the Church.⁵⁰

The Italians unquestionably constituted a drain on diocesan funds, and the Cardinal sometimes lost patience with them. Following a request in 1915 for more money from the League of Catholic Women to allow it to expand services at a North End settlement house, O'Connell crustily informed the League that it was "high time that the Italians should do something to help themselves." His Eminence was also annoyed by the recurring complaints of Italian parents of having to send their youngsters to "alien" Irish churches for special Sunday School instruction. And when an Italian Catholic Cemetary Association turned down O'Connell's request to inspect its account books, the Cardinal was again aggravated by these newcomers.⁵¹

In an effort to maintain a favorable public image of his Church in Yankee Boston, O'Connell sometimes tried to moderate the Italians' old world obsession for colorful feast day celebrations in honor of village saints. To non-Italians

the festival hardly looked like a religious ceremony. Starting from the parish church, Italian men placed a platform with the statue of their favorite saint upon their shoulders and accompanied by bands, fireworks and barefoot women carrying candles, the procession noisily wound its way through crooked North End alleyways, where residents leaning out their windows, pinned dollar bills on the statue as it passed below. Irritated by the carnival-like atmosphere surrounding these festivals, the highly conservative O'Connell discouraged them and usually granted his permission only after he was assured by the Italian pastor that "due religious decorum" would be maintained.⁵²

In the workplace the relationship between the Italians and the Irish was no less harmonious. Concentrated mainly in the building and construction trades, working-class Italians, unlike the white collar-oriented Jews, were natural competitors with Irish laborers who also knew what it was like to eke out a living with a pick and shovel. Employers frequently pitted Italians against the Irish by using them as strikebreakers. As early as 1876, the Boston Pilot criticized foremen at a nearby construction site in Newton for hiring "Italian serfs" to replace Irish laborers who had gone out on strike for better wages and working conditions. A quarter of a century later, Italians were imported into Boston as replacements for Boston freight handlers and teamsters who had walked off the job during a labor dispute. The Italians worked under heavy police guard which protected them from rock-throwing strikers.⁵³

No less repugnant to Boston's Irish union organizers was the infamous Italian padrone system. Widely in use at the turn of the century, the padrone system was essentially an international employment agency. Acting as a middle-man between employers and the immigrants, the Italian bossachi or boss greeted

his native countrymen at the piers in East Boston, provided them with the humblest of food and lodging, and later arranged their transportation to a nearby construction site or building project. In return for the padrone's services, the laborer was required to pay an exorbitant fee that sometimes cleaned him out of his life's savings and meager earnings.⁵⁴

For a variety of understandable reasons, Italian workers resigned themselves to being strikebreakers and human pawns in the padrone system rather than join labor unions. First, many of them planned to remain in Boston only long enough to accumulate some savings before returning to the old country. They saw little advantage in paying out their hard earned money for union membership dues. Moreover, similar to their experiences with Cardinal O'Connell's Church, the Italians had little reason to expect equitable treatment in labor organizations monopolized by Irish officials. (In New York attempts by Irish trade union leaders to increase initiation fees, to extend the time period between apprenticeship and journeyman, and to mandate that all union members be citizens, was understandably viewed by Italians as an Irish conspiracy to keep them out of unions.⁵⁵

After establishing their own Laborers' and Excavators' Union in 1904 with some 1600 members, the Italians were leery of associating with the Boston Central Labor Union, an Irish-run organization and local affiliate of the American Federation of Labor. Yet shortly thereafter they petitioned the Central Union for an A.F.L. charter, and quite predictably they ran into immediate difficulty. D. D. Driscoll, the Central Union's President, refused to grant a charter unless the Italian workers replaced their middle-class leaders with legitimate representatives of the working class. Especially obnoxious to Driscoll was James Donnaruma, a prominent Italian North End newspaper editor, who endorsed the union only after

the workers had agreed to subscribe to his weekly, the Gazetta del Massachusetts. Driscoll ultimately won out and in turn, the Excavators' Union received a charter. Working in close alliance with other Irish labor organizers and politicians, the Italians later benefited handsomely from new municipal legislation requiring the city to employ union labor on publicly-funded construction projects.⁵⁶

With only eleven percent of the city's Italian population eligible to vote in 1910, Irish politicians had little to gain by cooperating with these newcomers. Furthermore, the few Italians who did bother to go to the polls usually voted Republican because they detested the Democratic Irish ward boss or because they associated the word Republican with Garibaldian idealism. Some favored the G.O.P. because they believed that the party's support of a high protective tariff saved their jobs as factory or textile workers.⁵⁷

