

INTRODUCTION

Fenianism is not by any means a plant likely to take root, much less to flourish in Australian soil...

Melbourne Age, 14 August 1868

Among the poorer and most ignorant of Irish Roman Catholics in Victoria a feeling of sympathy with the Fenian movement is widespread...

Police Superintendent C.H. Nicholson, 9 March 1868¹

For almost two hundred years British imperial hegemony has been steadily disintegrating in Australia. In the same period a sense of Australian national identity has been emerging: shaped by the land itself, its great distance from the British Isles, and by conflicting cultural pressures in matters racial, religious, socio-economic and political, arising from a mixed population. Prior to the heavy European and Asian immigration after World War II, the three principal cultures in Australia after 1788 were Aboriginal, British² and Irish-Catholic; and to this day the Irish are second only to the English component of 140 ethnic groups living in Australia. In the years focussed upon in this study, Irish Catholics comprised at least a quarter of the population of nearly all Australian colonies. Given the circumstances of British rule in Ireland, it was virtually inevitable that this high proportion of Irish convicts and free settlers in Australia would provide a key influence in the emergence of a distinctive Australian ethos, in much the same way that they influenced American nationalism in the United States. But was Irish national sentiment as strong in

- (1) Report, 'Fenianism 1868-9', CSO Supplementary Police Box 10, VPRO.
- (2) Throughout this thesis I arbitrarily use 'British' to mean of predominantly English, Scottish, Welsh or Ulster-Protestant descent, and 'Irish' to mean, if not otherwise qualified, those who readily identified with Gaelic traditions and considered themselves to be Irish nationalists.

Australia as it was in America; or was it compromised by the fact that Australia was - and in some respects still is - a loyal British dominion? Irish-Americans, after all, enjoyed the luxury of asserting a combination of anti-British Irish nationalism and American national sentiment from the safe haven of an independent republic, uninhibited by fears of being stigmatised or legally punished as disloyalists.

This thesis is directed principally at the complex interaction between a dominant Anglo-imperial culture and a minority Irish-nationalist culture in the emergence of Australian nationalism. By this I do not infer that some degree of Irish nationalist influence was a necessary prerequisite for the growth of Australian nationalism, but only that it appears to have played an important shaping role. To put this another way, had Australia received no Irish convicts, or no Irish settlers of any kind, some form of Australian nationalism would obviously have emerged in time. What is worth considering therefore, is the degree to which our Irish influx may have influenced the inevitable growth of an Australian national ethos. Within this context then, attention is focussed on the ways in which Irish nationalism merged with and strengthened Australian nationalism.

In particular, emphasis is placed on a specific Irish nationalist influence in Australia: the impact of the Fenian movement. Arguably, Fenianism was the leading influence on Irish nationalism in the second half of the nineteenth century. Founded in 1858, it was a secret Irish separatist movement aimed at the overthrow of British rule in Ireland to establish a democratic republic. Two branches were organized: an American wing called the Fenian Brotherhood, and one in Ireland called the Irish Revolutionary (or Republican) Brotherhood, the IRB. In March 1867 both launched in Ireland a major uprising that was soon put down by the combined strength of British troops and the Irish Constabulary. Fenianism, however, out-lived military defeat and continued to exist, albeit in a reduced state, for another half century; Fenians being partly responsible for planning the Dublin Easter rising of 1916. The most obvious Fenian impact on Australia is discernible between 1865 and 1880, when Australians were from time to time acutely conscious of the

revolutionary activities of Fenians overseas, and influenced too by the presence of some Fenians transported to Western Australia as convicts in 1868. A detailed examination of this period is preceded by a survey of background influences in Ireland and Australia. The study concludes in 1880 when John Flood, a leader among the Fenian exiles in Australia, founded with others the first Australian branch of Michael Davitt's Land League. The rise of this movement, and of the Irish parliamentary party led by Charles Parnell, heralded a strong swing towards constitutional Irish nationalism which swept Australia as it did Ireland⁽³⁾. For many Fenians including Flood, the old tactics of revolutionary nationalism had failed and were no longer productive; it was time to steer Fenian support behind new ideas and tactics, to see what these could achieve. Coincidentally, 1880 also saw the demise of Australia's most celebrated symbol of Irish and Australian nationalism - Ned Kelly, an outlaw of primitive Fenian inclination who met his fate on the gallows of Old Melbourne Gaol.

If Fenianism is mentioned at all in Australian history, two incidents are usually referred to: Henry O'Farrell's attempt to assassinate Queen Victoria's son, Prince Alfred, at Sydney in March 1868; and the escape in 1876 of six Fenian convicts from Fremantle, on an American whaling ship, the Catalpa. Interpretation of the first has been fairly consistent; O'Farrell being invariably regarded as a deranged individual who acted alone, though he fancied himself to be a Fenian. Historically the incident has been placed in the context of a sectarian encounter between Irish-Catholicism and Protestantism in New South Wales⁽⁴⁾. The Catalpa incident has received quite a different treatment. Since it occurred eight years later and on the other side of Australia, it

(3) Gregory Tobin, 'The Sea-Divided Gael: A Study of the Irish Home Rule Movement in Victoria and New South Wales, 1880-1916', M.A. thesis, ANU, 1969, pp.61-124.

(4) See, for example, Patrick O'Farrell, The Catholic Church and Community in Australia, Melbourne, 1977, pp. 155-60; C.M.H. Clark, A History of Australia, Vol. 4, Melbourne, 1978, pp. 255-61; A.W. Martin, Henry Parkes, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 236-50.

has not been connected with the O'Farrell affair. Instead, it is generally seen to be simply a daring act by some intrepid Irish-Americans which confounded Fremantle gaolers, much to the delight of pro-Irish elements of the lower social orders who set to music a 'Catalpa' ballad - a popular folk song to this day⁽⁵⁾.

The fact that both incidents were actually part of a series of events much broader than is usually realised, invites re-examination within the wider context of Fenian influence in Australia. O'Farrell's act gains an added dimension if it is seen as one extreme manifestation of pro-Fenian disturbances in New Zealand, Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales before and after it. The Catalpa escape similarly gains an added perspective when treated as part of a continuum of Irish-Australian sympathy and support for Fenian prisoners first aroused in 1865. Nor should the history of fifty-six Fenian convicts who did not escape in 1876 be overshadowed by the Catalpa incident. When were these men released and where did they settle? How were they received into the community; by ultra-loyalists and Irish colonists particularly? And of special interest: did any ^{of them} attempt to further the Fenian cause in Australia, and if so, with what measure of success?

Reactions to Fenian influence in Australia ranged from hostility, fear and suspicion at one extreme, to warm sympathy - mainly but not exclusively Irish - at the other. This study's interpretation of them centres on the important question of 'loyalty': an issue viewed quite differently by imperial-minded Anglophiles, fervently patriotic Irish, and some liberal-minded colonists ideologically positioned somewhere in between. It is suggested that conservative British-Australians experienced between 1865 and 1880, a Fenian scare which had deep roots in an Irish phobia partly inherited from convict days and reinforced since then by ultra-loyal immigrants - particularly Protestant Irish. The scare owed its existence to the long unsettled state of British occupation of Ireland. Each of three Irish rebellions - in 1798, 1848 and 1867, took up the Irish national cause where its

(5) See, for example, Dr. John Watson (ed.), A Hundred Years Ago - Catalpa 1876, Nedlands, 1976; Bruce Rosen, 'The Catalpa Rescue', JRAHS, Vol. 65, Pt. 2, September 1979, pp. 73-88.

predecessor left off, and each in turn reinforced loyalist suspicion that many, if not most, Irish were disloyal and chronically hostile to the British throne. The Fenian scare first surfaced in Australia when early reports of the movement in Ireland and America reached the colonies in 1865. It grew steadily as the Fenian challenge to English rule in Ireland began to expand into an apparent threat to the security of order and property in England and the Empire. Tension reached a peak in 1867 and 1868 when fervent colonial loyalty, on parade for Prince Alfred's royal tour, collided with Irish sympathy for the Fenian cause. The attempted assassination caused a blood-letting on both sides: a wounded English prince, and an executed Irish extremist. Over the next decade the scare subsided, but periodically revived during a number of incidents concerning the release and dispersal of Fenian convicts or their continued detention in Fremantle Prison. Colonial Irish and some non-Irish sympathy for the Fenian cause is charted in a number of pro-Fenian organizations - public and secret, and in expressions of opinion throughout the period.

The study arrives at three general conclusions: the first, that radical Irish nationalists in Australia sympathised with and supported the Fenian cause in the interest of Irish independence; the second, that ultra-loyal British-Australians demonstrated a pronounced hostility towards Fenianism for what it seemed to represent: a violent onslaught on the sanctity of the Empire and the security of order, property and privilege within it; the third, that conflict between these poles acted as a catalyst of nascent Australian nationalism - built upon a compromise worked out through a clash of Irish and British cultures.

Chapter 1

EARLY INFLUENCES

If Ireland lies groaning, a hand at her throat,
Which foreigners have from the recreants bought,
Forget not the lessons our fathers have taught...

