

Chapter 3

THE O'FARRELL AFFAIR

Fenian, or moonstruck miscreant - one or both - What matter? Grant him of that serpent brood, Pests of the Green Isle...

Judge Francis, 'God Speed the Galatea', April 1868¹

...as Irishmen and uncompromising Haters of British Misrule and oppression, we fling back with scorn the foul calumny that would connect us with the cowardly attempt to assassinate your English Prince.

'Hibernicus' to the Argus (Melbourne), 14 March 1868²

Simmering fears and suspicions long held by conservative loyalists towards radical Irish nationalism in Australia were suddenly brought to a head in March 1868, when an Irish-born colonist named Henry O'Farrell attempted to assassinate Queen Victoria's younger son, Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, at a Sydney picnic ground. For many loyalists the mere fact that O'Farrell was Irish was alone sufficient indication as to his motives. It was common knowledge that considerable sympathy for Fenianism existed among poorer Irish Catholics particularly, and that protests about the Manchester executions were likely on or before St. Patrick's Day. A widespread loyalist impression therefore, was that Fenianism had spread its diabolical influence in a direct, conspiratorial way to Australia. There followed a deluge of bitter racial, nationalist and religious rancour that arose mainly from loyalist over-reactions to O'Farrell's crime, prompted by prior conditioning towards Irish 'disloyalty' and furious indignation that Alfred was attacked on Australian soil at the very time colonial loyalty to Britain was on display. This chapter examines O'Farrell's motives, and the social and political context of the attempted assassination.

Henry James O'Farrell had a middle-class upbringing in a moderately

(1) Sydney Morning Herald, 6 April 1868.

(2) See pp. 82-3

nationalist Irish-Catholic family. Born at Arran Quay, Dublin, in 1834 or 1835, he was one of the youngest of eleven children reared by William O'Farrell, a butcher, and his wife Maria Anastasia³. Not long after Henry's birth the family moved to Liverpool, and later emigrated (unassisted) to Victoria, arriving at Melbourne in 1841. William O'Farrell opened a butcher's shop in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, which soon prospered, enabling him to provide superior education for his children. Henry was enrolled in Reverend David Boyd's school in 1841. He was seven years old when his mother died in 1842. Two years later he became a boarder at St. Francis' College, Melbourne. In 1848 he found employment as a lawyer's clerk, working with his elder brother, Peter Andrew Charles, who was twenty-two⁴. Another brother, Daniel O'Connell O'Farrell, won high commendation from the 'Father of Melbourne', John Fawkner, when he made an eloquent maiden speech titled 'The Worth of Education', at a St. Patrick's Day banquet in 1846⁵. A family friend who met Henry in 1848, recalled that he had a quiet, shy disposition⁶. In 1850 he gave up his apprenticeship at law and entered St. Francis' seminary to train for the priesthood. He took deacon's orders, including a vow of celibacy in 1852. A colleague remembered him as an industrious, genial student who possessed an 'undeniably national bias'⁷. In 1853 he departed for Europe to continue his studies, toured England, Ireland and the continent for two years, then returned in 1855. At the age of twenty, he was a well-educated young man who could speak French with refined purity and had a firm grasp of the classics⁸.

- (3) Death certificates of William and Maria O'Farrell. A family grave is in Melbourne cemetery.
- (4) Robert Mason, statement to the police, 2 April 1868, 'Fenianism 1868-9', CSO Supplementary Police Box 10, VPRO (hereafter, 'CSO bundle, VPRO').
- (5) Port Phillip Herald, 19, 24 March 1846. See also Ballarat Star, 24 March 1868.
- (6) Mason, loc. cit.
- (7) Miner and Weekly Star (Ballarat) reprinted in Ballarat Star, 14 March 1868, and in Perth Gazette, 24 April 1868. This description, said to have come from a schoolmate, was part of a profile commonly quoted by papers assembling O'Farrell's background.
- (8) Unless otherwise noted, biographical details are based on the Miner and Weekly Star profile, loc. cit.. For another biographical sketch, see Mark Lyons, 'Aspects of Sectarianism in N.S.W., c. 1865-1880', Ph.D. thesis, ANU, 1975, App. V, pp. 438-40; and an ADB article by Lyons (Vol. 5, Melbourne, 1974, pp. 356-7).

At this point in his life, O'Farrell seems to have suffered an emotional trauma. In 1855 his seminary superiors considered him unsuitable for ordination. One explanation was that his 'proclivities' were inappropriate to the calling⁹; another, that he had disputed a point of doctrine advanced by Bishop Goold¹⁰. One other influence may have been a disagreement between the O'Farrell family and Bishop Goold over the settlement of William O'Farrell's deceased estate in 1854. According to Henry's elder brother, Peter, an up and coming Melbourne solicitor, several legacies were transferred to Goold in accordance with the will before it was discovered that the estate's debts outweighed assets. Peter O'Farrell claims to have explained the situation to Goold, who declined to return any of the legacies he received¹¹. Whatever the precise circumstances of Henry's differences with the Catholic hierarchy at this time, the result was a deep-seated bitterness on his part which became more evident in later years.

He left Melbourne in 1855 to join his brother-in-law, Timothy Lane, a wealthy squatter who was part-owner of Clunes Station - where gold was mined by Lane, McDonald Co. (later Clunes Co.)¹². He gained some experience in mining and sheep-farming, then moved to Ballarat where he established a successful business dealing in hay and corn in partnership with a cousin, Joseph Kennedy. Associates say he was prudent, sensible and industrious, quick-witted and shrewd at business, and that his powers of conversation and argument were well above average¹³. He was tall, well-dressed, affable and gentlemanly, and took an interest in the affairs of his local Catholic church. In 1860 he made a second trip to Europe, returning to his business in 1862¹⁴. At about this time Peter O'Farrell became embroiled in another

- (9) J. Tappin, letter to Ballarat Star, 19 March 1868.
- (10) Lyons, op. cit., p. 438.
- (11) Peter O'Farrell's evidence, given at his trial in 1882 on a charge of attempting to murder Goold. Goold sustained a slight gunshot wound in his hand when he brushed aside a revolver brandished by O'Farrell who was demanding compensation for his insolvent condition (Argus 22 August; 1, 21 September 1882).
- (12) Supt. Henry Hill, Ballarat Police report, n.d., 'CSO bundle, VPRO'.
- (13) Miner and Weekly Star, loc. cit., Witnesses at O'Farrell's trial commented that he had superior intelligence (see below, pp. 69, 76).
- (14) ibid., and Perth Gazette, 24 April 1868.

dispute. Acting as Goold's solicitor, he claims that he made enemies among the creditors of St. Patrick's Cathedral, whom he was forced to default under instruction from Goold¹⁵. A by-product of the affair was a costly slander case which Peter lost in 1863¹⁶. The outcome was that Peter O'Farrell lost most of his Catholic clientele, could not meet his debts and fled from the colony in 1864¹⁷.

It seems that his brother's decampment adversely affected O'Farrell and confirmed his ambivalent attitude towards the Catholic church. According to one associate, he developed a 'vindictive animosity towards the whole body of the Catholic clergy, vilifying them in a most outrageous manner whenever they formed the topic of conversation'¹⁸. In 1865 one of his sisters, Caroline Allen, observed that he appeared restless, uneasy and excitable, and that he seemed deeply affected by financial losses which he said he had sustained through his brother's departure¹⁹. There seems little doubt that he was under very great mental stress for a number of reasons. In Ballarat he had speculated heavily in property and shares, and had to work overtime to compensate for his partner's alcoholic bouts. And when Kennedy died of alcoholism in 1865, O'Farrell gambled more heavily in mining speculations, only to become more deeply in debt. Associates noticed that his behaviour became eccentric and irregular in 1866. He drank heavily, which seemed to upset his excitable nature, went days without meals, and sought companionship he had formerly shunned. In accordance with his vows of celibacy he lived alone on his business premises, but it was said that he would occasionally test his self-control by inviting two young female neighbours to spend an evening with him; 'taking a sort of martyr-pride in conquering whatever failings he might possess, though his visitors were allowed, perhaps, greater liberties than were..compatible with strict propriety'²⁰.

The combination of O'Farrell's frustrated religious vocation and

- (15) P.A.C. O'Farrell, Priests and their victims: the morals of Melbourne priests, pamphlet, Melbourne, 1888.
- (16) Hanify Vs O'Farrell, Age, 27, 28 February 1863, Victorian, 21 March 1863. O'Farrell was fined £50 and costs awarded against him.
- (17) Police report, 2 April 1868, 'CSO bundle, VPRO'; Argus, 21 September 1882.
- (18) Tappin, loc. cit.
- (19) Evidence given at O'Farrell's trial, The Late Attempt to Assassinate H.R.H. Prince Alfred, pamphlet, Sydney, April 1868, p. 32.
- (20) Ballarat Star, 27 March 1868.

his acute embarrassment at business failure, seems to have driven him to a state of neurotic despair. In September 1866 he suffered an attack of the D.T.'s during which he threatened the life of a banking friend who refused him further credit. As his condition deteriorated, the police were notified, and two of his sisters came up from Melbourne to tend to him. He accompanied them back to St. Kilda, stayed there a few months, then returned to Ballarat. In January 1867 his sisters were again called when he suffered another bout of the D.T.'s. He hallucinated about attempts to poison him, threatened to kill himself, and had several epileptic fits. On medical advice he was placed in Ballarat Hospital on 23 March. His business affairs were then wound up; debts totalling £600, and assets £60. On 5 April he was discharged from Hospital and accompanied his sisters back to Melbourne²¹.

Clearly, O'Farrell's mental condition was characterised by bouts of depression brought on by an obsession with deeply personal worries exacerbated by his financial straits. In this mental state his Irish nationalist sentiment became an absorbing passion, possibly providing a kind of distraction or relief. In Ballarat he declared himself wholly in support of Fenianism²², which would have had the effect of further alienating him from the middle-class business circles he had earlier associated with. When he went to Melbourne to convalesce, it was said that he met some anti-Fenians from Ballarat who challenged him on his Fenian sympathies. He responded vehemently in favour of Irish republicanism²³.