Despite these obstacles, political warhorses like Fitzgerald and Curley never gave up completely on the Italian voter. Along with nominating Andrew A. Badarraco to head the City's Assessing Department, Mayor Fitzgerald in 1910 also used his newspaper, The Republic, to praise the Italians as great lovers of children and for clinging tenaciously to their old world customs such as celebrating the feast days of their village saints. And in his grubby Jefferson Club, the Mayor tutored first generation Italian office seekers on the realities of Boston political life.⁵⁸

Even though James Michael Curley was presented a bust of himself by appreciative North Enders for welcoming the Italian War Mission to Boston in 1917, he nevertheless had his difficult moments with the city's Italians. Two years earlier he was hissed at a public hearing called by Italians to protest the inadequate enforce-

ment of existing sanitation and building codes by city officials in the North End. Moreover, the practice of Curley and various Irish societies to turn Columbus Day into an Irish Catholic celebration infuriated the Italian community. Tired of listening to speeches about Ireland and Catholicism on the birthday of the Genoese mariner, a group of militant, anti-clerical Italian nationalist societies tried to stop the 'Irishization' of this celebration in 1917. Marching through the North End and stopping only long enough to place a wreath at the base of George Washington's monument in the Public Gardens, the societies made their way to the Christopher Columbus statue standing adjacent to the main door of the Holy Cross Cathedral on Washington Street in Boston. Following several impassioned speeches praising Columbus as an Italian rather than a Catholic, the crowd finally dispersed, singing the anti-clerical song, "Go out of Italy."⁵⁹

From the north in Canada, the winds of change forced other new neighbors on the Boston Irish after the Civil War. Suffering from poor harvests and chronic unemployment, over 50,000 French-Canadians followed the sound of the factory whistle and rumors of steady work as carpenters and craftsmen and drifted into the Massachusetts mill towns of Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford and Fall River. By 1881 they were already being characterized by the Massachusetts Commissioner of Labor as the "Chinese of the Eastern States" because of their willingness to work for lower wages. And by the turn of the century some 2,000 odd French-Canadians living in Boston proper were presenting serious problems for the Irish trade union leader.⁶⁰

Working for fifty cents less than the prevailing daily union wage of two dollars and fifty cents, the self-employed French as well as English speaking Canadian carpenter, for example, severely crippled the bargaining position of

carpentry unions which consequently were the weakest labor organization among the building trades in 1902. Along with being highly independent minded and interested primarily in making money quickly and returning to Canada, the French-Canadian worker, like the Italian, was highly reluctant to pay union dues. Moreover, he distrusted labor organizations controlled by the very Irishmen who not only had tried to invade his country during the famous Fenian fiasco of 1866 but also showed a general disdain for the French language and culture.⁶¹

Fervent Catholics, the French-Canadians also balked at being ministered to by Irish priests who were as equally insensitive towards things French as were the labor leaders. Suspected of plotting to dismantle the French church in New England, William Henry O'Connell, the Cardinal of Boston, was condemned openly by many Canadians as being "notre ennemi le plus cruel." To a very large extent the hard feelings attributed to the "L'eglise Irlandaise" in New England were diminished in Boston by creation of a special French parish in 1880. At Notre Dame des Victoires, one observer noted in 1899, parishoners were able to listen to French-speaking priests preaching in a fervent and eloquent manner seldom heard in the more stolid Irish church. Removed from the scrutiny of the Irish clergyman, the Canadians were finally on their own spiritually. If they wished, they could pray to Saint Joan rather than Saint Bridget or be absolved from their sins in confession by a priest whispering penance in familiar French rather than in a grumbling English, punctuated by a heavy brogue. And on the day of a funeral they were even free to decorate the interior of their church with as much black crepe paper as they wished without fear of recrimination from an Irish pastor.⁶²

At the polling place Pierre and Pat likewise had disagreements. As dis-

trustful of Democratic Irish politicians as they were of Irish priests, the majority of French-Canadians prior to World War I supported Republican candidates, who usually took questionable credit for saving immigrant factory jobs by championing a high tariff. Hoping to broaden the base of the Massachusetts State Democratic Party, Governor David I. Walsh, with some assistance from Martin Lomasney, attempted to bring in the French-Canadians by appointing more than 80 of them to various administrative posts during his first term in office in 1914. But over the doorway to the legendary smoke-filled caucus room where Irish ward bosses met to accept applications for wide scale patronage, there still hung the invisible caveat, "No French need apply."⁶³