Irish-Australian ballad, c. 1830⁽¹⁾

The most important interpretation yet written about the nature of Australian responses to Fenianism, has, I believe, misinterpreted their historical context. In a thesis aimed at fathoming the basis of sectarian rivalry in New South Wales during the period 1865-1880, Mark Lyons found that conflicting Irish-Catholic and Protestant attitudes towards Fenian influences provided a major centrepiece for his study⁽²⁾. His general conclusion in relation to this and other sources of conflict between Catholics and Protestants, is that New South Wales was relatively free of sectarianism until an 1840's generation of Irish immigrants, Catholic and Protestant, set about tarnishing social harmony with religious and nationalist bigotry that would have been better left behind in Ireland⁽³⁾. Irish Catholics, he contends, were not in fact consistently the victims of unjust persecution, as often depicted by eulogistic Catholic historians; but rather they were 'very largely responsible for bringing hostility upon themselves'⁽⁴⁾. This chapter suggests that responses to Fenianism should be judged within a much broader perspective, taking into consideration a long history of conflict between Irish nationalism and British imperialism. Certainly there was a strong element of sectarianism in Australian reactions for and against Fenianism, but essentially the passions aroused were racial, cultural and political, as well as religious. With the arrival of the first Irish convicts in New South Wales, the infant penal

(1) See pp. 31-2.

(2) 'Aspects of Sectarianism in N.S.W., c. 1865-1880', Ph.D. thesis, ANU, 1975.

(3) *ibid.*, *passim*.

(4) *ibid.*, p. VIII.

colony became involved in an international struggle between England and Ireland, the nature of which was embedded in an ancient conflict. In this context it will be demonstrated that Australian responses to Fenianism were to a large extent pre-conditioned by deeply implanted attitudes, passed down from generation to generation during seven centuries of English occupation of Ireland.

The long history of English intervention in Ireland began in 1169 when land hungry Norman mercenaries were enlisted in Wales by Dermot MacMurrough, the deposed King of Leinster, for the purpose of regaining his Irish Kingdom. The short javelins, wooden shields and small ponies of Ireland proved no match for the armour, long lances and mailed steeds of the mercenaries, and the result was a Norman presence in Ireland that was subjected in 1171 to the strong monarchy of Henry II. Henry had been granted overlordship of Ireland in 1155 by Pope Adrian IV⁽⁵⁾ - the English cleric, Nicholas Breakspear, the only Englishman ever to succeed to the papacy - but had seen no need to effect an Anglo-Norman conquest until the settlement of Norman barons in Ireland presented a potential threat to the western flank of his monarchy⁽⁶⁾. Initially the Anglo-Norman conquest extended English control over extensive areas of Ireland, but over the next four centuries a loose anarchy prevailed, as the English domain shrank and the balance of power fluctuated between the native Irish kings, the Anglo-Irish lords and the English monarchy. The Tudor conquest initiated by Henry VIII attempted to remedy this situation by establishing Protestant English control throughout Ireland but the various wars that followed, especially those waged by Elizabeth I, Charles I, Cromwell and William III, were not only wars of conquest but wars of confiscation,

(5) Edmund Curtis and R.B. McDowell, Irish Historical Documents, 1172-1922, London, 1943, pp. 17-8.

(6) W.L. Warren, 'Strongbow in Ireland', Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Hugh Trevor-Roper, A.J.P. Taylor (eds.), History of the English Speaking Peoples, London, 1969, Vol. 1, pp. 461-4.

with the result that the great majority of the best land in Ireland passed into the hands of Scottish and English Protestants⁽⁷⁾. The victory of William III over James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, followed by the introduction of a penal code against Catholics, perpetuated the settlement of Irish society into two castes distinct in origin, faith and feeling: an ascendant oligarchy of English Protestants; and a Celtic, Catholic majority condemned to bitter and helpless subjection.

Out of this disunion the creation of anything resembling an Irish nation became virtually impossible. The eighteenth century saw some periods of concord but the ill-cemented orders of Irish society remained essentially hostile and culturally apart. The penal code was gradually revoked as a by-product of the English Enlightenment, but discriminatory Protestantism was retained in the Established state Church supported by tithes levied on both Protestants and Catholics. The overriding motive behind England's Irish policies from the time of the Tudor intervention was to ensure that Ireland did not become a base for enemies. Thus, when France threatened to invade Ireland in support of England's rebellious American colonies, England permitted the organization and arming of a national, exclusively Protestant, volunteer army. The enthusiasm and solidarity experienced by these Volunteers, combined with their resentment of restrictive English trade laws on Irish commerce, carried over into demands for an Irish parliament, which England conceded in 1782. So long as a property franchise limited the vote to wealthier landlords and merchants - mostly Protestant but including some Catholics - and as long as Catholics were excluded from election, England was confident that an Irish parliament would prove a manageable channel for pressures that in America had led to rebellion and the disastrous loss of colonial possessions. As it happened however, seeds of nationalism sown by Protestant Irish patriots aroused a fervour for political and social reform that passed beyond parliamentary control, as the impact of the French revolution

(7) In 1695 Catholics, though an overwhelming majority, owned only 14% of Ireland; by 1714 this had shrunk to 7% (Robert Kee, Ireland: A History, London, 1981, p. 48).

swept across Ireland.

The nationalist group most committed to reform was the Society of United Irishmen founded by Wolfe Tone and others at a meeting of one of the Volunteer clubs in 1791. Tone, a Protestant and prominent Dublin barrister, marshalled support from a cross section of liberal and radical opinion, Anglican, Presbyterian and Catholic, committed to a united drive for full civil and political rights for all Irishmen irrespective of religion. The Society sought equality before the law, abolition of religious discrimination, a purging of corrupt political practices and a general reduction of English influence in the government of Ireland⁽⁸⁾. Constitutional methods were at first pursued but conservative intransigence to the Society's proposals, both in Ireland and England, urged United Irishmen to greater militancy and, ultimately, into open rebellion after their organization was banned. The Society secured promises of French intervention, in response to which England hurriedly increased its military strength in Ireland, and in May 1798 the insurrection began. The upheaval that followed revealed differences that lay embedded in the apparent unity of the rebels. United Irishmen, primarily inspired by French republicanism, chose a tricolour banner of orange, white and green to symbolise the union of all nationalist and religious elements of Irish society, which they hoped to achieve in the future interest of Ireland; but the Catholic peasantry that rallied to their support retained its hereditary antagonism to 'foreign usurpers', Orangemen particularly, who were considered to be occupying Ireland under false pretenses. The peasantry's culture and nationalist consciousness was Celtic, and when some of their number rallied in support of a French expedition which landed at Killala in the summer of 1798, they raised a green flag bearing the ancient Celtic war-cry 'Erin-go-Bragh' (Ireland forever)⁽⁹⁾.

(8) Curtis and McDowell, op.cit., pp. 238-40.

(9) 'The derivation of Erin-go-Bragh', Emerson Tennet's Notes and Queries, reprinted in Freeman's Journal (Sydney), 7 June 1865.

In the savage battles and reprisals which swept Ireland for five years before the last pocket of rebel resistance, led by Michael Dwyer in the Wicklow mountains, surrendered in December 1803, Orange and Green engaged in yet another struggle to resolve the enduring question of Irish nationality: to whom did their land belong?

As the first Irish convicts began to stream into the British penal colony of New South Wales in the 1790's, they brought with them cultural 'luggage' which included elements of republicanism, anti-British sentiment and of Celtic culture outlined above. Political offenders transported for riot and sedition under the Insurrection Act, comprised about 30% of the 2086 Irish men and women transported between 1791 and 1803⁽¹⁰⁾; and their influence over the Irish convicts as a whole, and to an extent over non-Irish convicts as well, was soon felt by those in charge. Between 1796 and 1800, Governor Hunter continually complained to Whitehall that the Irish convicts - Catholics among them outnumbered Protestants twenty-three to one⁽¹¹⁾ - were 'ignorant' and 'deluded' at best, and 'turbulent' or 'diabolical' at worst, and he appealed that the number of Irish transportees be considerably reduced in the interest of colonial security⁽¹²⁾.

To colonists who feared and distrusted them, Irish convicts represented a distinct racial group which seemed as capable of organizing collective resistance to their incarceration as they had been in organizing rebellion to English authority in Ireland. For this reason there was a tendency for some to over-react to the Irish 'menace', prompted by mixed feelings of hostility, fear and suspicion. For example at Toongabbie in April 1798, a magistrate

(10) C.M.H. Clark, A History of Australia, Vol. 1 1962, Melbourne, 1974, p. 102.

(11) *ibid.*

(12) HRA, I, Vol. 1, pp. 674, 784; I, Vol. 2, pp. 9, 31, 115, 118, 129-30.

was promptly summoned when an Irish convict threw down his hoe and gave three cheers for liberty. The prisoner was summarily sentenced and severely flogged in the field where he had been working¹³. Hunter tried to restrain excessive suspicion and racial antipathy on the part of the officers and civil magistrates towards the Irish¹⁴, but the arrival early in 1800 of two hundred and thirty-five 1798 rebels on board the transports Minerva and Friendship dismayed him to the point of despair¹⁵. In September that year while Hunter awaited a ship to return to England, his replacement, Philip Gidley King, conducted an inquiry into rumours that the Irish had conspired to seize the military at Parramatta, on a particular Sunday during divine service, and then massacre all who refused to join the rebel side¹⁶. The evidence put to the inquiry was contradictory and flimsy, making the facts almost impossible to ascertain, but the magistrates pursued whatever leads were given them with a vengeance. One witness, Hester Stroud, stated under Reverend Samuel Marsden's examination that she became convinced the Irish were bent on 'something that was improper' when she saw them 'walking about together and talking very earnestly in Irish'¹⁷. The next day Marsden supervised the flogging of Patrick Galvin, and afterwards conveyed his disappointment of the outcome to Acting-Governor King:

I ordered him to be punished very severely in the hope of making him inform where the Pikes were. Tho' a young man, he would have died upon the spot before he would tell a single sentence. He was taken down three times - punished upon his back, and also on his bottom when he could receive no more on his back...I am sure he will die before he will reveal anything of this buisness (sic)¹⁸.