Towards the end of April 1867 he wrote to the Bishop of Adelaide, L.B. Shiel, expressing a wish to return to his church career, but received no reply for almost a year as Shiel was overseas visiting Ireland²⁴. In August, he took passage to Sydney, after informing relatives that he intended to start a church career in New South Wales. He arrived early in September and took a room at Daniel Tierney's Currency Lass Hotel, dependent on family remittances to meet expenses. But if the sentiments he privately recorded in a small memo book at this time are sincere, he had no genuine intention

- (21) Miner and Weekly Star, loc. cit.; Ballarat Star, 14 March 1868; Supt. Hill, 13 March 1868, loc. cit.; The Late Attempt...etc., pp. 8-9.
 (22) The Late Attempt...etc., p. 9.
 (23) *ibid.*
 (24) Shiel to O'Farrell, 31 July 1867, 'Papers related to the attempt to assassinate H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh', Legislative Assembly of N.S.W., Votes and Proceedings 1868-69, Vol. 1, pp. 762-3. O'Farrell received Shiel's letter just before the attempted assassination. The Bishop advised him to seek a position with the Jesuits at Adelaide.

to return to the church. His disclosures are interesting in that they indicate his consciousness of a personal conflict within him, between religious and national loyalties:

Go in for the Church! The idea disgusts me. That is what they would have me do. And yet I cannot get money unless I lead them to believe I am studying for the Church. I did think of doing so once, and it plunged me into a fever - the having to decide on loyalty to a Church or to Country²⁵.

It is uncertain whether O'Farrell came to Sydney with the object of shooting Alfred, or set his mind to it after arrival. In support of the latter is a report in the Freeman's Journal of 5 October that may well have influenced him, especially since the paper was radical, distinctly Irish, and the only Catholic one published in Sydney. It told how a young Polish soldier named Beregowski had recently attempted to assassinate the Czar of Russia in Paris. He had boarded the Czar's carriage and fired point blank, but the barrel of his gun had exploded. As an enraged crowd set upon him he had cried 'Vive la Pologne!', and explained later at his trial that the Czar had 'murdered' his country - since with the stroke of a pen he had set all the youth of Poland into Siberia and condemned a whole people to exile and death. A defence witness stated that Beregowski had wept when the Polish insurrection was put down, that he was studious, sincerely religious, and had avidly read anything in line with his 'patriotic sentiments'. If O'Farrell read this report, parallels with his own position in regard to Irish nationalism would have been strikingly obvious. Inspirational influences on lone assassins are only recently beginning to be appreciated, as James Clarke illustrates in a study of fifteen such attacks in America between 1835 and 1975²⁶.

- (25) Extract from a memo book seized by the police on 12 March 1868. The original pages are in 'Alleged Fenian conspiracy re attempted assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh', Col. Sec. special bundle 4-768.1, NSWAO. For a typed copy: 'Papers related to the attempt...' etc., loc. cit., p. 727.
- (26) J.W. Clarke, American Assassins, the Darker Side of Politics, Princeton U.P., 1983. In one footnote, for example, Clarke points out that John Hinckley's attempt on the life of President Reagan was inspired by fantasies based on a would-be assassin in the film, Taxi Driver. The script of Taxi Driver in turn drew heavily on the diaries of Arthur Bremer who tried to kill presidential candidate George Wallace. Bremer in turn had identified with Sirhan who killed Robert Kennedy (Sydney Morning Herald review, 23 April 1983).

For six months O'Farrell resided in several Sydney hotels, frequenting saloons and billiard rooms and wandering city streets. Several acquaintances he made observed that his manner was gentlemanly and his conversation intellectual. One who conversed with him on several occasions at the Clarendon Hotel, recalled at O'Farrell's trial:

I was always struck with the calmness and precision of mind with which he arranged his arguments and ideas on political subjects; he very often spoke of the wrongs of Ireland... exhibit (ing) a power of argument, which I thought rather above the capacity of those whom he met²⁷.

In December 1867, when he told another acquaintance, Henry Lewis, that he had just purchased a revolver and bullets, Lewis remarked that anyone who heard of it would think him a Fenian. The conversation continued:

...(O'Farrell) asked me my opinion of Fenianism, and I said that I thought it was well to have hanged the men at Manchester...he asked me whether I was a Protestant or a Catholic, and I answered that I was a Protestant; on this O'Farrell said to me, 'That accounts for the answer which you have just given to me'²⁸.

Early in January, two naval surgeons breakfasting at the Clarendon noticed that O'Farrell was excited by a newspaper report that a Fenian warship might attempt to intercept a convict transport carrying some Fenian prisoners to Western Australia. When one remarked that he hoped the warship would be sunk, O'Farrell trembled, mumbled something to himself, then replied that he hoped the Fenian mission would succeed²⁹. From such observations it would appear that O'Farrell's Fenian sympathies were sincere, though probably accentuated by his inner turmoil.

In mid January he wrote to the editors of two Dublin papers, The Irishman and Nation, saying he intended to shoot Prince Alfred³⁰. He gave

(27) Joseph Hind's evidence, The Late Attempt...etc., p. 43.

(28) ibid., p. 39.

(29) Evidence of Dr. Joseph Colville and Mr. Dalley, ibid., pp. 39-40.

(30) O'Farrell, recorded conversation with Frederick Bernard, Principal Warder at Darlinghurst gaol, 20 March 1868, The O'Farrell Papers: a Correct Reprint of Papers Tabled in the Legislative Assembly by Mr. Parkes, Sydney pamphlet, 1869, p. 13 (hereafter, 'O'Farrell Papers'); O'Farrell's final confession, 20 April 1868: 'I have written to the printers of two Irish periodicals an address to the people of Ireland', Sydney Morning Herald, 23 April 1868; T.D. Sullivan, Troubled Times in Irish Politics, Dublin, 1905, pp. 103-4.

his reasons and added that he expected the deed would cost him his life. T.D. Sullivan, co-editor of the Nation, took the letter to his brother, A.M. Sullivan, who was serving a sentence in Richmond prison for sedition - related to his attendance at a mock funeral rally against the Manchester executions. The Sullivans decided to do nothing about it, assuming that either nothing would come of it or that it had already occurred. Their failure to notify authorities that Alfred's life was in danger indicates the extent to which even moderate Irish nationalists such as the Sullivans were alienated by British rule in Ireland. T.D. Sullivan explained their decision as follows:

I told him of the letter as we took a turn or two in the prison yard, remarking that possibly no such attempt had been made, that, if it had, the whole thing must have been done and ended long before O'Farrell's letter reached Dublin and that consequently we could do nothing towards preventing the commission of the crime. 'Take my advice', he said, 'and as soon as you get back to the office, burn that letter; you know what harm has already been done in this country by the keeping of 'documents''. I acted on his advice³¹.

Though much consideration has been given to the question of whether or not O'Farrell had actual Fenian connections³², his letters to Dublin have never been mentioned. Clearly the personal nature of the letter the Sullivans received, strongly suggests that O'Farrell acted alone. At least one Fenian assassination circle did exist for a time in Ireland, but on no occasion of its reprisals against informers was a formal explanation conveyed to newspapers³³.

(31) Sullivan, op. cit., pp. 103-4.

(32) See, for example: Phillip Cowburn, 'The Attempted Assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh, 1868', JRAHS, Vol. 55, Pt. 1, 1969, pp. 19-42; D.I. McDonald, 'Henry James O'Farrell - Fenian or Moonstruck Miscreant', Canberra and District Historical Soc. Journal, September 1970, pp. 1-13; A.W. Martin, 'A Note on the Attempted Assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh, Sydney, 1868', La Trobe Historical Studies, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1971, pp. 23-32.

(33) The death of George Clarke on 10 February 1866 was the first of several attacks on informers, most of which were instigated by an assassination circle headed by Michael Cody, alias James Dunn (Freeman's Journal, Sydney, 21 April 1866; Perth Gazette, 19 July 1867; Advocate, Melbourne, 17 July 1869. See also John Devoy's memoirs in Gaelic American, 6, 21 January 1905; and John Rutherford, The Secret History of the Fenian Conspiracy, 2 vols, London, 1877, Vol. 2, pp. 158-166).

O'Farrell later recounted that his first intention was to shoot Alfred on 21 January, the day the Prince arrived in Sydney³⁴. To do so he had rented a verandah room in The Custom House Hotel, Circular Quay, but he had refrained from firing at the royal carriage for fear of injuring the governor, Earl Belmore, who had recently accepted patronage of St. Patrick's Day³⁵. He was similarly concerned when he heard rumours about an Irish plot to burn the Hyde Park pavilion during a Royal Ball there on 5 February, as he considered such a method recklessly irresponsible to the safety of others. To effect his own plan, he hired evening dress to attend the Ball but was refused entry - having no invitation. During these delays he gave rein to fantasies that he belonged to a Fenian band which had been instructed by warrant from Ireland to assassinate Alfred as a reprisal for the Manchester executions. In a small memo book he filled several pages with a distorted suicidal stream of consciousness. He aimed to give England's 'ugly nose...a tweak it little dreams of'; - hoping for that particular kind of public notoriety commonly sought by neurotic lone assassins:

...I am to die in a few days; - let me see; - in two weeks from this, and in tolerable company. It will be a fine soul race to somewhere, or more probably, nowhere, or nihil. What nonsense it is to write like this, and yet I find grim satisfaction in thinking of the vengeance. How the nobility of the three countries will curse me, and the toadying lickspittle Press hunt the dictionaries over for terms of abhorrence! But vengeance for Ireland is sweet. ³⁶Woe to you England, when the glorious 'nine' carry out their programme

He further disclosed that he was capable of maintaining a facade that would not arouse suspicion:

- (34) O'Farrell, recorded conversation with Henry Parkes at Darlinghurst gaol, 18 March 1868, 'O'Farrell Papers', pp. 6-12; O'Farrell, recorded conversation with Principal Warder Bernard, 20 March 1868, *ibid.*, pp. 12-13; evidence of Warder William Boon, 'Select Committee on alleged conspiracy for purposes of treason and assassination'. Reports, proceedings, minutes of evidence and appendix, Legislative Assembly of N.S.W., Votes and Proceedings 1868-69, Vol. 1, p. 912 (hereafter, 'Parl. Inquiry').
- (35) Belmore to Buckingham, 25 March 1868, Belmore Corres., 1862-72, A2542-2, ML.
- (36) Memo book extract, *loc. cit.*

...Fool! - suppose the police come suddenly upon you, and, taken unawares, these papers found upon you? True; but this last six months I have passed through so many dangers of the sort, that impunity is begetting a kind of fatalism in my own invincibility...Play the fool like Brutus - the simpleton - the ready laugh for all comers. Shew yourself incapable of entertaining serious ideas, least of all a sentiment of patriotism³⁷.