Caught up in a babel of Yiddish, Italian, and French dialects, the Boston Irish also came into contact with other ethnic groups as the Germans, Poles and Lithuanians. Prior to the American Civil War Boston already had a small but cohesive colony of German Catholics. Numbering roughly 18,000 and employed chiefly as clockmakers, toy manufacturers and white collar professionals, the Germans seldom shared a lunch break with their Irish working class coreligionists. Passionately committed to the idea that "language saves faith," the Germans in 1842, founded their own immigrant church which had as adjuncts a grammar school, orphanage, old age home, drama club, orchestra, and a licensed casino where beer was dispensed on Sundays. German Catholics worshiping at Holy Trinity Church in the South End were an unusually self-sufficient group.⁶⁴

In politics the Germans generally got along amicably with the Irish. Along with supporting German songfests on the Boston Common, Mayor Fitzgerald also permitted German residents to use the city's official boat, the "Monitor", in order that they might greet oceanliners pulling into the Harbor from the Fatherland.

And in an effort to attract German tourists to the Hub, the flamboyant Fitzgerald even made a special visit to Berlin where he reportedly entertained Kaiser Wilhelm with his famous rendition of "Sweet Adeline."⁶⁵

Once World War I broke out in August of 1914, Boston's Germans and Irish were drawn even closer together by their mutual hatred of Great Britain. Ignoring pleas by Catholic Church officials to remain strictly neutral, opportunistic politicians like James Michael Curley played incessantly upon the Anglophobic sentiments of his German and Irish constituents. In 1915, the Mayor gave his approval to the request of German citizens wishing to celebrate the Kaiser's birthday on the Boston Common. And when a motion picture showing German soldiers in steel pointed Prussian helmets invading America appeared in the city, Curley moved swiftly to try and have it banned. Shortly later the Mayor's Election Commissioner, a German named Frank Seigerrich, was accused of using his official position during a municipal election to disseminate literature critical of the Allies. Distributing over 10,000 circulars to German voters in Boston, the Commissioner called for the defeat of James A. Storrow, a prominent lawyer and a Curley critic, who, he said, had used his influence among American bankers to procure large loans for the Allies. Reviewing the matter, the Mayor, as expected, defended his election commissioner. He maintained that Seigerrich was within his constitutional rights so long as he distributed the leaflets on his own time and not at the taxpayers' expense.⁶⁶

Clustered almost unnoticed around their own ethnic church in South Boston, the Poles, numbering close to 3,000 in 1905, had one uncontestable connection with their Irish neighbors—a steadfast commitment to the Catholic faith. Sure of the Poles' allegiance to the Church, Irish priests in Boston seldom had to worry,

as they did with the Italians, of losing the souls of Polish children to Protestant proselytizers.⁶⁷

If the Poles had one flaw, noted one church historian, it was their tendency to drink too heavily, something characteristic, however, of "all inhabitants of cold countries." Although politically innocuous, the Poles, nevertheless, received on occasion unsolicited assistance from Irish officials. For example, in 1910 when the Protestant establishment's newspaper, the Boston Transcript, criticized the city's Poles for holding "alien festivals" or national celebrations, Mayor Fitzgerald defended them as being a "virile, public-spirited element of our citizenship."⁶⁸

Although few in number the Lithuanians were no small problem for Cardinal O'Connell. Almost from its inception in 1904, the Lithuanian church of Saint Peter's in South Boston was riddled with controversy and dissent. In 1911, the Cardinal was asked by some parishoners to censure a Father Zylinsky, who reportedly used the church basement for Socialist meetings, charged fees to hear confessions, and attended a local theatre with his 22 year old female housekeeper. Another frequent complaint centered around the Lithuanian custom of holding wedding ceremonies in conjunction with regular Sunday Mass services. Incensed by this practice, parishoners again petitioned O'Connell to intervene in 1915 and 1916. According to the discontented parishioners, various wedding parties threw the congregation at St. Peter's into an "uproar" by showing up intoxicated at Sunday Mass. Staggering up the center aisle and bouncing from one pew to another, one bridegroom allegedly made it to the altar rail, vomited, and had to be taken downstairs to sober up. Responding to his critics, the pastor at St. Peter's calmly informed the Cardinal that he never performed marriage rites during,

but only before or after, the regular Mass. He noted that his accusers were troublemakers trying to usurp his priestly authority.⁶⁹