Though no pikes were ever found, circumstantial evidence prompted the officers in charge of the inquiry to recommend that four principal suspects receive 1000 lashes each, another four 500 each, and seven more

- (13) George Barrington, History of New South Wales, London, 1802, p. 230.
- (14) Elizabeth Paterson to Captain George Johnston, 3 October 1880, Paterson Corres., AP 36, ML.
- (15) Hunter to Portland, 28 September 1800, HRA, I, Vol. 2, pp. 613-4.
- (16) 'Papers relating to the Irish conspiracy and general orders', HRA, I, Vol. 2, pp. 575-615, 637-51, and notes.
- (17) Deposition taken by Rev. Marsden, 29 September 1800, *ibid.*, pp. 640-1.
- (18) Memorandum, 30 September 1800, *ibid.*, pp. 638-9.

200 each, after which it was suggested they be removed to a distant and secure place such as Norfolk Island¹⁹. As an additional deterrent, two 1798 rebels of some importance in the colony, Father James Harold and 'General' Joseph Holt, both of whom had been arrested on suspicion of complicity, were compelled to witness several floggings of suspects at Toongabbie. Holt records that during Maurice Fitzgerald's punishment, Father Harold was ordered to place his hand on the whipping tree close to the prisoner while two floggers, one right-handed, the other left-handed, alternately laid on the lashes (sic passim):

...I never saw two trashers in a barn moove there stroakes more handeyer than these two man killers did...I was to leew'rd of the flogers and I protest, tho' I was two perches from them, the flesh and skin blew in my face as they shooke off the cats.

Fitzegerrel recaiv'd his 300 lashes. Doctor Mason (I will never forget him) use to go to feel his pulls and he smiled and sayd 'this man will tire you before he will fail - go on'. It is against the law to flog a man past 50 lashes without a Doctor, and during the time he was getting his punishment he never gave as much as a word; only one and that was saying, 'Don't strike me on the Nick, flog me fair'. When he was let loose two of the Constibles went and tuck hould of him by the arms to help him in the cart. I was standing by, he said to them 'let my arms go', struck both of them with his elbows in the pit of the stomick and nock them both down and then step in the Cart. I herd Doctor Mason say 'that man had strength in nuff to bear two hundredd more'.²⁰

The Irish scare of 1800 had a deep and lasting impact on the colony. Hunter offered King his counsel, expressed doubts about the real danger of insurrection and disapproved of the imprisonment of Father Harold²¹, but King's suspicions were not allayed. Nor would he have overlooked evidence given by one witness that the rebels intended to

- (19) Findings and recommendations of William Paterson, Richard Dore, William Balmain and John Harris, 1 October 1800, *ibid.*, pp. 650-1.
- (20) Broadsheet: 'An Account of the Condign Punishment given to the Irish Rebels..as narrated by Joseph Holt, former General of the Irish Rebels in 1798...' etc., Geoffrey Ingleton, True Patriots All, Sydney, 1952, pp. 22-3.
- (21) G.W. Rusden, History of Australia, London, 1883, p. 280, cited Rev. Harold Perkins, 'Father Harold: The Story of a Convict Priest', J.A.C.H.S., Vol. 3, Pt. 3, 1971, p.10.

confine Hunter but proposed to put him to death²². It should be noted also, that the Kings were then residing with Lieutenant-Governor William Paterson and his wife. Both couples were in England during the Irish rebellion of 1798 and doubtless it was still fresh in their memories; the Patersons, for example, had received vivid reports about it from their friend, General Francis Grose, while Grose was stationed as the British commanding officer at Wexford²³. The kind of apprehensions the Patersons expressed in their letters to Sir Joseph Banks and Captain George Johnston (Elizabeth Paterson's uncle), reveal the nature of anti-Irish fears and prejudice transmitted from Britain to Australia, where such alarm became more pronounced due to feelings of isolation and concern about inadequate protection. Referring to Father Harold and other suspects held in custody in October 1800, Elizabeth Paterson observed:

...They are now in confinement with their Priest, a crafty villain who has no doubt the sole command of these bigotted creatures - an attempt to release him has been some time expected, which the Military and Loyal associations would not be sorry for - but I have no idea myself that they will ever appear in numbers or in noonday - my terror is private assassination breaking into our houses in the dead of night - in which case they were but too successful in their own country...the government(should)...take some steps for our protection either by sending more forces or stationing a Man of War as a guard ship in the Harbour, as on the departure of the Buffalo we are left without any ship whatever - so that we are cut off from communication with any part of the world²⁴.

In actual fact Harold was one of the first to warn the government that the Irish planned rebellion, but during the inquiry he stated that his conscience as a priest prevented him from naming those involved²⁵. However this stand did not impress a Protestant tribunal which had no sympathy for Catholic confessional sanctity in a penal establishment. Harold was promptly gaoled for 'prevaricating and withholding the truth'²⁶, and subsequently joined an Irish group expelled to Norfolk Island. After

- (22) Deposition of James McNally, 5 September 1800, HRA I, Vol. 2, p. 577.
- (23) P.F. Moran, Spicilegium Ossoriense, Vol. II, Caulfield to Troy, 6 December 1798, cited by Perkins, loc. cit., p. 6.
- (24) Paterson to Johnston, 3 October 1800, loc. cit.
- (25) Examination of James Harold, 4 September 1800, HRA, I, Vol. 2, pp. 575-6.
- (26) *ibid.*, p. 576.

almost seven years confinement there he was moved to Van Diemen's Land, from which he later returned to Sydney and was conditionally pardoned in July 1810, at the age of sixty-seven²⁷.

Like most 1798 rebels, Harold was never tried before a jury. He had agitated in favour of the United Irishmen, but in compliance with Church instruction he attempted to dissuade the movement from violent action. In the turmoil of 1798 he was arrested in Dublin, summarily court-martialled and transported - whether for ten years or life, is not clear - possibly on his own choice, as an alternative to standing trial for his life²⁸. On Norfolk he shared a two-year friendship with Reverend Peter O'Neill who was also transported as a 1798 rebel. Like Harold, O'Neill had bitter memories of his treatment in Ireland. Upon his arrest in Youghal, Cork, in 1799, a written confession was extorted from him after he received 275 lashes²⁹. He was transported for life without a trial, but influential friends in Ireland secured a pardon which enabled him to return home in January 1803³⁰. On his death, O'Neill bequeathed all his property to a favourite grand-nephew who carried his surname: Peter O'Neill Crowley. When Crowley - a gentleman farmer of Ballymacoda, Cork - became a Fenian, he acknowledged that his enlistment was inspired by the example and influence of his grand-uncle³¹. Through ties such as this, we can see family and inspirational links between 1798 rebels and Fenians. It is also apparent that the experiences of some Irish rebels in Australian penal colonies helped forge such links. The Irish, more than most races, held oral tradition in high esteem and nurtured memories of harsh treatment suffered by Irish convicts at such places as Toongabbie, Norfolk Island, Moreton Bay and Van Diemen's Land, to inspire succeeding generations to continue Irish resistance³². Undoubtedly, the experiences

(27) Perkins, loc. cit., pp. 10-13.

(28) *ibid.*, pp. 2-5, 14.

(29) Peter O'Neill, 'Remonstrance', 23 October 1803, quoted *Freeman's Journal*, 6 July 1867

(30) T.J. Kiernan, *Irish Exiles in Australia*, Melbourne, 1954, p. 37; Perkins, loc. cit., p.10

(31) *Cork Herald* n.d., reprinted in *Freeman's Journal*, 29 June 1867.

(32) Note, for example, the themes of such ballads as 'Van Diemen's Land', 'Moreton Bay', 'The Wild Colonial Boy' and 'Bold Jack Donohue' (Peter O'Shaughnessy, Graeme Inson and Russel Ward, *The Restless Years*, Sydney, 1968, pp. 23, 29, 31; Georges-Denis Zimmermann, *Songs of the Irish Rebellion*, Dublin, 1967, pp. 269-71). That they succeeded in their objective is evident, for example, in Ned Kelly's 'Jerilderie Letter' of 1879 (Max Brown, *Ned Kelly: Australian Son* (1948), Sydney, 1980, Appendix 2, pp. 244-58.

of James Harold, Peter O'Neill and numerous others, strengthened the nationalist sentiment of their countrymen in Ireland and Australia for generations afterwards.