Apparent too, is O'Farrell's sense of isolation from fellow Irish-Australians, particularly those of the lower classes, emanating from contempt for what he believed to be a degenerative patriotic and moral state into which most had fallen:

...My countrymen here think more of the fleshpots than of allegiance they owe their country. They talk big, profess and profess. Indeed as far as professions go, they would each and all out Emmett - Emmett (sic) for the republic - but I can trust few...I dare not trust that Tierney..(and others).. among these in esse or in posse convict people. For swearing and cursing and the use of the word bloody, commend me to this Colony³⁸.

In the very week that tension began to mount in anticipation of expected Irish nationalist protests on St. Patrick's Day, O'Farrell seized an opportunity to act. On Thursday 12 March he joined a crowd of 1500 well-to-do citizens who purchased charity tickets - £1 for gentlemen, 10/- for ladies - in aid of the Sailors' Home, to attend a picnic in royal company at Clontarf, a bushland park on the north shore of Sydney's Middle Harbour. Dressed in a hired black suit and white waist-coat, he chatted with a casual acquaintance on a ferry trip to the venue. In his pockets were two loaded revolvers: a six-chambered Smith and Wesson, and a smaller Colt. He had tested them the day before at a vacant lot near Waverley Hotel, using a handkerchief for a target³⁹.

In the mid-afternoon, as Alfred strolled across Clontarf Park, O'Farrell approached quickly to within a few paces, drew the large revolver

(37) *ibid.*

(38) *ibid.*

(39) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 March 1868; *The Late Attempt...etc.*, pp. 1-17; Detective John Raven's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 883.

and fired point-blank at the Prince's back. Alfred collapsed and O'Farrell took aim again, but hesitated when Sir William Manning stepped into the line of fire. He then tried to shoot Manning but the gun misfired. A third shot, diverted when O'Farrell was grasped from behind, entered the foot of a man nearby. 'I'm a Fenian - God save Ireland!' O'Farrell yelled, then disappeared beneath a seething mass of bodies⁴⁰.

Shock waves of astonishment and anger excited the crowd to the point of hysteria. Alice Stephen, daughter of the chief justice, Sir Alfred Stephen, thought the shots marked the onset of 'a general massacre by the Fenians'⁴¹. Her brother, Consett Stephen, described the scene in a letter to his wife in the following vivid terms:

Fancy a staid old churchman like Alexr Stuart when at the Picnic running about with a carving knife to stab O'Farrell - rushing to get at him with oaths and imprecations - and on my father saying gently to him no, no, Stuart - let the law take its course - his exclaiming D___ you and the law let me rip the _____ scoundrel up. Your friend Mr. Learmouth I hear was in a frightful state of excitement. You can form no idea what a scene it must have been from the extracts in the papers. Ladies too strong to faint were screeching to cut him to pieces with scissors. Steady old attorneys with hundreds to help them were running ropes over extempore gibbets, and calling to the mob to bring him to be hanged⁴².

With great difficulty the police extracted O'Farrell, and assisted by Sir Alfred Stephen and Lord Newry, managed to get him on to a steamer. No sooner was O'Farrell aboard than a number of sailors were ready to string him up, but Lord Newry restored order and told the captain to cast off before the mob could board the ship. O'Farrell was battered and bleeding, his clothes almost stripped off, and several policemen had minor injuries. From Circular Quay he was taken by cab to Darlinghurst gaol. A preliminary hearing was held the next morning, at which O'Farrell cross-examined some witnesses, but only to clarify minor aspects of the incident. He did not deny that he had said just after the shooting: 'I've done my duty and I can die for my country'. Asked if he had anything to say before the hearing concluded, O'Farrell replied: 'I have nothing to say but that the task of

(40) The Late Attempt...etc., pp. 4-8, Senior Sergeant Rawlinson's evidence, preliminary enquiry, 13 March 1868, *ibid.*, p. 17.

(41) Alice to Emilie Stephen, 17 March 1868, Stephen Family Papers, MLMSS 777-10, p. 147, ML.

(42) Consett to Emilie Stephen, *ibid.*, 777-11, pp. 287-92.

executing the Duke was sent out and allotted to me'. He was then committed to stand trial at Darlinghurst Central Criminal Court on 26 March⁴³.

Alfred miraculously escaped serious injury. The bullet's impact was impeded by a combination of his heavy jacket and the double thickness of his trouser braces. It entered his back just to the right of his spine, followed the course of a rib and lodged beneath the flesh on the right side of his chest⁴⁴. He was conveyed to Government House where it was decided to operate a day or two later, after shock had passed. Two nurses trained by Florence Nightingale had arrived from England a week earlier and were able to assist the surgeons. Being young and strong, the Prince withstood an uncomplicated operation on 14 March, described by one of the Nightingale nurses as follows:

...when before 7 a.m. the surgeons entered, his Royal Highness gave them a hearty greeting. Chloroform was mentioned but dismissed. The Prince was then placed in a sitting posture in an armchair, which he took hold of with both hands, as is done at the dentists. The surgeons then made an incision in the right breast, and with the forceps quickly extracted the bullet - an ugly rough slug, of size and shape of small thimble. Excepting a momentary pallor, his Royal Highness showed no fear - was, on the contrary, very composed. Whilst the wound was being dressed,⁴⁵ he examined the bullet, and conversed with the surgeons.

Ten days later Alfred was back on his feet inspecting the Galatea; and three weeks after the operation he had a gold trowel in hand, laying a foundation stone for Sydney's new Town Hall.

At a farewell levee on 6 April at Government House, the Prince responded to a toast to his health with some advice for the colony:

If there is any disaffection tending to disloyalty amongst any community, in any section of Her Majesty's dominions, it will be the duty of the Government to put it down,⁴⁶...

Late that evening the Galatea slipped out of the Heads, bound for New Zealand. On board was a large collection of gifts including live emus and kangaroos,

(43) The Late Attempt...etc., pp. 4-8, 12-20.

(44) Belmore to Buckingham, 27 March 1868, Belmore Corres., ML 2542-2, pp. 283-9.

(45) Sister H _____, 'Clontarf', Australasian Nurses' Journal, October 1906, p. 332.

(46) Quoted Rev. J. Milner and O.W. Brierly, The Cruise of the Galatea, London, 1869, p. 444.

and one unusual memento from Henry Parkes: O'Farrell's two pistols, still loaded, and the flattened bullet extracted from Alfred, nicely arranged in a small cedar case⁴⁷.

As colonial secretary and minister of police, Parkes assumed the main responsibility for investigating O'Farrell's Fenian assertions. After Parliament was adjourned on the afternoon of the incident, he accompanied Premier James Martin to Government House, then went on to Darlinghurst gaol to assess police inquiries. He found the police in a general state of confusion, partly due to the absence of Inspector General John McLerie, who was ill in bed⁴⁸. Parkes assumed command, ascertained from O'Farrell where he had slept the night before, and proceeded to the Clarendon Hotel accompanied by two detectives. In O'Farrell's room they found percussion caps, wadding and cartridges, a Douay bible, a Catholic prayer book, a crucifix, some correspondence from Victoria, and O'Farrell's memo-book notes torn out and tucked in a waist-coat pocket⁴⁹. This evidence, combined with O'Farrell's disclosures, quickly convinced Parkes that their prisoner was in fact a Fenian.

On the first night O'Farrell was in prison, he told the cell warden, William Boon, that Fenians he was associated with had made several plans to assassinate Alfred and would continue with their intention in New Zealand. He added that Sydney Fenians met weekly at Dan Tierney's Currency Lass Hotel and at Michael Shalvey's Globe Tavern⁵⁰. The next morning he told Principal Warden Frederick Bernard that a band of twenty-four Fenians including himself had been recruited in Melbourne by a leader who had come out from England to organize the assassination. This band was afterwards reduced to ten who drew lots for the deed, O'Farrell being selected⁵¹. The information was conveyed to Parkes who made arrangements for a Sydney Morning Herald shorthand reporter, Samuel Cook, to be hidden outside O'Farrell's cell door to record further conversations⁵². Several were thus recorded, including at least two long exchanges with Parkes himself⁵³. Within three days Parkes was certain that O'Farrell was sane and telling the truth. He dispatched his conclusion to the Victorian government on 15 March:

(47) Advocate, 18 April 1868.

(48) Parkes' evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', pp. 840-1.

(49) ibid.

(50) Boon's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', pp. 912-3.

(51) F.R. Bernard, report, 13 March 1868, CS0 special bundle 4-768.1, NSWAO.

(52) Cook's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', pp. 864-5; and see his affidavit, 'Papers related to the attempt...' etc., loc. cit., p. 19.

(53) 18, 24 March 1868, 'O'Farrell Papers', pp. 6-11, 14-18.

The government of this colony is in possession of information which leaves no doubt that the man O'Farrell who made the desperate attempt..to take the life of the Duke of Edinburgh is one of a band organized for this diabolical purpose, and that he had accomplices in Victoria and probably in Ireland.

Both the honor (sic) and the interest of these colonies impel us to make every effort to discover and bring to justice these infamous criminals⁵⁴.

Since Parkes had almost no evidence apart from O'Farrell's confessions, why was he so sure that the man was a Fenian? An important influence was that O'Farrell gave every appearance of being quite sane, not only to Parkes but to a number of fairly objective observers as well. The principal gaoler at Darlinghurst, J.C. Read, thought that O'Farrell seemed 'very intelligent - in fact a witty man; a clever man I should take him to be, only for the atrocious act he committed'⁵⁵. Asked whether O'Farrell seemed desperate for notoriety, Read replied: 'I think he was tired of life; he said so, he said he wished to find out the grand secret...The only thing he said he was afraid of was that they might bring him in insane, and confine him to a madhouse'⁵⁶.