In addition to acting as peacemaker between two quarreling Lithuanian pastors who accused each other of stealing parishoners from their respective churches in Boston and nearby Cambridge, O'Connell was continuously plagued by his Lithuanian flock during the War years. In order to curb the spread of anti-Catholic, Socialist material among these newcomers, the Cardinal assigned a priest to monitor all Lithuanian newspapers and magazines in his diocese. And disturbed over a rumor that a priest at St. Peter's was trying to frustrate fund raising efforts for the Allied Red Cross, O'Connell warned the Lithuanian cleric. The priest replied that the report was a "vile slander" against his good name and patriotism and reassured the Cardinal that he was "pro Allies with all my soul."⁷⁰

The Boston Irish were anything but pristine democrats in dealing with the Negro and their fellow ethnics. Entrenched firmly in the Catholic Church hierarchy, the Democratic Party and the trade union movement, they sometimes reacted harshly and arbitrarily towards minorities such as the Italians and French-Canadians. By serving as a sort of cultural envoy between the newcomers and Boston society at large, the Irish were still able to make significant contributions towards helping the melting pot absorb rather than disintegrate. The vast majority of Italians, Jews and other immigrants, it must be recalled, came to know and understand Boston initially through Irish rather than Yankee eyes. Fleeing from a European past that made them cynical and indifferent towards the political process, the newer immigrants learned from Irish ward bosses that in Boston a man's vote meant something and that by joining hands politically with

the Martin Lomasneys of the world they could achieve desired objectives such as better housing and public services. From Irish trade union leaders such as D. D. Driscoll the unskilled foreign laborer discovered how to organize collectively in order to combat an economic system that all too often brutalized them individually. Finally, those Catholic immigrants who cherished their faith owed no small debt to Irish priests who, despite their shortcomings, struggled to ensure that the Catholic Church, universal, authoritarian, and adaptive, would survive and flourish in the Protestant city of Reverend Phillips Brooks and King's Chapel.

Sharing these common interests and secure in their overwhelming numbers, the Irish were thus more than able to function effectively as ethnic power brokers. But much more important, they added a new and dynamic dimension to urban, American democracy itself. For at the turn of the century when many scholars at Harvard and other leading universities were resorting to immigration restriction leagues and the publication of dangerous pseudo-scientific theories of Aryan racial supremacy, the Irish in Boston confidently insisted that the Republic could survive as a culturally, pluralistic society. And in grubby union halls, smoke-filled ward rooms, and in ethnically diverse parishes across the breadth of the city, they demonstrated, if somewhat imperfectly, how right they really were.⁷¹

FOOTNOTES

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- 2 John Daniels, In Freedom's Birthplace, A Study of the Boston Negroes (Cambridge, 1914), 457, 458; Leon F. Litwack, North of Slavery, the Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860 (Chicago, 1961), 155-165; Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, A Study in Acculturation (Cambridge, 1959), 69, 70, 96, 205, 357, footnote number 104.
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- 4 Walsh, The Boston Pilot, 135, 136.
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- 12 Roche, Life of O'Reilly, 288; Walsh, Boston Pilot, 211.

- 13 Boston Pilot, June 28, 1890.
- 14 Roche, Life of O'Reilly, 353, 356, 359, 369.
- 15 Daniels, In Freedom's Birthplace, 229, 458; In Memoriam, Robert Morris, Sr., An Account of Funeral Obsequies and Memorial Meeting (privately printed, 1882), 5, 34, 35; M.P. Durran, Life of Patrick A. Collins, With Some of His Most Notable Public Addresses (Norwood, 1906), 12.
- 16 Foley, Bishop Healy, 18-76; Richard Grozier, "The Life and Times of John Bernard Fitzpatrick: Third Roman Catholic Bishop of Boston", (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Boston College, 1966), 358-359.
- 17 Lord, Sexton, Harrington, History of Archdiocese, II, 611, 709; Foley, Bishop Healy, 66, 108, 109. An extensive collection of Bishop James Healy's sermons can be found at the Holy Cross College archives, Worcester, Massachusetts.
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- 26 Boston Post, April 22, 1915; Fox, Monroe Trotter, 193-194; James Michael Curley newspaper clipping dated March, 1917. Like the Fitzgerald collection, many of the Curley newspaper clippings are undated and unidentified and are deposited in scrapbooks at the Holy Cross College Library. Hereafter cited as C.N.C.