Another important outcome of the 1800 Irish scare was the official establishment of a civilian para-military movement. On Governor Hunter's orders of 7 September 1800, two voluntary citizens' forces were founded: a Sydney Loyal Association commanded by Dr. William Balmain, and a like force at Parramatta under Judge-Advocate Richard Atkins. Each group had a captain, three sergeants, two drummers and three corporals, backed by thirty-six privates at Sydney and twenty-nine at Parramatta. Recruits were unpaid, supplied with arms and ammunition, and drilled twice weekly from four till five-thirty in the afternoon. When proficient they trained once monthly, but were expected to turn out 'at a moment's notice' when called upon³³. The zeal of these volunteers a month after training began, can be gauged from Elizabeth Paterson's comment that the Loyal Associations 'would not be sorry for' an opportunity to combat the Irish. In August 1801, when the excitement had died down, King suspended the two forces; but recalled them on 9 December 1803, within a month of news reaching the colony that France and England were at war³⁴. The threat was internal as well as external, for King would have been aware that republican France had launched three Irish expeditions in support of the 1798 rebels, and he would have been alert to the possibility that any French attack on New South Wales was likely to be supported by an Irish-led convict rebellion. The formation and maintenance of Loyal Associations was thus an understandable preparation for such a contingency; they were, however, the beginning of a conservative Protestant 'law and order' tradition that stretched from 1804 well into the twentieth century, periodically manifesting itself in the form of British-minded associations bent on eradicating suspected 'disloyalty', by force if necessary³⁵.

(33) HRA, I, Vol. 2, pp. 636-7; HRNSW, IV, pp. 131-2.

(34) HRNSW, V, p. 276.

(35) See, for example, the manifesto of the British Association - later renamed the Protestant Political Association - founded in April 1868 in response to a Fenian scare in New South Wales (The Illustrated Australian News, 13 June 1868). The ideology of this movement closely resembles that of a succession of conservative para-military bodies founded in the 19th and 20th centuries (Keith Amos, The New Guard Movement 1931-1935, Melbourne, 1976; Andrew Moore, 'Send lawyers, guns and money: a study of conservative para-military organization 1930-1932; background and sequel 1917-1952', Ph.D. thesis, La Trobe Univ., Vic., 1984).

In the event, neither harsh punishment nor zealous loyalists deterred some Irish convicts from continued resistance to their incarceration. In February 1802 King ordered a house to house search throughout the colony for 'offensive weapons', and in April he gave stern notice that any person involved in the making or concealment of pikes would be immediately executed³⁶. These measures, together with official sanction to Father James Dixon, one of the 1798 transportee priests, to commence Catholic services in May 1803³⁷, seemed to subdue Irish turbulence for a time, but in fact it turned out to be a lull before the storm.

The Castle Hill rising of 1804 was not as spontaneous as Australian historiography often presents it. Planning began at least a month beforehand³⁸, but exactly who was involved at this stage remains largely a mystery. There was no doubt when the rebels took to the field on Sunday night, 4 March, that their leader was Philip Cunningham, a Tipperary man, apparently of some military experience, who had arrived in the colony on the Luz St Ann in February 1801, having been sentenced at Clonmel for 'forming rebellion' in 1799³⁹. Subsequent inquiry revealed that Cunningham had been rebellious on the voyage out but was afterwards considered reliable enough for the position of overseer of stone-masons at Castle Hill⁴⁰. When the rising began, he rallied his forces to a United Irishmen slogan 'Death or Liberty!', to which a colonial corollary was added: 'and a ship to take us home!'⁴¹. He played the role of spokesman for the rebels at a local prominence - later called Vinegar Hill - and was the first insurgent hanged, while severely wounded, from the staircase of a public store at the Hawkesbury River settlement, on Monday evening⁴². But was Cunningham the most senior conspirator, or was King correct in his suspicion that 'some very artful wretches, above the common class of those designing

(36) HRNSW, IV, pp. 738-9, 741.

(37) Kiernan, op. cit., p. 40.

(38) R.W. Connell, 'The Convict Rebellion of 1804', Melbourne Historical Journal, Vol. 5, 1965, p. 27.

(39) George Rudé, 'Early Irish Rebels in Australia', Historical Studies, Vol. 16, No. 62, April 1974, p. 25; Suttor to Banks, cited James G. Symes, The Castle Hill Rebellion of 1804, Sydney, 1979, p. 22.

(40) Symes, op. cit., p. 22.

(41) Suttor, loc. cit.

(42) Johnston to King, 5 March 1804, printed in Sydney Gazette, 11 March 1804.

(43) King to Hobart, 12 March 1804, HRA, I, Vol. 4, p. 563.

deluded people'⁴³ were in fact the prime movers?

Absence of evidence precludes a definite conclusion, but intriguing information revealed by Sidney Sheedy in 1965 invites consideration, for it is said to be based on the diary and records of his Irish convict forbear, James Sheedy, who arrived on the Tellicherry in February 1806.⁴⁴ According to Sidney Sheedy, at least two colonial convicts were corresponding in 1803 with remnants of the Society of United Irishmen, then under Robert Emmet's leadership in Ireland. The two men were James Meehan, a former 1798 rebel whose skill and quiet diligence had earned him a responsible position as a government surveyor, and Dr. Daniel McCallum, a Scottish surgeon convicted for having given medical attention to some 1798 rebels. Both men had arrived in the colony in February 1800, on board the Friendship. The object of their correspondence was to form a secret colonial branch of the United Irishmen, to co-ordinate activity under direction from Ireland. Sheedy states that initial organization to this effect occurred in Ireland in August 1803, a few weeks before Emmet was hanged on 20 September. The Irish executive of the 'International Society of United Irishmen' comprised William O'Finneran, of Belfast, a Scotsman named Andrew Thompson, Patrick Sheedy, and two Englishmen - whom Sidney Sheedy declines to name because both were sons of leading English merchants, the descendants of whom were prominent English businessmen in 1965. As the Sheedy family documents are not at present available for scrutiny, doubt is cast on the factual basis of some of this information; but the precision of detail given, much of which can be corroborated⁴⁵, lends validity to the account.

According to Sidney Sheedy, Robert Emmet alluded to the newly formed international society of United Irishmen when he said from the dock: 'This conspiracy will exist when I am no more. It will be

- (44) 'The history of the Sheedy family and of United Irishmen transported to N.S.W.', MLDOC 563 and MLMSS 1337. I am told Sidney Sheedy died in 1973. His MSS advise students not to quote from them without permission from the Sheedy family trust. I have without success made every possible effort to contact members of the Sheedy family.
- (45) For example, James Sheedy and seventeen others on the convict indent for the Tellicherry have crosses before their names, apparently identifying them as political rebels (Reel 393, NSWAO). In his diary James Sheedy indicated that eighteen United Irishmen were on board (Sheedy, loc. cit., MLMSS 1337).

followed by another more strong, and rendered still more formidable by foreign assistance'⁴⁶. Sheedy does not indicate whether this society had prior contact with rebel leaders of the Castle Hill rising, but states only that Meehan and McCallum 'tried to prevent acts of violence by political men by assuring them that a committee was being formed in N.S.W. to represent their interests and that the Committee had decided that open rebellion was not the answer'⁴⁷.

Whether such advice was offered before the rising, to restrain the hot blood of Cunningham and others, is not indicated, but if it was then it went unheeded. The rebels found out for themselves that several hundred badly armed and inadequately trained insurgents were no match for the combined forces of the military and Loyal Associations, backed by marines from the Calcutta and armed sailors in reserve at Sydney. On the government side the hero of the day was Elizabeth Paterson's uncle, Major George Johnston, who led about twenty-eight soldiers and a dozen or so armed loyalists against the main rebel force of over 200 at Vinegar Hill (now Rouse Hill), by the Hawkesbury Road five miles from Windsor. Before this decisive skirmish Father Dixon tried to persuade the rebels to surrender, but Johnston employed a more effective tactic when he clapped a musket to Cunningham's head after inviting him and a principal follower, William Johnston, to come forward to parley on neutral ground. Cunningham was thrust into the custody of Quartermaster Laycock who either struck the rebel leader himself or did not prevent others from taking that action. Fifteen or more rebels were shot dead in the fray, nine more (including at least two English convicts) were hanged within three days, and another nine, eight of them Irish, each received between 96 and 164 lashes. Thirty-four rebels were despatched to a new penal settlement on the Coal River (later named Newcastle), where they subsequently planned an escape and were flogged for threatening the lives of military officers there⁴⁸.

In the wake of the rising, King repealed martial law, suspended Father Dixon's Catholic ministry and began a hunt for conspirators 'above

(46) Sheedy, loc. cit., MLMSS 1337.