The goal's visiting surgeon, Dr. Isaac Aaron, who saw O'Farrell twice daily during his six weeks imprisonment, stated that he was 'most perfectly satisfied' the prisoner was sane⁵⁷. Aaron was unaware that one conversation he had with O'Farrell was overheard by a warder who objected to its nature and reported the matter to Principal Warder Bernard. The conversation, claimed to have been recorded verbatim, illustrates O'Farrell's sharp wit:

Doctor: How much will you give me now to prove you insane,
and get you out of this scrape?

O'Farrell: How much will you ask?

Doctor: What will you give?

(54) Parkes to McCullogh (Chief Secretary), 15 March 1868, Parkes Corres., A 926, pp. 363-6, ML.

(55) Read's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 822.

(56) *ibid.*, p. 824.

(57) Aaron's evidence, *ibid.*, p. 829.

O'Farrell: It's you that's to name the price; I know that you can get two doctors in England to swear you insane for £500. I know that all doctors are latitudinarians - they can expand or contract when they please.

Doctor: You can't buy me or nobody else.

O'Farrell: That ends the joke, Doctor⁵⁸.

The shorthand reporter, Samuel Cook, thought 'all the statements about O'Farrell's insanity were exaggerated;' he added, 'I think O'Farrell was sane...his conversation appeared to be perfectly rational, his memory seemed to be good, his appearance did not indicate any aberration of intellect'⁵⁹. Governor Earl Belmore concurred: 'I believe O'Farrell to be as sane as I am', he informed Whitehall⁶⁰. Similar views were held by the head of police, Inspector-General McLerie, and his deputy, Edmund Fosbery. Though one contrary opinion was given by an Irish-born detective, Daniel McGlone, who saw O'Farrell briefly on 14 March and said that he seemed to be rolling his eyes like a madman⁶¹. McGlone's opinion aside, the general impression O'Farrell gave his observers matches a report in the Empire that most visitors: 'left him no wiser than when they went; his remarkable acuteness and readiness in argument enables him to draw out his opponents, and then, when they are thrown off their guard by his apparent candour and earnestness, to turn upon them with quick retorts or cutting sarcasms'⁶².

The conversations between Parkes and O'Farrell recorded by Cook, reveal O'Farrell behaving more or less exactly this way. Parkes gives the impression of being an amateurish inquisitor, attempting to draw out what he believed to be the truth from O'Farrell, but becoming instead a victim of his imaginative web of confessions. Admittedly, Parkes and the authorities were unacquainted with the real nature of the Fenian movement, and were therefore not in a position to recognize O'Farrell's wilder stories. His assertion, for example, that Fenians proposed a confederate republic of

(58) Warder John Carroll to Bernard, reported conversation of 23 March, *ibid*, p. 933.

(59) Cook's evidence, *ibid.*, pp. 864-5.

(60) Belmore to Buckingham, 25 March 1868, Belmore Corres., 1862-72, A2542-2, ML.

(61) McGlone's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 905.

(62) 20 March 1868.

Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England⁶³ was quite contrary to the actual Fenian objective. At such a disadvantage, Parkes and the Martin Government were all the more disposed to accede to public pressure from ultra-loyal Protestants, who demanded that Irish disaffection be sought out and purged from the midst of society. The atmosphere while O'Farrell awaited his trial was electric, comparable with the social climate in the United States when Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President John Kennedy. O'Farrell's powers of deception, then, combined with the circumstances during which official inquiries were undertaken, provide at least a partial explanation for the events that followed.

Throughout Australia, countless mass meetings expressed outrage at the deed, declared unswerving loyalty to the British Crown, and very often threatened dire consequences if any Fenian conspirators or sympathisers were exposed. A day after the incident, an indignation meeting at Hyde Park, Sydney, attracted a crowd of 25,000. To cool sectarian ardour, neither Protestant nor Catholic clergy were allowed to make speeches, but at least one scuffle occurred when a drunk named Alfred Shipton declared that he did not 'believe in the British Throne'. Shipton was seized by George Hixson, a Volunteer resplendently dressed in green uniform, who was in turn assaulted by Leopold Morgan, who had been told that Hixson was a Fenian. Shipton was later charged with drunkenness, and Morgan with assault. A large crowd gathered at the court to see 'the Fenians'⁶⁴.

Similar scenes were witnessed in Victoria. On 13 March, a capacity crowd of 7,000 jammed into the Exhibition Building, to be addressed by Melbourne's leading citizens. Munster-born John O'Shanassy, a leading parliamentarian and former premier, was loudly applauded when he affirmed the city's loyalty to the British throne. But when the Mayor described O'Farrell's deed as the act of a lone madman, he was met with vehement cries of 'No! No!'. At a Fitzroy meeting the Member for Ballarat East, C.E. Jones, declared that all present knew 'a small section of this community was tainted with treason' and suggested to the cheering crowd that 'the loyal population..place themselves at the disposal of the governing powers almost as one man against treason, wherever that treason might be found'. The next

(63) Conversation with Parkes, 18 March 1868, 'O'Farrell Papers', p. 7.

(64) Sydney Morning Herald, 14, 16 March 1868; Empire, 16 March 1868; Lyons op. cit., p. 109.

night at Ballarat, a record indoor crowd of 6,000 condemned the 'sneaking atrocity of the Sydney assassin' - unaware at this time that O'Farrell had been for many years a resident of Ballarat. A declaration by Captain W.C. Smith, commander of the Ballarat Rangers, that 'in this district the wretch would not have lived one half-hour' roused enthusiastic cheers; though the loudest applause was given to an avowal by D. Blair MLA, that he would have rejoiced had he heard that an 'irrepressible feeling of human justice had caused the loyalty of Sydney there and then to immolate this monstrous ruffian'⁶⁵.

The main force behind demands for a purge of Irish-Catholic disaffection came from the Orange order and loyalists sympathetic to it. A typically provocative step taken by this element was the printing in New South Wales of notices calling for an anti-Catholic union in the face of O'Farrell's act. One of these, addressed to Archbishop Polding, St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, was passed on by him to the police:

Great but Dreadful Discovery
The new
'Protestant Cement'
as lately discovered by the
Bullet of the Roman Catholic Fenian O'Farrell,
in the sands of Clontarf, with the blood of
our beloved Prince!!!
Orange Grove, N.S.Wales
March 12th, 1868⁶⁶.

In Victoria, William Clarke, grand master of Ballarat Orange Lodges, secretary of Buningong Shire Council and a member of the Melbourne Club, became an active participant in the anti-Fenian purge. On 16 March he informed Attorney-General A.E. Higinbotham that Fenianism was rife in his region, so much so that local Orangemen had armed themselves with revolvers when the Prince visited Ballarat, fully expecting an attempt on his life⁶⁷. This information, coming from one who stood to inherit (and did, in 1874) the richest squatting domain in Victoria - valued at £1,500,000⁶⁸, could not be brushed aside. Captain Frederick Standish, Commissioner of Police and a fellow member of the Melbourne Club, promptly responded by ordering Superintendent Henry Hill of Ballarat to investigate, adding that 'money

(65) Advocate, 21 March 1868; Ballarat Star, 16 March 1868.

(66) Col. Sec. special bundle 4-768.1, NSWAO.

(67) Clarke to Higinbotham, 'CSO bundle, VPRO'.

(68) ADB, Vol. 3, Melbourne, 1969, p. 423.

can be fully expended in processing information'⁶⁹. Meanwhile Clarke continued his campaign with a letter to the Ballarat Courier, calling for the utmost vigilance:

...I am aware and can positively state that bodies of these Fenians meet in...Fenian lodges or associations in Bungaree, Sebastopol, Ballarat East and Ballarat West.
 ...I say that the loyal portion of the community should adopt some defensive organization, and be prepared to repel any attack made on them individually or collectively.
 ...say that the Yankee Fenians were to send a few gunboats to bombard Melbourne, I am convinced we would have hordes of these scoundrels springing up amongst us to aid and succour their brethren and render them every assistance imaginable. I am thoroughly convinced that if something is not done, and that done quickly, the loyalists of Victoria will be caught napping'⁷⁰.

A short time later Clarke's name appeared in the news in connection with a shooting incident. A James McBride had been charged with firing into a crowd outside the election headquarters of C.E. Jones MLA - the outspoken loyalist at the Fitzroy indignation meeting, and Clarke had stood surety for McBride's release on bail. Outside the court Thomas Dalton showed his feelings about this by assaulting Clarke. Dalton was fined £10. McBride was acquitted on a lack of evidence: the same finding reached a few months earlier in relation to the Orange shooting incident at Protestant Hall⁷¹.

When a thorough police investigation at Ballarat and surrounding districts was completed, Detective Eason reported that Clarke's principal informant was a Dr. King, 'a violent orangeman addicted to Whisky Punch which occasionally obscures his intellect'. Eason concluded that most of the Irish miners and labourers sympathised with Fenianism and would 'undoubtedly enlist under the Yankee Fenians were such to come in the manner indicated', but he added that at present there was nothing to fear from them. Commissioner Standish concurred, pointing out in a memo to the government that widespread inquiries over a three month period had revealed no evidence

(69) Standish to Hill, 17 March 1868, 'CSO bundle, VPRO'.

(70) Ballarat Courier, 27 March 1868. Clarke signed the letter 'A Loyalist'. His identity as writer is revealed in a police report compiled 28 April 1868 ('CSO bundle, VPRO').

(71) Advocate, 6 June, 8 August 1868.

of Fenian organization. The only danger, he suggested, was a possibility that conflict might occur between 'Orangemen and Irish Catholics of the low class'⁷².