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- 35 Proceedings of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1905 (Boston, 1905), 280, 336, 337, 431, 446, 447; Boston Advocate, January 12, March 30, May 18, June 22, 1906.
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CONCLUSION

The odyssey of the Boston Irish from the dreadful days of steerage to the palatial surroundings of the Hotel Somerset where in 1912 President Taft, addressing a gathering of the Charitable Irish Society, eulogized their descendants for their contributions to American life, was indeed a poignant and heroic one. A forlorned and impoverished people when they first arrived in wake of the Great Hunger, the Irish and their offspring could take justifiable pride in the numerous hospitals, orphanages and the like that they had built, at great personal sacrifice, to care for their own. Subjected often to religious discrimination in the Protestant-controlled public school, they would furthermore construct an impressive parochial school system that not only excelled in teaching the three r's but also succeeded in passing on the life-sustaining gifts of faith and culture. As wives and mothers, Irish women, on the other hand, would do their part in managing and stabilizing society's most crucial institution, the family.

Even though not taking full advantage of the opportunities available to them in business and the professions, many other Irish still managed to prosper as lawyers, doctors, journalists, or as grocers, liquor dealers, contractors and undertakers. Separated as much from their fellow immigrants by language, customs and manners as they were from native Yankees, the Irish, nevertheless, as power brokers within the Democratic Party, the Labor Movement and the Catholic Church, would moreover play a major role in educating recently arrived Italians, Jews, Poles, etc., on the realities as well as the myths of the American Dream in Boston.

While attending to these solemn responsibilities however, they never

lost sight of the important fact that life was meant to be enjoyed as much as it was to be productive, in an economic and monetary sense. Consequently, they organized their own parish socials, fraternities, and clubs while leaving a lasting impression on the world of professional sport and theatre. Politics, Irish style, would additionally liberate Boston from the restraints of its puritan past, where officeseekers and holders were expected to be heard but not seen mingling with the masses at ward meetings, picnics, streetcorner rallies and the neighborhood saloon.

NOTES ON KEY SOURCES

The world of the Boston Irish beyond the ballot box is a well documented one. By consulting the mountains of information, reports and correspondence pertaining to just about every charitable institution under the Catholic Church's auspices at the Boston Chancery Archives (BCA), this writer was able to reconstruct the Irish's institutional response to poverty. Curiosity as to how the parochial school system evolved and what values were perpetuated by it, led me to the archives of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Ipswich, Massachusetts, where I found an abundance of histories, annals, memoirs and even materials written by some of their students, of a teaching order that helped organize and staff many of Boston's parochial schools during their pioneering days. Also of great use in understanding the growing administrative pains of parish schools was the "Report of the Supervisor of Schools on First Official Visit, January, 1898 to January, 1899" stored at the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools, Boston, Massachusetts. As to what was taught in the parochial school, the Monroe C. Gutman Library of the Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts made available an ample number of nineteenth century Catholic school primers and textbooks.

For general attitudes towards Irish women, regarding their roles and place in society, Donahoe's Magazine, a popular Boston Irish monthly, published between 1878 and 1908, and the Sacred Heart Review (1888-1918), a weekly journal written mostly by Catholic priests, was of particular usefulness. The materials on the Domestic Reform League at the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts and the numerous investigations cited in the text, conducted by the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor shed additional light on the life of Irish maids and factory workers.

Offering fresh and interesting insight on the history of the Boston Irish entrepreneur and businessman were the records of the Dun and Bradstreet Credit Agency deposited at the Baker Library, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, Boston. Piecing together the professional lives of Boston Irish physicians and lawyers was accomplished by drawing upon the numerous books, directories, pamphlets and the like found at the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, Boston, the Social Law Library, Boston, as well as the data deposited in the school archives of Boston College, Newton, Massachusetts, and the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts.

In trying to demonstrate that the Irish related to other racial and ethnic groups like pistons do to an engine, depending upon whether the issue was economic, political or merely who ran the local parish church, this writer relied mainly on parish histories, settlement house studies and the various dissertations, referenced in the footnotes, written on ethnic relations in Boston. Luckily, sometimes ethnic newspapers like the Boston Advocate afforded the added advantage of observing the world of the Boston Irish through Jewish eyes.

To catch the Irish at ease, socially or athletically, one merely has to consult the pages of the Boston Pilot, the city's most popular Hibernian weekly and the social columns found in the other respected Boston Irish newspaper, the Republic. That politics, Irish style, had its lighter moments is attested to by the thousands of Boston newspaper clippings found in the scrapbooks of both mayors John F. Fitzgerald and James Michael Curley at Holy Cross College.