(47) *ibid.*

(48) King to Hobart, 12 March 1804, HRA, I, Vol. 4, p. 563 et seq.; Johnston to King, 5 March 1804, *loc. cit.*; Connell, *loc. cit.*, pp. 27-37; Symes, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Humphrey McQueen, 'Convicts and Rebels', Labour History, No. 15, November 1968, pp. 7-9.

the common order' thought to be lurking in the background. The first to be rounded up were a French winemaker, Francois Girrault, a number of Irish political convicts including Joseph Holt and Captain St. Leger⁴⁹, and Dr. Daniel McCallum⁵⁰. No evidence was produced to implicate these men, but for good measure King expelled all except Girrault⁵¹ to secure confinement on Norfolk Island. During the voyage there, they were favourably treated by the captain, an Englishman named R.W. Eastwick. The image of Holt landing at Norfolk stuck in Eastwick's memory:

..At this place he was very finely dressed on landing in a new blue coat, with a black velvet collar, like a gentleman should be - which he was, every inch of him - and he sat with dignity in the stern sheets. On the shore was a large truck waiting, with fourteen prisoners to drag it, who had been landed just previously, and among them Captain the Hon. St. Ledger (sic), and some others who had been men of fortune in Ireland. The jailer standing by them perceived General Holt in the stern-sheets of the approaching boat, and called out to the coxswain to ask who he was. 'General Holt' came the reply. Then the uncouth man cried out: 'Damn the General. Let Holt assist to unload the boat; put the biggest bag of sugar on his back, for he appears a big man in his own estimation'. This was done and the General, all in his fine clothes, laden like a common felon, was forced to wade a long way through the water, the boat, from its draught, being unable to come close to the landing place⁵².

The sincerity of nationalist convictions expressed by Holt and the others aroused in Eastwick a deep respect for their right to love and to attempt to free Ireland: an empathy not shared by most Englishmen, and quite beyond the comprehension of more extreme loyalists. Eastwick expressed his sympathy as follows:

It was a sorry sight to see so gallant a gentleman submit himself to these vulgar people in authority, and with a silent dignity obey the order given him. For, after all, he and many other prisoners were gentlemen of birth - such as Counsellor Sutton, Dr. McCullom (sic) and Mr. Brennan, who

- (49) A 1798 rebel, St. Leger arrived on the Minerva in January 1800. Both he and an associate, Captain William Atcock, had been summarily tried by court-martial, sentenced to death and shipped without legal warrant (Charles Bateson, The Convict Ships, 1787-1868, Glasgow, 1959, p. 158).
- (50) R.W. Eastwick, A Master Mariner, H. Compton (ed.), London, 1891, p. 199.
- (51) Girrault left the colony on board the Calcutta (Symes, op. cit., p. 25).
- (52) Eastwick, op. cit., pp. 198-9.

held the situation of High Sheriff of the County of Wexford, and Mr. Lysaght, a man of considerable property in Ireland, all forfeited to the Crown. They were persons of refinement, whose only crime was a love of their native island, and a desire for its freedom. Had they been Englishmen this would have been highly esteemed. Nevertheless for this feeling, which I hope would do any patriotic person positive credit, they were condemned to transportation and treated as common criminals. I had been in daily contact with them for the past fortnight (for I had berthed them aft in my cabin, instead of with the common prisoners between decks), and I never heard any sentiment pass their lips except such as I could commend. They spoke of their wrongs and their disappointed hopes with resignation, but with an amazing eloquence that forced from me the tribute of sincere pity⁵³.

On the mainland, the purge of suspected Castle Hill conspirators continued. A government raid on the home of Maurice Margarot, who had been transported from Scotland for agitation in support of constitutional reform, secured evidence of republican sentiments among his letters and notes⁵⁴. In August 1804 King conveyed his suspicions of Margarot, Muir (another 'Scottish martyr') and Sir Henry Brown Hayes (a former mayor of Cork city, transported for abducting an heiress) to England, and in July 1805 he accepted the counsel of a meeting of magistrates who advised him to disperse Hayes, Margarot and another convict among the outer settlements⁵⁵. As R.W. Connell indicates, the post-rebellion scare was not confined to King: another manifestation was the dismissal of a Sydney police officer for disloyalty, an action warmly applauded by the editor of the Sydney Gazette, who commended representations against the officer made by a 'respectable inhabitant'⁵⁶. There were also strong recommendations from Paterson, Johnston and Sutton, as well as those from King, that the military establishment be expanded for the sake of security⁵⁷. Thus, the development of a siege mentality, motivated primarily by the perception of an Irish republican threat, was very much in evidence.

When Bligh replaced King as governor in August 1807 reverberations of loyalist alarm were still being felt, partly from the Castle Hill rising and partly from the arrival of another contingent of Irish political rebels aboard the Tellicherry in February 1806. This group comprised the last

(53) *ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

(54) HRNSW, V, pp. 512, 598, cited McQueen, *loc. cit.*, p. 8.

(55) Connell, *loc. cit.*, p. 36.

(56) *ibid.*

(57) *ibid.*

hard core of United Irishmen led by Michael Dwyer, the 'Wicklow Chief', who surrendered in December 1803 on condition that he and his men be permitted voluntary exile in the United States of America⁵⁸. After eighteen months in prison they were informed that Dublin Castle had decided to alter the terms of surrender; they were to be transported to Botany Bay. Five of them - Dwyer, Hugh Byrne, Martin Burke, Arthur Devlin and John Mernagh - were, however, granted special privileges as Irish prisoners of state: Dwyer and Byrne were allowed to take their wives and children with them, all five were exempted from prison garb and cropped hair, separate quarters from ordinary convicts were arranged on the voyage out, and the status of free settlers was to be granted to them upon arrival at Sydney⁵⁹. King received them without enthusiasm: 'How far these indulgences will operate on their apparent turbulent dispositions time will show', he wrote to the Under-Secretary in Dublin⁶⁰.

According to Sidney Sheedy⁶¹, thirteen lesser United Irishmen including his forbear, James Sheedy, also disembarked from the Tellicherry. James Sheedy, an educated man, partially trained for the priesthood, had been instructed to found a New South Wales branch of the International Society of United Irishmen. He carried out this task, Sidney Sheedy writes, at a meeting at the home of Colonel George Johnston, on Sunday 16 February 1806. Johnston had selected James Sheedy as an assignee convict and had invited Daniel McCallum to attend the meeting. Though it might seem incredible that such a meeting could occur in the home of one of the leading opponents of the Castle Hill rebellion, it should be borne in mind that Johnston, like McCallum, was an independent-minded Scot. In 1800, when arrested by Lieutenant-Governor Paterson on a charge of issuing spirits to his company, Johnston returned to England to seek a fair trial but was censured for his action and ordered to return to Sydney⁶². Thereafter his fortunes improved, and advanced markedly as a result of his role at Castle Hill. By 1806 he was in command of the military and his reputation depended on the maintenance of colonial security. As stated above, Meehan and McCallum were intent

(58) Kiernan, op. cit., pp. 30-1; W. O'Dwyer, 'Michael Dwyer and the 1807 plan of insurrection', JRAHS, Vol. 69, Pt. 2, September 1983, pp. 73-4.

(59) Rudé, loc. cit., p. 24.

(60) HRA, V, p. 638, cited by Kiernan, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

(61) Sheedy, loc. cit., MLMSS 1337.

(62) Paterson to Banks, 8 October 1800, HRNSW, IV, p. 228.

on restraining Irish violence, so it was in Johnston's interest to encourage this particular management of Irish nationalism, especially as he had the opportunity to maintain private contact with it. At Castle Hill, Johnston more than any other officer acted quickly and cleverly to suppress an Irish-led rebellion. In February 1806, it would appear that he was covertly setting up more permanent reins of restraint on Irish 'turbulence'.

Just as William Bligh arrived to take office as governor in August 1806, King received information from convict sources that another Irish revolt was planned. His informants advised that the rising had been set down for 6 August but had been forestalled by the appearance of Bligh's ship off the coast. King commenced proceedings against a number of suspects but soon dropped the charges for want of evidence. However Bligh, determined to make his authority felt, put Dwyer and the other Irish state prisoners, together with three other convicts, on trial in May 1807. A complete absence of evidence resulted in the acquittal of six, including Dwyer and his companions, but this outcome dissatisfied Bligh. On dubious legal grounds he treated Dwyer and company as if they had been transported as prisoners for life, and on this basis, since they had come under suspicion⁶³, he dispersed them to the outer settlements: Dwyer and one companion to Norfolk Island, two to the Derwent settlement and two to Port Dalrymple. Dwyer spent six months on Norfolk and a further two years confinement in Van Diemen's Land. The two men found guilty were severely punished. One of them, William Morris, pursuant to his sentence of 1000 lashes, received 525 in Sydney and the balance upon arrival at Norfolk Island. The two convict informers, on whose evidence the case depended, were both given free pardons⁶⁴.

In the light of 'justice' such as this, it is little wonder that radical Irish nationalism in Australia retained its anti-English sentiment for generations. The principal 'softening' agent was of course property ownership, combined with social acceptance within colonial society. Ultimately it was this influence particularly that established a willingness

(63) O'Dwyer suggests (*loc. cit.*, *passim*) that the military officers opposed to Bligh used Michael Dwyer and company as pawns to incite Bligh into violating public justice, thus damaging his standing in the colony as an initial step towards removing him from office.