From such evidence it is apparent that a fair proportion of working-class Irish Catholics sympathised with Fenian objectives to liberate and democratise Ireland. Equally apparent is the fact that they despised Orangemen as colonial representatives of a Protestant ascendancy shielded by British authority both in Ireland and Australia. In Australia as in Ireland, Orangemen were a minority whose influence in politics, the judiciary, Volunteer militia and local government, far outweighed their numbers. We may instance, for example, William Clarke as one of many such influential citizens who had a ready access to arms and were prepared to use them when threatened. Radical Irish nationalists, on the other hand, rarely used arms, but were not averse to physical assault should a situation seem to require it. To what extent then, did they consider that O'Farrell had taken justifiable action against a representative of British oppression? During a festive town banquet in Cork City, Ireland, loud shouts of 'Bravo!' greeted Mayor Daniel O'Sullivan's declaration that O'Farrell was a 'noble Irishman' moved to fire at Prince Alfred by feelings 'as noble and patriotic..(as) any of the men who had sacrificed their lives for Ireland'⁷³. Did radical Irish in Australia share that view?

An examination of radical Irish conduct in eastern Australia during the O'Farrell affair, reveals in fact scant support for his action. Wherever some kind of demonstration was made, it was either a response to news about the Fenians executed at Manchester, or a more general expression of sympathy towards the political condition of Ireland. As communications from Ireland and Britain reported the occurrence of mock funeral processions in honour of the 'Manchester Patriots', various colonial processions were organized on similar lines to coincide with St. Patrick's Day 1868. The fact that this day fell within a week of the assassination attempt ensured that loyalist reactions to such activities, and government suppression of them, were all the more vigorous.

(72) 28 April 1868 (Eason's report enclosed), 'CSO bundle, VPRO'.

(73) Oliver MacDonagh, 'The last bill of pains and penalties: the case of Daniel O'Sullivan, 1869' Irish Historical Review, Vol. 19, No. 74, September 1974, p. 140. (I am indebted to Prof. MacDonagh for bringing this source to my attention).

At least two attempts at such demonstrations were made in New South Wales. At Hartley, fringing the Blue Mountains, a supervisor on the zig-zag railway warned the Commissioner of Railways on 13 March that an Irish protest demonstration was in the planning and that he believed '20 or 30 Red Coats would have the desired effect'⁷⁴. On the morning of St. Patrick's Day a troop of mounted police confronted about 200 Irish navvies there, preparing to march to the accompaniment of drum and fiddle; but order prevailed when the local priest, Father Phelan, implored the men not to connect themselves with O'Farrell's crime, nor forge 'fresh fetters' for themselves by encouraging the Government to pass the English Treason Felony Act. Phelan's entreaties, the police presence, and a threat from their work supervisor, Mr. Higgins, that any navy who marched would be dismissed, finally caused the crowd to disperse to several hotels, where the 'Wearing of the Green' and other nationalist songs were bellowed forth in a lusty manner till midnight⁷⁵. The other march, at Singleton rail-head, was also suppressed without incident after Police Headquarters at Sydney was informed that a large amount of green ribbons, sashes and crepe had been ordered by Irish navvies for the purpose of holding a mock funeral⁷⁶.

In Melbourne a day before the attempted assassination, placards were pasted up around the wharves and streets announcing that a 'Monster Funeral Procession in Memory of the Great Irish Patriots, Larkin Allen and O'Brien' would leave Mr. Daly's, Undertaker, at 2 o'clock on Tuesday 17 March; it concluded 'God Save Ireland!'⁷⁷. The police soon ascertained that the printing had been ordered by Louis Ducrow, a government scab inspector, and distribution handled by a bookseller named M^cDonough: 'a very talkative intermeddling man...generally harping on Ireland's wrongs'⁷⁸. The organizers at first defied a police order to abandon proceedings, even when news of O'Farrell's deed swept the city. The general secretary, using a pen-name 'Hibernicus', informed the Argus that this and other marches would go ahead as planned. He claimed that endorsement had been given at meetings held in Melbourne, Collingwood, Ballarat, Sandhurst, Kyneton, Kilmore,

- (74) George Cowdrey to the Commissioner of Railways, 13 March 1868, 'Attempted Assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh', Legislative Assembly of N.S.W., Miscellaneous Papers 1868-69, A497, ML.
- (75) Police reports, 13, 15, 18 March 1868, Col. Sec. special bundle 4-768.1, NSWAO; Empire, 27 March 1868.
- (76) Evidence of John McLerie and Patrick Lyons, 'Parl. Inquiry', pp. 801, 884.
- (77) Police Report, 12 March 1868, 'CSO bundle, VPRO'.
- (78) *ibid.*

Geelong and Epping, and rejected suggestions that such procedures were disloyal:

...Is there anything illegal in any expression of sympathy with our poor Suffering Country, and the victims of English tyranny, is it in any way incompatible with loyalty and real attachment to the constitution of our adopted country to give expression to our feelings as Irishmen on such a subject. We think not...

...I am requested to state that as Irishmen and uncompromising Haters of British misrule and oppression, we fling back with scorn the foul calumny that would connect us with the cowardly attempt to assassinate your English Prince⁷⁹.

'Hibernicus' was probably unaware that such activity was in fact illegal; since after sectarian clashes between Orange and Green in 1846, the legislative council of New South Wales had passed a Party Processions Act to prevent marches either on St. Patrick's Day or during Orange 'Battle of the Boyne' celebrations on 12 July. The law extended to Port Phillip, which was then part of New South Wales. Thereafter banquets held by either party were acceptable to the law, but not street marches⁸⁰. By 1875, however, observance of the Act had weakened to the point where a large Irish procession to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Daniel O'Connell was permitted to proceed in Sydney⁸¹.

In the event the Melbourne march was abandoned, and St. Patrick's Day there passed fairly quietly. The authorities ensured that law and order prevailed by positioning a contingent of 220 14th Regiment troops to guard Melbourne gaol and the powder magazine in Royal Park, and as a precaution against any 'Fenian funeral procession', the gates of Melbourne cemetery were locked for the day⁸². In addition, the police concentrated a force armed with carbines and revolvers in Russell Street Barracks, and a mounted troop, forty strong, was kept at the ready⁸³. The only disturbance occurred when a crowd led by Sandridge boatmen launched an anti-Fenian demonstration outside St. Francis' Catholic Church. The crowd lustily sang

(79) 14 March 1868, encl. *ibid.* The editor did not publish and passed the letter on to the police.

(80) K.S. Inglis, *The Australian Colonists*, Melbourne, 1974, pp. 90-4.

(81) Attorney-General of N.S.W., special bundle 1836-76, Vol. 5, 9-2699A, pp. 621-41, NSWAO.

(82) Chief Commissioner Standish, memo 17 March 1868, 'CSO bundle, VPRO'.

(83) Standish to Governor Manners-Sutton, 16 March 1868, *ibid.*

the national anthem but dispersed swiftly when a hundred police arrived, armed with batons and revolvers⁸⁴.

One mock funeral that did proceed was held at Hokitika, New Zealand, under the joint leadership of a former Eureka rebel and a local Catholic priest. News of the Hokitika 'outrage' reached Sydney a week after the assassination attempt. Reports related that at Hokitika goldfield - on the west coast of the south island - about 1000 men led by a horse-drawn hearse, a brass band, and a group carrying a large wooden cross and banners inscribed 'God Save Ireland' and 'Allen, Larkin and O'Brien', had wound its way to the cemetery, forced open the gates and observed a memorial service conducted by Father William Larkin, who was dressed in full canonicals⁸⁵. Larkin and John Manning, joint owners of the New Zealand Celt newspaper, were brought to trial with a handful of other leaders for inciting 'discontent, dissatisfaction and disaffection with the Queen's government at home and abroad, ... forcible entry into a public cemetery... and erecting there a cross in honour of three men guilty of murder'⁸⁶. Held to be the main instigators, they were each fined £20 and sentenced to one month imprisonment. The Melbourne Age reminded readers that Manning had a history of radical Irish association, having been one of the principal Eureka rebels charged with high treason in 1854⁸⁷.

Radical Irish diggers at Mary River goldfield in Queensland were similarly moved, but their attempt to hold a funeral procession was suppressed before it got under way. It is interesting to note that the police informant here was a Limerick-born Protestant, H.E. King, the field's gold commissioner, who telegraphed the Queensland colonial secretary that large scale 'Fenian disturbances' were feared⁸⁸. In Ipswich, meanwhile, official

(84) Illustrated Australian News, 23 March 1868.

(85) Sydney Morning Herald, 19 March 1868; Sydney Illustrated News, 20 April, 15 May 1868; West Coast Times (N.Z.), reprinted in Illustrated Australian News, 23 June 1868.

(86) Advocate, 30 May 1868.

(87) 21 March 1868. Manning wrote a number of inflammatory articles before the rebellion and proposed the motion which put Peter Lalor in command. Along with other principal rebels he was acquitted of high treason. In 1867 he was a Catholic teacher at Wangaratta, then moved to N.Z. where he became proprietor of the Celt. In September 1868 he left N.Z. for California (Age, 21 March 1868; Advocate, 22 August 1868; Geoffrey Gold ed., Eureka, Sydney, 1977, pp. 32-4, 46-9).

(88) 9 April 1868, Col. Sec. Corres., 1021, QSA.

attention was attracted to the alleged disloyalty of Father Henry Brun. During a St. Patrick's Day banquet at St. Mary's School, Brun had made a point of toasting St. Patrick, then the Pope, ahead of the royal toast to the Queen. He next proposed a toast to Ireland, adding that although 'one of her sons had committed a frightful crime, he would not be ashamed of...that country or love it the less'⁸⁹. Called upon by the Education Board to explain why he should not be dismissed, Brun successfully argued that in Europe and Ireland drinking the health of the Pope before temporal rulers was not considered disloyal, and he was not aware of any legislation prohibiting such action in Australia⁹⁰.

Those involved in organized pro-Fenian demonstrations, then, were largely lower-middle and working class Irish colonists - particularly navvies, diggers and labourers - joined occasionally by a radically patriotic priest or schoolteacher. But even among this group there is no evidence of widespread support for O'Farrell. As we have seen, the Melbourne funeral march organizer, 'Hibernicus', who claimed to represent a significant number of his countrymen, specifically dissociated them from O'Farrell's deed and denounced loyalist attempts to connect it with the Irish national cause. Irish colonists higher up the social scale shared this view, often making earnest appeals for fair treatment from loyalists. Richard O'Sullivan, so radical a nationalist before the assassination attempt, hastily penned an apologetic editorial in the Freeman's Journal: 'Pray God that he is not an Irishman...for if the atrocious villain be of our race, thus Irishmen must bow their heads in sorrow'⁹¹. Charles Gavan Duffy, a former Young Irelander who had risen to prominence in Victorian politics, was more positively defensive: 'We have done nothing, we're loyal, indeed we are'⁹². Dr. Kevin O'Doherty MLA, a '48 rebel who had served his sentence in Van Diemen's Land, called upon the Queensland Irish to rid themselves of 'Fenianism...or any other ism' on Australian soil, where an absence of political inequalities contrasted so markedly with the situation in Ireland⁹³. And a similar stance was taken by Archbishop Polding, who expressed a hope that his adopted land would not 'import miseries and enmities' from the Old World⁹⁴. He added an appeal for national unity: 'I say Australia for

(89) Queensland Times (Ipswich), 19 March 1868.