(64) *HRNSW*, VI, pp. 257-8, 260n, 338, 363-4, 364n, cited by McQueen, *loc. cit.*, pp. 11-12; *HRA*, V., p. 841, VI, p. 159, cited by Kiernan, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-2.

between Irish and British to learn to live side by side, for the most part quietly, in the Australian colonies. Such a transformation is evident, for example, in the later history of Dwyer and his companions. Shortly after Bligh was forcibly disposed in January 1808, Colonel Johnston ordered Dwyer's release⁶⁵. Bligh complained to England that this action was 'an extraordinary circumstance, for which no reason can be assigned, unless they propose by their indulgence to him to induce him hereafter to unite with his old party in an opposition to Government should they feel his assistance necessary'⁶⁶. Whether Johnston had this object in mind or had acted in response to representations from Sheedy, McCallum and company, or simply out of conscience to see justice done, cannot be ascertained. Whatever the reason it was an important step towards Irish appeasement, as Dwyer was recognized among his countrymen as the most prominent Irish nationalist in the colony⁶⁷. The same policy continued in May 1808 when Lieutenant-Governor Paterson - possibly under Johnston's urging - granted each of the five Irish state prisoners a farm of 100 acres in the Cabramatta district of Sydney⁶⁸. Governor Macquarie confirmed these grants in January 1810, and in March that year, gave the first official sanction to St. Patrick's Day, by declaring it a day of celebration and a holiday for his convict servants⁶⁹. Three years later Macquarie approved the appointment of Dwyer to the position of chief constable and poundkeeper at Liverpool⁷⁰. Dwyer subsequently became proprietor of a local hotel, Harrow Inn, and died at Liverpool in 1825. His daughter, Bridget, married John O'Sullivan, manager of the Commercial Bank at Goulburn (her mother, Mary, who went to live with them, died there in 1861). The social assimilation of the other 1798 rebels paralleled Dwyer's experience. Liverpool, Irishtown (now Bankstown), Airs (now

(65) Bligh to Castlereagh, 30 June 1808, HRA, VI, pp. 541-2.

(66) ibid.

(67) Recognition of this occurred during the Sydney celebration of the 1798 centenary. Funds were raised to build an impressive monument to Michael Dwyer at Waverley Cemetery where Dwyer and his wife were re-interred in 1898, following one of the largest processions ever witnessed in Australia (Sun, 1 February 1978; Irish Times, 10 June 1980).

(68) HRA, V, p. 841, cited Kiernan, op. cit., p. 32.

(69) M.H. Ellis, The Bulletin, 14 January 1953, p. 25; K.S. Inglis, The Australian Colonists, Melbourne, 1974, p. 86.

(70) Father N. McNally, 'The Men of '98', JACHS, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 1969, p. 35.

Campbelltown) and Appin were studded with their land grants and purchases; though a small number, including the much lacerated Patrick Galvin, returned to Ireland at the first opportunity⁷¹.

While the 1798 rebels and other Irish convicts of similar outlook aged and became assimilated, a continuous stream of younger Irish transportees ensured that radical Irish nationalism retained its vigour in Australia. If conditions in Ireland during the first half of the nineteenth century had greatly improved, this process might not have occurred; but the fact was that Irish disaffection to British rule, in the south-west counties particularly, remained as strong as ever. A leading English Whig, writing for the Edinburgh Review of November 1820, accurately described the Irish situation:

..In Munster, where title of potatoes is exacted, risings against the system have constantly occurred during the last forty years...The unfortunate consequence of civil disabilities, and the Church payment, under which Catholics labour, is a rooted antipathy to this country. They hate the English government from historical recollection, actual suffering, and disappointed hope; and, till they are better treated, they will continue to hate it. At this moment in a period of the most profound peace, there are twenty-five thousand of the best disciplined and best appointed troops in the world in Ireland, with bayonets fixed, presented arms, and in an attitude of present war; nor is there a man too much - nor would Ireland be tenable without them⁷².

During the period 1788-1840 in eastern Australia, and 1850-1868 in Western Australia, about 50,000 Irish convicts arrived; rather less than a third of the total number of convicts transported. Definitive evidence of their counties of origin is yet to be studied⁷³, but we do know that they were distinguishable from English convicts in certain respects: Irish convicts being overwhelmingly Catholic, older - averaging nearly twenty-eight at the time of trial, more likely to be married, more likely to

(71) *ibid.*

(72) Reprinted in Freeman's Journal, 8 June 1867.

(73) In regard to political rebels transported to Australia between 1791 and 1805, George Rudé lists their counties of origin, in descending order of magnitude as suppliers, as being: Wicklow, Limerick, Wexford, Cork, Tipperary and Dublin ('Early Irish Rebels in Australia', Historical Studies, Vol. 16, No. 2, April 1974, p. 29).

have come from the countryside, less likely to have had previous convictions, and less likely to have been convicted of theft (about 80% of all convicts, English and Irish, were transported for larceny)⁷⁴. Compared with English convicts then, the Irish were less likely to have been young urban thieves of habitual criminal habits. More significantly, they were a race apart: the great majority having a Gaelic background and all that this implied in terms of culture, inherited beliefs and attitudes. We may instance, for example, the inability of an English convict, William Derrincourt, to understand any of the language used by a newly arrived contingent of Irish convicts landing at Hobart in 1841:

...The scene on their landing was one never to be forgotten. The contrast between the old country and the new land to which they had been brought seemed utterly to bewilder them. They were hustled ashore and driven off to the huts like a flock of hunted and frightened sheep. We older prisoners were quite amused at their astonishment at seeing our strange dress of yellow and black. I tried to talk to some of them but could not make out a word of what they said...⁷⁵.

Certainly most Irish convicts accepted transportation with resignation and earnestly sought social acceptance when they became free⁷⁶, but a great many nevertheless retained warm sympathy for countrymen, both in Australia and in Ireland, who continued the old conflict with English authority. Nor was this sympathy confined to convicts and emancipists, for it is important to note that a large proportion of nineteenth century Irish migration to Australia comprised younger farmers and artisans from Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Tipperary⁷⁷: the Munster counties described by the Edinburgh Review of November 1820 as

- (74) L.L. Robson, The Convict Settlers of Australia, Melbourne, 1965, pp. 9, 101, 119, 130, 143-58. Robson's conclusions are challenged but not significantly disproved by James Waldersee (Catholic Society in New South Wales, 1788-1860, Sydney, 1974, pp. 42-70).
- (75) William Derrincourt, Old Convict Days (ed. Louis Becke, New York, 1899), Penguin fascimile, 1975, p. 52. The Irish referred to were probably those who disembarked from the British Sovereign on 18 March 1841 (Bateson, op. cit., pp. 291, 364).
- (76) Waldersee, op. cit., pp. 79-100.
- (77) Gregory Tobin, 'The Sea-Divided Gael: A Study of the Irish Home Rule Movement in Victoria and N.S.W., 1880-1916', M.A. thesis, ANU, 1969, pp. 15-17.

consistently the most 'disaffected' parts of Ireland. As Greg Tobin points out⁷⁸, it was this Munster component that contemporary observers in Australia identified as the Celtic or 'bog' Irish. English and Scotch who travelled with them on emigrant ships, or mixed with them in the colonies, very often regard^{ed} them as an alien race; and when they treated them as such, sometimes in a disparaging manner, violent clashes often resulted. Two such instances are recorded by J.F. Hogan in his work, The Irish in Australia (1888). The first, a fracas on board an emigrant ship, arose from 'a stupid insult having been offered to Ireland by a few ignorant malcontents'; to which the Irish responded physically 'in a manner which effectively prevented its repetition', with one Irishman reminding an English opponent in the process: 'Although we have been driven into exile, don't think that we have forfeited our nationality'⁷⁹. The second instance occurred on a Victorian goldfield when a dispute between a Tipperary digger and an Englishman gave rise to a major racial clash between Irish and English miners. One Irishman was shot in the lungs, and another in the head, whilst the leader of the English side had his head split open with an axe⁸⁰.

Given that a great many Australian Irish burned with a deep commitment to independence for the reasons outlined above, it should be considered whether they remained colonial outsiders in this belief, or were able to win sympathy and support from a sector of the non-Irish community, particularly native-born Australians who were beginning to develop a sense of Australian national identity as distinct from regarding themselves as simply antipodean Britons⁸¹. Was there in fact a natural merging to some extent between Irish nationalism and indigenous Australian nationalism, encouraged by a common distaste for the glorification of English imperial authority? Though a difficult question to answer quantitatively, various instances of empathy between Irish rebels and liberal-minded, non-Irish colonists strongly suggest that such a process occurred. To illustrate the point, brief consideration will be given to three cases: John Mitchel's escape from Tasmania, the Eureka rebellion,

- (78) *ibid.*, p. 17. q.v. Neil F. Coughlan, 'The Coming of the Irish to Victoria', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 45, October 1965, p. 68.
 (79) J.F. Hogan, The Irish in Australia, Sydney, 1888, p. 146
 (80) *ibid.*, p. 93.
 (81) Ward, The Australian Legend, pp. 43-64.

and colonial responses to Irish bushranging.

John Mitchel was one of several nationalist Young Irelanders transported as political prisoners to Van Diemen's Land in 1849 and 1850. Two of his comrades had already escaped on American whalers when an Irish nationalist agent, P.J. Smyth, arrived in January 1853 on a mission to effect his escape launched by a New York based Directory of the Friends of Ireland - a forerunner of the Fenian movement⁸². In accepting Smyth's offer, Mitchel felt honour bound to give formal notice that he intended to break parole - having been granted an early ticket-of-leave on condition that he would not attempt to escape. He did this on 8 June 1853, by riding off before a stunned Bothwell magistrate could comprehend the nature of the ticket-of-leave resignation Mitchel had thrust in his hand⁸³. Although Mitchel described his escape in some detail in his book, Jail Journal (New York, 1854)⁸⁴, the identity of those who assisted was not publicly revealed until 1949, when Ellen Payne recorded the recollections of a participant, Daniel Burke, a former Tasmanian parliamentarian, who had described the escape in detail to her, when an elderly man in 1915⁸⁵.

As Burke relates, Mitchel's flight to freedom was assisted by quite a few sympathisers who were by no means exclusively Irish. From Bothwell he was accompanied by an experienced bushman, J. Howell, who guided him across country to the hut of a shepherd named Russell, who lived in the lakes district. He rested here overnight, shaved off his beard and moustache, and continued on with the assistance of a second guide named Parker, of 'Parknook' property. Eventually they arrived at 'Westfield', a gracious double-storey Georgian mansion situated on

(82) John Mitchel, Jail Journal, New York, 1854, p. 309; E.R.R. Green, 'The Beginnings of Fenianism', in T.W. Moody (ed.), The Fenian Movement (1968), Dublin, 1978, p. 14.

(83) Mitchel, op. cit., pp. 319-20.

(84) *ibid.*, pp. 309-50.

(85) Ellen Nora Payne, 'Recollections of Westfield and the Field family of Tasmania', 1949, MSSA 3042, ML. Ellen Payne (nee Field) is William Field's grand-daughter, and daughter of the Hon. Thomas Field, M.L.C., the owner of 'Westfield' property. Daniel Burke, 88, was the only surviving abettor of Mitchel's escape when he gave this account to Ellen Payne.

Westbury estate, in the island's north-west. The owner who introduced himself to Mitchel, was Thomas Field, thirty-five, the second eldest son of the late William Field, an English immigrant whose meat, wheat and property interests had made him, in 1824, the wealthiest man in Van Diemen's Land. As a police station was in close proximity, Field arranged Mitchel's seclusion a few miles away on Quamby estate, at a farm owned by a trustworthy Irishman, John Burke. After twelve days in hiding while Bothwell police scoured the countryside, Mitchel prepared for a final, difficult trek to the coast, where Smyth had arranged for him to be taken aboard a ship, the Don Juan, commissioned to wait for him at Badger Head, near the mouth of the Tamar River. He made the journey in the company of eight men. John Burke was joined by his brother Daniel, a ploughman in Thomas Field's employ, who had emigrated from Ireland as an infant with his parents in 1829. The others were Patrick Foley and Michael O'Keefe, both Tipperary-born, Daniel O'Meara, Thomas Field, and the latter's younger brother, John, the owner of Eastfield estate. The Field brothers, Mitchel relates, were men of very large property, bold horsemen and indefatigable bushmen, who joined the enterprise for the sake of excitement as well as a sincere regard for Irish rebels⁸⁶. They were Australian-born. The kind of influence the Irish would have had on them is suggested in one of Daniel Burke's reminiscences: that at one campsite en route they had all 'sat smoking and looking on in silence while O'Keefe narrated the black story of the clearing of his village in Tipperary', a large-scale eviction instigated by the landowner, Lord Hawarden. There being no sign of the ship at the coast, the party dispersed; Mitchel's seclusion being taken up at Father Butler's presbytery in Launceston, where he remained for two days. He then took the mail coach to Hobart, dressed in a suit of clothes lent by Father Hogan of Westbury, passing as 'Reverend M. Blake'. At Hobart, with the aid of Smyth and other friends, he took passage under the same disguise to Sydney, and continued on to America. In New York he edited an Irish nationalist newspaper, the Citizen, for a time, then settled at Knoxville, Tennessee, during the civil war. In October 1865 he attended a Fenian convention at Philadelphia which appointed him financial secretary in Paris, a key post through which Fenian funds from

(86) Mitchel, op. cit., pp. 329-30.

America and other sources, including Australia, were transmitted to Ireland⁸⁷.

The fact that Mitchel's escape was made possible by two wealthy, Australian-born Protestant pastoralists, at least two Catholic priests and a dozen or more other contacts of various national backgrounds⁸⁸, all of whom acted at considerable risk to themselves, indicates not only the extent of respect for the man and the cause he represented, but also that it cut across racial, class and religious divisions. There existed obviously, a common bond of liberal belief that Ireland, or any other country in a similar condition, had a basic national right to command its own destiny free of foreign oppression. Further evidence of the same respect - though in this instance, more exclusively Irish - was accorded to three of Mitchel's fellow Young Irelanders conditionally pardoned in Tasmania in 1854. William Smith O'Brien, Dr. Kevin O'Doherty and John Martin were given a celebration banquet by Melbourne Irishmen on 22 July, at which O'Brien was presented with a gold vase and a nine pound nugget from the Irish diggers at Bendigo, and Martin and O'Doherty were each given a purse of 200 gold sovereigns⁸⁹.

On the Ballarat goldfield in December 1854, when it appeared to many diggers that basic rights were being denied by colonial authority, Munster Irishmen were again to the fore: mounting a multi-national challenge in favour of democratic reform. The Eureka rebellion was certainly sparked by a variety of local and colonial factors, but in the absence of the Irish component it might never have occurred. When the diggers' delegation returned to Ballarat in August, it was reported⁹⁰ that they were welcomed with a grand parade led by the Irish, bearing 'their green banner...with the harp and shamrock on it'. Behind them followed a troop of White-hill diggers also led by the Irish, next came the Scots, and then: 'as if only third, instead of first in rank, the Union Jack of Great Britain'. While towards the rear, came crowding the 'revolutionary flags of France and Germany accompanied by the stars and stripes of America, with some other minor flags'. When the conflict loomed, the diggers' defence council

(87) Freeman's Journal, 30 December 1865, 7 April 1866; Gaelic American (New York) 2 January 1904 (John Devoy's reminiscences).

(88) Payne, loc. cit.

(89) Hogan, op. cit., pp. 211-12.

(90) Argus (Melbourne) n.d., quoted Geoffrey M. Gold (ed.), Eureka, Sydney, 1977, p. 22.

elected as their president Peter Lalor, twenty-seven, of Queen's County, a Trinity College educated civil engineer whose brother, James Fintan Lalor, had taken a leading part in the Young Irelander rising of 1849. Peter Lalor was by instinct a moderate nationalist in the O'Connell mould, but he nevertheless committed himself to lead a struggle against what he declared to be 'a tyrannical government'⁹¹. Of the thirty-four rebels who died or were seriously wounded, twenty were Irish and nearly all were from Munster or counties adjoining it⁹². If, as is usually recognized, Eureka was an important step on the path towards Australian nationality and democracy, then it should be conceded that a struggle for Irish nationality was foremost among the influences that forced the pace.

Given the tendency of Munster Irish in particular, readily to identify political injustice and social inequality in the colonies as simply an extension of British injustice in Ireland, it is not surprising to find this group strongly represented among bushrangers in both the convict and colonial eras. R.B. Walker points out that a New South Wales police return of 1871 which listed 118 prisoners serving sentences for armed robbery, included 86 Roman Catholics⁹³ - Catholics then being largely synonymous with Irish-born colonists and their Australian off-spring. A detailed analysis of bushrangers' motives cannot be entered into here, but some comments made by one comparatively objective observer, an Irish Protestant police trooper, are illuminating. Edward John Brady, the son of an Irish landowner, migrated to Melbourne in 1862, joined the police and served twenty years in the Victorian and New South Wales forces⁹⁴. His service coincided with the major bushranging period, during which he became familiar with the background and activities of most of the leading outlaws. Commenting on the prevalence of Irish bushrangers, Brady writes:

(It was) no great wonder to me, who knew many of their antecedents, in the old land. I knew, too, the severity of the laws in Ireland and the conditions under which the majority of the people were compelled to live. There were

(91) Ballarat Star, n.d., quoted *ibid.*, p. 34.

(92) Argus, 10 April 1855. A complete list of the dead and wounded including most counties of origin.

(93) R.B. Walker, 'Bushranging in Fact and Legend', Historical Studies, Vol. 11, No. 42, April 1964, p. 207.

(94) E.J. Brady, Two Frontiers, Sydney, 1944 (a work that incorporates a MS by Edward John Brady, the author's father).

laws on the Statute Book in my father's time and mine which belonged to the Dark Ages. In my eighteenth year, Thomas Francis Meagher was sentenced 'to be drawn on a hurdle to the place of execution, hanged by the neck until dead, his head severed from his body, and his body divided into four quarters...' ⁹⁵....I have in mind now the case of a minor bushranger whom I heard sentenced at Bathurst assizes to 15 years imprisonment. That man's father swung in County Clare for an offence that nowadays would be punished by a small fine. They drove him in an open cart eighteen miles to the place of execution. He ⁹⁶ sat on one end of his coffin and the hangman sat on the other.

The Irish penchant for the preservation of national ethos by means of oral tradition, resulted in anecdotes about bushrangers being put to verse in ballads which reflected an Australian extension of Ireland's struggle for nationality. These ballads in turn mythologised common outlaws, giving them a heroic image and widespread notoriety which aroused much sympathy, particularly among the Munster component of Australian Irish. And so when a convict-bushranger like Jack Donahoe challenged his gaolers, the police, colonial order and property, he became for this group especially - as Ned Kelly did two generations later - a symbol of Irish national resistance to English oppression and misgovernment. An autobiographical ballad recorded either by Donahoe himself or by the Irish convict poet, Frank McNamara, illustrates the point. The ballad simultaneously justifies past, present and future resistance to 'foreign' British intervention in Irish affairs, as is evident in the following verses:

If Ireland he's groaning, a hand at her throat,
Which foreigners have from the recreants bought,
Forget not the lessons our fathers have taught,
 Though our Isle's full of danger
 And held by the stranger
Be brave and be true

.....