(90) Brun to Secretary R. Bourne (Board of Education), 2 May 1868, Educ. Department 1861-75, A599, QSA.

(91) 14 March 1868.

(92) Herald (Melbourne), 20 March 1868.

(93) Brisbane Courier, 17 March 1868.

(94) Pastoral letter, quoted Empire, 30 March 1868.

Australians our sole and sufficient nationality'; but in view of tenuous national homogeneity in Australia, between Anglo-Saxon, Scot and Irish, not to mention Aboriginals, Chinese and other races, Polding's hope belonged more to the future than to the present.

While such men appealed for a national perspective on the O'Farrell incident, the Martin-Parkes Government joined a loyalist tide of anti-Fenian panic and suspicion. Acting on its conviction that O'Farrell was connected with a Fenian underground organization, the Government hastily framed a modified version of the English Treason Felony Act recommended for Australian adoption. To its existing clauses, the attorney-general and premier, James Martin, added three of his own: making it a punishable felony to use language disrespectful of the Queen; to refuse to join a loyal toast to the Queen; or to publish language considered treasonable under the Act⁹⁵. It passed all stages on Wednesday 18 March, and became law the next day upon Governor Belmore's consent. The only outright criticism in the House came from two opposition members, John Stewart and William Forster, the latter warning that he saw it as an act of 'Loyalty run mad'⁹⁶. Proclamation of the Treason Felony Act, a reward of £1000 for information leading to the conviction of any one of O'Farrell's accomplices⁹⁷, a further £250 reward for information of seditious conduct⁹⁸, and communications by Parkes to the other colonies, all gave impetus to a Fenian 'witch-hunt' that spanned Australasia but ultimately produced no evidence of a Fenian conspiracy connected with O'Farrell.

In New South Wales the police investigated a deluge of loyalist suspicions, only to find in most cases wild exaggerations or evidence of loose drunken language only bordering on 'sedition'. For example, the conduct of G. Plunkett, a teacher at Kurrajong Catholic School, was investigated following rumours that he had called on his pupils to give 'three cheers for O'Farrell'. The inquiry established that, unknown to Plunkett, a pupil had called out 'Hurrah, the Prince is shot!', and another (Protestant) pupil had told the tale to his father⁹⁹. Another case concerned

(95) Sydney Morning Herald, 19 March 1868; Parkes to the Governments of Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania, 19 March 1868, Legislative Assembly of N.S.W., Votes and Proceedings 1868-69, Vol. 1, p. 737.

(96) Sydney Punch, 28 March 1868.

(97) Milner and Brierly, op. cit., p. 419.

(98) 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 805.

(99) Police reports, 24, 31 March, 9 April 1868, Col. Sec. special bundle 4-768.1, NSWA0.

an elderly Dublin-born man, John Sinnet, arrested at Gundagai racecourse for yelling 'Hurrah for the green!'. Sergeant McCook, who arrested him, explained to the magistrate that 'the green' was a symbol of disaffection used by Fenians and Ribbon-men. The magistrate lectured Sinnet at length on the criminal nature of Fenianism, but accepted his explanation that he was only barracking for a jockey dressed in green; and dismissed the case¹⁰⁰. From Broughton Creek on the New South Wales south coast, information was conveyed to Parkes that an Irish infant, born in March 1868, had been christened 'Feni Ann' to commemorate the shooting of the Prince; but this was later completely discounted when Sydney Punch revealed that the parents were English and had actually named it 'Mary Ann'¹⁰¹. In Cowra, Ambrose Kelly and Richard Noonan were arrested for having allegedly said in a public house: 'there (is) no more harm in shooting the b_____ Prince than a blackfellow of this country'¹⁰². A magistrate dismissed the case. And in Goulburn, Bartholomew Toohey, charged with having said: 'It served the Prince right, he had no business in this country', was also discharged when the crown elected not to prosecute¹⁰³. Within a year about fifty men were charged under the Treason Felony Act, but all were either discharged or convicted of minor offences such as drunkenness and obscene language¹⁰⁴.

Similar instances occurred in other colonies. At Westbury, Tasmania, a man was arrested for allegedly using language disrespectful of the Prince on St. Patrick's Day; but no charges were pressed when it was learned that he was a drunken Scot named William Lindsay¹⁰⁵. Less fortunate was Warder Egan, at St. Helena penal settlement in Queensland, whose 'disloyalty' was reported to the authorities by a visiting justice named William Thornton - a County Cavan-born Protestant¹⁰⁶. Thornton had asked Egan if he was shocked to hear about O'Farrell's deed, to which Egan had made no reply apart from 'a smile...over his countenance'¹⁰⁷. When Thornton requested the Colonial Secretary, Arthur Palmer, to confirm his dismissal of Egan, Palmer did so

(100) Sydney Morning Herald, 31 March 1868.

(101) March 1869. See also 'Parl. Inquiry', pp. 854-5.

(102) Sydney Morning Herald, 31 March 1868.

(103) *ibid.*, 25 March, 1 April 1868.

(104) Lyons, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-32.

(105) Advocate, 18 April 1868.

(106) D.B. Waterson, A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929, Canberra, 1972, p. 180.

(107) Thornton to Palmer, Colonial Secretary, Col. Sec. bundle A103, 1863-8, QSA.

but felt obliged to advise him that he thought the evidence against Egan 'very defective'¹⁰⁸.

In Victoria, Thomas Hickey was charged at Flemington Court on 6 April for drunkenness and violent language. Constable Dunlop reported that Hickey's most seditious words were:

About the shooting of the bloody thing the bloody Prince its a bloody pity he was not shot I will be nothing else but a Fenian when Ireland requires soldiers I will go home, I will strike Peel as O'Farrell did the Prince to hell with Royalty I am a Fenian.

He was fined five shillings and given twenty-four hours imprisonment¹⁰⁹. Also arrested was an Irish-born Presbyterian named Moses Carson, alias Charles Stewart, reported to be a 'rank Fenian' who had allegedly commented in December 1867 that the Prince 'would not leave Sydney with his life'. On the basis of this allegation-reported to the police by a London-born man, George Whalebone - Chief Commissioner Standish instructed that Carson be charged with being 'an accessory before the fact in the attempted assassination of H.R.H.'. Carson was so charged; but at a preliminary hearing the only firm evidence against him was a fragment of verse found in his tent on Dunolly gold diggings:

Then I'll go to my native land
And join the Fenians heart and hand
Pipe clay and surface then be damned
And the diggings of old Dunolly.

The case against Carson was dismissed¹¹⁰. Another typical investigation was undertaken by the Victorian police acting on a report about a Mr. Perry, a schoolmaster at Thomastown, who was supposed to have heard it said that if the Prince 'did not get it in Victoria he would get it in Sydney'¹¹¹. Detective O'Callaghan, sent to make discreet inquiries in the district,

(108) Memo, *ibid.*

(109) Supt. Hare's report, n.d., 'CSO bundle, VPRO'.

(110) Police reports, 15, 23, 26, 30, 31 March, 3 April 1868, *ibid.*

(111) Police report, 19 March 1868, *ibid.*

concluded that Perry's story was:

...a complete Cock and Bull story...in fact somebody had told somebody and that somebody had told somebody else's mother and so on...
 ...the only Fenianism that exists in either Irishtown or Thomastown exists in the wine excited imagination of an underworked pedagogue¹¹².

It seems that only in New South Wales did panic and prejudice associated with the Fenian scare infect even the police themselves. On 14 March, a Mr. Powell telegraphed Police Secretary Edmund Fosbery that he had witnessed Detective Daniel McGlone blatantly ignoring 'Fenian expressions' well within his hearing in Shalvey's Hotel, Sydney. When McGlone's apparent disloyalty was confirmed by a fellow officer who remembered him remarking that the Prince 'was only a damned pup', he resigned on the spot¹¹³. When he later cooled down and attempted to withdraw his resignation, this was refused¹¹⁴. Two other Irish detectives, Patrick Lyons and William Apjohn, were dismissed after quarrelling about Fenianism at South Head Road, two days after the assassination attempt. Lyons was later re-admitted to the force, but Apjohn's appeal against dismissal was declined¹¹⁵. Another Irish detective named Lawrence Finigan, suspected of 'disloyal conduct', was called before the head of detectives, Henry Wager, who warned him: 'some of you have gone; more of you will soon have to go'¹¹⁶. Finigan was dismissed a week later. Wager's prejudice can be gauged from an alleged comment he made to Finigan: that if he had his way, 'he would have all the priests in the colony boiled down and thrown into Woolloomooloo Bay'¹¹⁷.

As Parkes was later to recall, a 'strange lurid glow' settled over the O'Farrell incident, engendering feelings that were 'almost deadly in

(112) O'Callaghan's report, 4 April 1868, *ibid*.

(113) Powell to Fosbery, 14, 15 March 1868; Fosbery to McGlone, 16 March 1868; McGlone to Fosbery, 16 March 1868; Col. Sec. special bundle 4-768.1, NSWAO.

(114) McGlone to Fosbery, 17 March 1868, *ibid*.

(115) Evidence of Lyons and Finigan, 'Parl. Inquiry', pp. 884, 900; Apjohn to Belmore, petition, 3 February 1869, Col. Sec. bundle A4-649, NSWAO.

(116) Finigan's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 900.

(117) *ibid*.

the depth and colour of their hatred'¹¹⁸. For several days after the assassination attempt, the police had to protect two hotels where O'Farrell had stayed - from people who wanted to pull them down¹¹⁹. From the extreme fringes of society, cranks sent letters either offering their services to, or threatening the lives of, Parkes, Martin, Belmore and Polding¹²⁰. O'Farrell's distinguished counsel, Butler Aspinall (a liberal-minded Melbourne barrister who defended some of the Eureka rebels without fee), was snubbed by a number of respectable Sydney clubs and only accepted into the Australia Club when it was explained that their rules could not exclude a member of the Melbourne Club¹²¹. Consett Stephen, son of Chief Justice Stephen, confided to his wife that the loyalty of respectable society was at boiling point:

Mr. Norton...like everyone else...can't entertain the idea of the brute O'Farrell having a fair trial... Norton says that if the jury find O'Farrell to be insane neither they nor Aspinall nor the prisoner will live through the day...They are all as bloodthirsty as Fenians¹²².

In such an atmosphere it is not surprising that many colonists expected O'Farrell's trial would be simply a formality to precede his execution. Governor Belmore's comment summed up the loyalist mood: 'If he is...a Fenian an example is necessary', he informed Whitehall¹²³.

O'Farrell stood trial at the end of March charged with attempted murder, a crime punishable by death. Justice Cheeke presided and the premier, James Martin, prosecuted for the crown. Aspinall ably defended O'Farrell on grounds of insanity, fully recounting the prisoner's financial and religious worries, his heavy drinking, and threats of suicide. He also drew attention to the English precedent of Edward Oxford who had fired at Queen Victoria in 1840, pointing out that Oxford, too, was a self-proclaimed political subversive, but had been judged insane and committed to an asylum.

- (118) Henry Parkes, Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History, 2 vols., London, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 224.
- (119) Consett Stephen to Emilie Stephen, 27 March 1868, loc. cit.
- (120) Forbery's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 813; Col. Sec. special bundle 4-768.1, NSWAO; Lyons, op. cit., pp. 122-3.
- (121) Consett to Emilie Stephen, 27 March 1868, loc. cit.
- (122) *ibid.*
- (123) Belmore to Buckingham, 1 April 1868, Belmore Corres. 1862-72, A2542-2, ML.

Martin, however, had only to impress on the jury that at the time of the shooting O'Farrell was sane. He did so without difficulty, and the jury returned an hour after retirement to find him guilty. Justice Cheeke then pronounced the sentence of death¹²⁴.

A petition for clemency - on further evidence of insanity - was made by O'Farrell's sister, Mrs. Caroline Allen, directly to Prince Alfred¹²⁵. Alfred then asked the Martin Government to consider postponing the execution until the British government was consulted, adding that attempted murder was no longer a capital offence in England and that he thought the trial had been conducted with undue haste¹²⁶. The Executive Council considered his request in concert with Justice Cheeke, and advised the Prince that colonial law should take its course¹²⁷. A further appeal reached Belmore from the Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment in New South Wales, calling on him to commute the sentence on grounds of insanity. Its petitioners added that there was still 'no satisfactory clue' to suggest that O'Farrell was a Fenian, beyond his own admissions¹²⁸. This was also unsuccessful.

O'Farrell was hanged at 9 a.m. on 21 April, at Darlinghurst gaol. About a hundred distinguished observers were permitted to view the execution and a large orderly crowd gathered outside the prison gates. O'Farrell remained quiet and dignified to the end. 'The cool manner in which he ascended the scaffold, looked up at the drop and assisted the hangman to adjust the rope was the coolest thing I ever witnessed', observed Principal Gaoler Read¹²⁹. Read thoughtfully ordered that O'Farrell's clothing and leg irons be put aside for Parkes, whom he notified: 'I thought you might like to send those articles home, particularly the irons and pads'¹³⁰.

- (124) The Late Attempt...etc. pp. 24-60; Sydney Morning Herald, 1 April 1868.
- (125) Encl., Alfred to Belmore, 5 April 1868, Col. Sec. Corres. 1869, 4-646, NSWAO.
- (126) *ibid.*
- (127) Executive Council minute, 6 April 1868, *ibid.*
- (128) Frederick Lee (Secretary) to Belmore, *ibid.*
- (129) Read's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 822.
- (130) Read to Parkes, 21 April 1868, Autographed Letters of Notable Australians (collected by Parkes), 13-5, ML.

Photographs of O'Farrell had already been sent by Parkes to the Prince, and reproductions were made available to the public in shops¹³¹. The customary death mask was made before the body was buried in Haslem's Creek cemetery (now Rookwood). Rumours soon reached Parkes that O'Farrell's head had been detached, but when the ~~grave~~^{grave} was discreetly exhumed at 10.30 p.m. on Friday 24 April, the ~~body~~^{it} was found to be intact¹³².

Within two hours of the execution, Parkes opened an attested confession O'Farrell had made the night before to the gaol chaplain, Father Michael Dwyer (grandson of the United Irishman convict, Michael Dwyer). O'Farrell had specifically instructed that it should not be opened until after his death. It read in part:

...I had no foundation for saying there was a Fenian organization in New South Wales. From continually thinking and talking of what I may still be allowed to call the wrongs of Ireland, I became excited and filled with enthusiasm on the subject. And it was when under the influence of these feelings that I attempted to perpetuate the deed, for which I am most justly called upon to suffer¹³³.

Was O'Farrell's dying confession his penultimate effort to impale Parkes on his rapier wit; or was it that the fanciful shadows clouding his mind cleared on the eve of his death? 'Dying confessions...are seldom to be relied on', commented Inspector General McLerie¹³⁴, drawing on his long experience; but then he, like Parkes, would have found it painful to accept that the government and police had both been duped. Since all evidence supports the conclusion that O'Farrell was at last telling the truth, there are two possible explanations why he elected to unburden his conscience to Father Dwyer. Firstly, O'Farrell was well aware that he had convinced the most fervent loyalists in the colony - Parkes included - that he was a Fenian. What better way, then, to leave his ashes in the mouths of those who shouted loudest for his execution, than to undermine

- (131) Alfred to Parkes, 28 March 1868, Parkes Corres., Vol. 49, pp. 173-5, ML; Sydney Morning Herald, 27 March 1868.
 (132) Unsigned police report, 24 April 1868, Col. Sec. special bundle 4-768.1, NSWAO.
 (133) Sydney Morning Herald, 23 April 1868.
 (134) McLerie to Parkes, 10 August 1868.

their conviction after his death? Such an interpretation is quite consistent with O'Farrell's expectation, if not desire, that he would be killed during or after the assassination. It is consistent too, with his reluctance to make any statement that would shed doubt, before he was hanged, on his complicity with a Fenian organization.

The second possibility is that O'Farrell remained a confirmed Catholic, and that Father Dwyer or other clerical visitors warned him about a papal encyclical generally adhered to by the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland - that a sworn Fenian could not be granted absolution¹³⁵. During the first three weeks of O'Farrell's imprisonment, Parkes permitted him only one religious visit (from Dwyer on 13 March) hoping, apparently, that if he wanted to unburden his conscience at all, he could only do so to his gaolers or Parkes himself¹³⁶. But after the trial concluded, clerical visits permitted from two Sisters of Charity, Dwyer, Archdeacon McEncroe and Archbishop Polding¹³⁷, undoubtedly impressed upon O'Farrell the grave position of his faith and the great harm he was bringing upon Irish-Catholic society by not admitting that his Fenian connections were fanciful, and that he alone was responsible for his action. Dwyer later reported that O'Farrell became an 'altered man' after 15 April, and that he had confided that he had been 'long enough playing the fool'¹³⁸. It was on Dwyer's suggestion that O'Farrell made a written confession¹³⁹. He wrote it himself, but allowed minor editing suggested by Dwyer¹⁴⁰. On Dwyer's recommendation two copies were made, one for Parkes, and the other for someone Dwyer suggested would be outside the sphere of politics¹⁴¹ - it was passed on to Archbishop Polding.

The political fortunes of the Martin-Parkes government declined rapidly from the moment Dwyer's copy of O'Farrell's confession reached an

- (135) Pius IX, encyclical letter 8 December 1864, quoted Freeman's Journal (Sydney), 25 March 1865. See also Donal McCartney, 'The Church and the Fenians', University Review (Ireland), Vol. 4, No. 3, 1967, pp. 205-6.
- (136) Dwyer's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 866-7.
- (137) Read's evidence, including a list of O'Farrell's visitors, *ibid.*, p. 820.
- (138) Dwyer's evidence, *ibid.*, p. 867.
- (139) *ibid.*, p. 868.
- (140) *ibid.* Dwyer deleted a sentence that he thought might encourage revenge on O'Farrell's account.
- (141) *ibid.*

opposition politician, William Macleay, and the press, immediately after the execution. The next morning Parkes at first refused to table his copy in the House, on grounds that it could not be made public while the government was engaged in exposing 'a new kind of crime' connected with Fenianism¹⁴², but was finally forced to do so by Macleay. Sydney Punch sarcastically intoned that 'The new crime is in fostering sectarian animosities'¹⁴³; but in fact Parkes was in the process of being duped again, on this occasion by a dismissed police officer, Henry Benedict, who had told Parkes that he could trace O'Farrell's accomplices. Unknown to the police, Parkes agreed to pay Benedict £1000 for each accomplice arrested on his evidence, and Benedict then departed for Victoria where his travels were sustained through periodic remittances¹⁴⁴. But when he failed to produce results, despite continual promises telegraphed to Parkes, his services were dispensed with on 22 May¹⁴⁵. As Detective John Raven put it, Benedict was a man who lived 'on his wits'¹⁴⁶. Parkes was similarly duped by Charles Meyers, alias Miller, alias Smith, whom he arranged to have released from Darlinghurst gaol early in May, to embark on a mission in central-western New South Wales for the same purpose¹⁴⁷. Meyers claimed that he had been offered £100 to shoot the Prince by certain Fenian associates whom he could track down; but after a paid country tour his services were also ended - on 21 May¹⁴⁸.

By mid 1868 the government faced mounting political and public censure and ridicule. It had failed to uncover any evidence of a Fenian plot

(142) Sydney Morning Herald, 22 April 1868.

(143) 25 April 1868.

(144) Benedict file, Col. Sec. special bundle 4-768.1, NSWAO; Benedict to Parkes, 23 April 1868, Miscellaneous papers tabled by Parkes, A497, ML; Benedict and Parkes, corres. 4 May - 2 July 1868, 'Papers related to the attempt'...etc., loc. cit., pp. 747-50. Benedict attempted to recruit ex-detective Daniel McGlone, offering to share a £12000 reward if they traced twelve accomplices, but McGlone declined the offer (McGlone's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 903).

(145) Benedict file, loc. cit.

(146) Raven's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 880.

(147) Meyers file, Col. Sec. special bundle 4-768.1, NSWAO; Meyers' corres. with the police, 7 May - 21 May, 'Papers related to the attempt'...etc., loc. cit., pp. 757-61.

(148) *ibid.*

and seemed to have acted vindictively: in dismissing Father Dwyer from Darlinghurst Gaol¹⁴⁹, and in moving to have the Freeman's Journal prosecuted for sedition¹⁵⁰. While parliament was prorogued between 16 June and 13 October, news reached Australia that the British government had declined to submit the N.S.W. Treason Felony Act to the Queen for royal assent¹⁵¹. Whig, liberal and even some Tory papers roundly condemned it as a 'monstrous production' enacted in a 'whirlwind of passion' by a 'bewildered and misled Parliament'¹⁵².

It is clear that Parkes' vanity was stung to the quick. He defensively collected police evidence to justify his conduct in communications to Governor Belmore¹⁵³; and at Kiama on 24 August he rashly informed an audience of constituents that he had evidence, attested by affidavit, that 'not only was the murder of the Prince planned but that some person who was in on the secret...was foully murdered before the attack'¹⁵⁴. Whether he had in mind O'Farrell's claim that a traitor in his Fenian band had met a 'horrible death'¹⁵⁵ is not clear, but whatever his source he was never able to substantiate it. 'We have never heard of this crime before', commented the Sydney Morning Herald, in an editorial titled 'The Kiama Ghost'¹⁵⁶; and the Sydney Punch scoffed: 'God, what lies I have heard...A stupendous hoax!'¹⁵⁷.

Parkes resigned from the ministry on 17 September, giving as his reason a deadlock with ministerial opinion on another matter¹⁵⁸. Without his support, the Martin Government fell on 13 October. When parliament reassembled on 8 December, the new ministry led by John Robertson set up a Committee of Inquiry into the 'Alleged Conspiracy for Purposes of Treason

- (149) Sydney Morning Herald, 11 June 1868; Freeman's Journal, 13 June 1868; Lyons, op. cit., pp. 172-5.
- (150) Fosbery's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', p. 817, and Parkes, ibid., p. 846; Freeman's Journal, 16 May, 15 June 1868; Lyons op. cit., pp. 214-5.
- (151) Sydney Morning Herald, 5, 12 August 1868; Australasian, 8 August 1868.
- (152) Several English papers quoted, Advocate, 15 August 1868.
- (153) Fosbery's evidence, 'Parl. Inquiry', pp. 802, 806; Parkes to Belmore, 11 August 1868, Belmore Corres., 1862-72, A2542-2, ML.
- (154) Kiama Independent, 27 August 1868.
- (155) Noted in his memo book, loc. cit.
- (156) 26 August 1868.
- (157) 29 August 1868.
- (158) The dismissal of W.A. Duncan, a customs officer (see A.W. Martin, Henry Parkes, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 244-6).

and Assassination'¹⁵⁹. Its majority finding concluded that no Fenian conspiracy had ever existed in the colony; but with an adroit display of oratory, Parkes managed to sway a majority in the House to oppose the Committee's report and have it expunged from the records. He emerged from parliament at 4 a.m. to be greeted by an enthusiastic crowd of supporters in Macquarie Street who cheered him to the echo¹⁶⁰. Parkes had at least won a face-saving victory for himself and the more fervent loyalists of New South Wales.

To sum up, there is no reason to believe that O'Farrell was ever a Fenian or had connections with a Fenian organization in Australia. Whether his mental state was such that he believed he had Fenian associations, or whether he kept up a charade to torment his captors, is almost impossible to determine; but it is likely he wavered between the two. O'Farrell was obviously an intelligent, solitary man whose neurotic disorder developed a warped response to Fenianism. His violent act stirred racial, religious and nationalist tensions deeply embedded in colonial society. Seventeen years later, Edmund Fosbery informed Parkes that confidential correspondence relating to O'Farrell had recently come into police possession; 'Is it worthwhile continuing the inquiry?' he asked Parkes¹⁶¹. No reply has been preserved, but it is certain that the delusions Parkes shared with so many colonists remained entrenched: 'It seems to me beyond dispute that the attempt on the life of the Duke of Edinburgh emanated from a plot', he wrote in 1892¹⁶².

The O'Farrell furore was symptomatic of a social issue that extended beyond the bounds of mere sectarian rivalry. It demonstrated rather, with remarkable intensity, the breadth and depth of long-held ultra-loyalist fears and suspicions that radical Irish nationalism constituted the most dangerous subversive influence in Australia.

(159) Legislative Assembly of N.S.W., Votes and Proceedings 1868-69, Vol. 1, pp. 769-957.

(160) Martin, op. cit., p. 248. See also Lyons, op. cit., pp. 237-46.

(161) Fosbery to Parkes, 17 October 1885, Parkes Corres., A883, pp. 231-5, ML.

(162) Parkes, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 238.



ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS AT COCHIN, INDIA, 1868.

ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF PRINCE ALFRED, MARCH 1868



THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF PRINCE ALFRED, MARCH 1868.

ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF PRINCE ALFRED, MARCH 1868



AUSTRALIA VINDEXT.

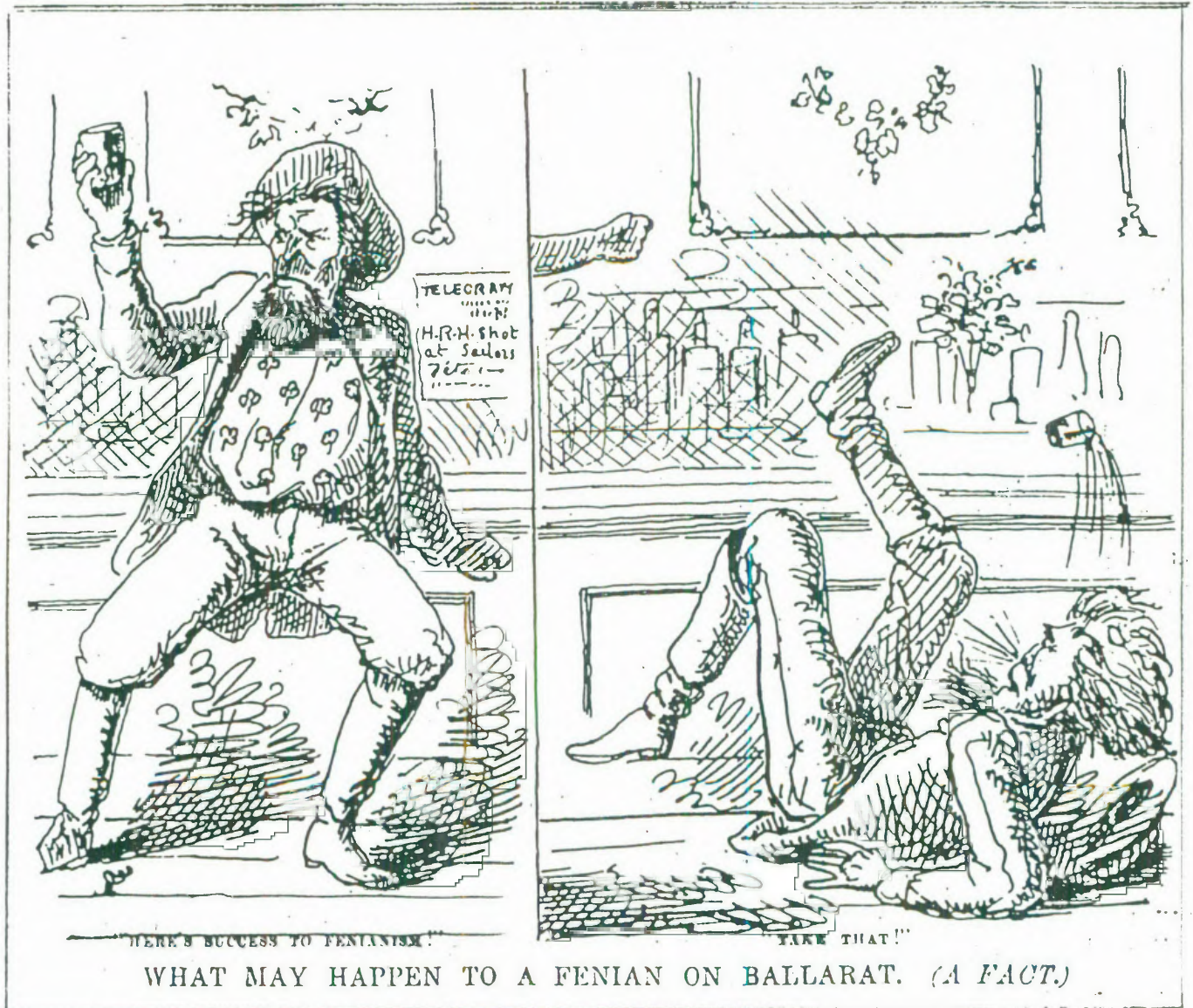
"REMEMBER MARCH; THE IDES OF MARCH REMEMBER!"

"MORE THAN THE DEED, OUR HONOR FEELS THE WOUND."

LOYAL NEW SOUTH WALES OUTRAGED AT O'FARRELL'S ACT



HENRY O'FARRELL IN DARLINGHURST GAOL



ANTI-FENIAN SENTIMENT AT BALLARAT



PARKES'S PATENT GHOST ;

OR, THE MURDER *MUST* OUT.

"By Heaven! I'll make a Ghost of him that *lets* me."

"It is a *non est* Ghost—that lot mo tell you."

"The image of a murder done at—Klana."

} *Hamlet, slightly Parkesified.*

HENRY PARKES' CREDIBILITY IN QUESTION