Then hurl me to crime and brand me with shame,
But think not to baulk me my spirit to tame,
For I'll fight to the last in old Ireland's name.

- (95) Meagher, a Young Irelander, survived the sentence. He was transported to Van Diemen's Land with Mitchel and subsequently escaped aboard an American whaler to the United States. His gallant service during the civil war earned him a post-war appointment as Secretary of Montana Territory (Freeman's Journal, 21 October, 16 December 1865).
- (96) Brady, op. cit., p. 259.

Though I be a bushranger
 You still are the stranger
 And I'm Donahue⁹⁷.

In time, the largely Irish bushranging challenge to British imperialism became absorbed into a generalised native Australian resistance to British domination, as can be seen for example in the transition of Jack Donahoe into the native-born Wild Colonial Boy, usually called Jack or Jim Doolan in various versions of this ballad⁹⁸. In bushranging legendry then, as in convict resistance, free-immigrant assimilation and the Eureka rebellion, radical Irish nationalism readily became an important strand of emerging Australian nationalism, in so far as it frequently challenged Anglo-imperial loyaltyⁱⁿ favour of Australian national sentiment.

Whereas radical Irish influence represented one cultural pole of Irish-Australian nationalism, Ulster conservatism upheld a diametrically opposed ideology. The course of Ulster migration to Australia has not been adequately charted, but work presently being done⁹⁹ suggests that Protestant farmers and tradesmen from the northern counties were considerably represented in the first major surge of about 18,000 assisted immigrants who reached Australia between 1836 and 1842. According to Orange tradition¹⁰⁰, the first warrant to establish an Orange lodge in New South Wales was brought out by Andrew Alexander, a private of the 50th Regiment, who arrived with his family on the convict transport, Lady Nugent, in April 1835. Alexander is said to have carried the warrant sewn inside the lining of his jacket. The regimental lodge he established became absorbed into a duly instituted colonial branch of the Orange Order, founded in April 1845. Within three years at least four lodges were operating in Sydney, and others at Gladesville, the North Shore, Parramatta, Windsor and Kiama, supported by a total membership of 500 to 700. Samuel McCaffrey, the grandson of an Irish-Catholic emigrant from Fermanagh who settled near Kiama in 1841, records that the Orange lodge there was established about 1843 by William Gray, one of a large number of assisted Ulster migrants who arrived in the early 1840's¹⁰¹. McCaffrey adds that the charter was inherited by

- (97) Quoted 'An Old Identity' (Thomas Walker), Felony of New South Wales etc., Sydney, 1890, p. 60 ff, cited Russel Ward, The Australian Legend (1958), Melbourne, 1965 p. 50.
- (98) Ward, op. cit., pp. 154-7.
- (99) Richard Reid, 'Assisted Irish Immigration to Australia, 1836-70', Ph.D. in progress, Univ. of Wollongong, 1983.
- (100) Lyons, op. cit., App. II a: 'An early history of the Loyal Orange Institution in New South Wales'.
- (101) McCaffrey Papers, University of Wollongong, N.S.W.

John Gray, a son, who named his farm 'Loyal Valley' and wore orange flowers in his breast pocket to the great annoyance of local Irish Catholics¹⁰².

Throughout the 1840's, tension often arose between colonial Irish Catholics and Orangemen, periodically erupting into violence when the two groups gathered in numbers. Animosity in Melbourne became evident after the first Orange lodges were founded in 1842 and 1843 to support Protestant candidates in municipal and legislative council elections¹⁰³. On 12 July in 1844 and 1845, Battle of the Boyne celebrations were organized by the Melbourne Orange Institution, but on each occasion Orangemen refrained from marching in procession when they learned that Irish Catholics had organized hurling matches on the same date, as a dissuading influence¹⁰⁴. This hostile stand-off ended violently in 1846 when Melbourne Orangemen hung banners from the upstairs window of their favourite public house. A crowd of irate Irish Catholics gathered and made a rush on the building, in response to which some Orangemen inside fired a volley of shots which wounded several people. Only the prompt arrival of the military prevented further bloodshed: the crowd dispersing as representatives on both sides were arrested¹⁰⁵. McCaffrey relates a similar incident which occurred at Kiama about this time¹⁰⁶. During a Catholic procession honouring the visit of some higher clergy from Sydney, an Orangeman named John Colley, who had hidden in a Protestant-owned hotel, fired a shot that passed through the main banner. An incensed crowd sought out Colley but the intervention of Father Rigney, the local priest, protected him from injury. Reacting to incidents such as these, the Legislative Council of New South Wales passed a bill in 1846 prohibiting all 'party processions'¹⁰⁷. The absence of similar incidents for some years following, indicates that the bill achieved its purpose; though two other factors appear to have helped reduce hostilities. The first was that gold discoveries lured a great many Orangemen away from Sydney and Melbourne lodges, leaving them virtually moribund¹⁰⁸. The second, that such discord in the colonies was undoubtedly influenced by social and political conditions in Ireland; and whereas the 1840's were years of political protest, famine and emigration, the 1850's were

(102) *ibid.*

(103) Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. 417; Clark, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3 (1973), pp. 288-9.

(104) Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

(105) *ibid.*

(106) McCaffrey Papers.

(107) Inglis, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

(108) Lyons, *op. cit.*, pp. 417-8.

years of comparative calm.

To sum up, a large proportion of Irish convicts, emancipists and emigrants in Australia were lower-class Catholics from the depressed south-western counties of Munster and neighbouring regions. Celtic in background, this group by tradition resented British intervention in Ireland, and many maintained a hope that Irish independence could be restored. The disproportionately large number of Catholic Irish in Australia - more than double the proportion of Catholics, English and Irish, in England - combined with their propensity physically to resist colonial authority, had two broad effects. On the one hand, it attracted considerable sympathy from some non-Irish colonists, native-born especially, who judged the Irish cause as having more universal validity than England's right to maintain occupancy of a nation it had subjugated. On the other, it encouraged the growth of anti-Irish racism, evident in the attitudes of extreme loyalists almost from the beginning of the convict era. Irish emigration to Australia reinforced these divisions. On one side it sustained Irish nationalism in the colonies; while on the other it strengthened anti-Irish racism, as Ulster Orangemen set about reconstructing their traditional means of containing the Catholic-Irish 'menace'. It remained to be seen how those colonists who were most conscious of the Irish national question would react to the re-birth of revolutionary Irish nationalism in its Fenian form.

Chapter 2

THE FENIAN SPECTRE, 1865-68.

...of all the delusions that have glazed the sanguine and impulsive sons of the Emerald Isle, none, surely, has been so preposterous or so contemptible in its inception progress and results as that of the 'Fenian Brotherhood' ...the separation of Ireland from Great Britain can never appear more than a madman's dream.

Editor, Brisbane Courier, 9 December 1865

So long as England governs Ireland Fenianism will exist in some state, active or quiescent, but it will never disappear. We have a nobler and higher opinion of our race, than to think they will suffer themselves to be spoon-fed with liberty by the hands of another people.

Editor, Sydney Freeman's Journal, 20 July 1867

Henry O'Farrell's attempt to assassinate Prince Alfred at Sydney in March 1868 heightened but did not initiate an Australian Fenian scare. Years earlier the movement's influence had reached the colonies by way of emigrant ships, home mail, newspapers and official despatches. Steadily Fenianism permeated the sentiments and behaviour of all who took an active interest in the issue of Irish nationality. A gradual build-up of warm sympathy at one extremity and strong hostility at the other, accompanied news that American and Irish Fenians were skirmishing with British authority in Canada, Ireland and England, and were being imprisoned or executed for their actions. This chapter examines increasing social tension related to Fenian influence in eastern Australia.

At least some colonial knowledge of the Fenian movement would have preceded newspaper reports about it by several years. Among some Irish immigrants who disembarked from the Chatsworth at Brisbane in 1862, for example, were two senior Fenians from Cork - James O'Mahony and William O'Carroll, both of whom had decided to come to Australia after contact with an agent engaged by the Queensland bishop, Matthew Quinn¹.

(1) Queenslander (Brisbane), 23 May 1885. Immigration research kindly undertaken on my behalf by Alan Queale, of Annerley, Brisbane.

O'Mahony, a Bandon draper, had been among the first IRB recruits. He was enlisted by the Fenian commander-in-chief, James Stephens, who appointed him 'centre' of the Bandon district; but later he became disenchanted with Stephens' dogmatic leadership and decided to emigrate². There is no evidence that he remained a Fenian in Queensland, or in Victoria where he later settled, but he did not sever contact with the movement. In 1884 for example, he wrote to Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa - a prominent Fenian exile in America, offering to serve under Rossa's command if money could be sent to facilitate his passage from Melbourne to New York or Dublin³. William O'Carroll, a baker, had been founder and leader of the Cork city Fenians⁴. He emigrated with his wife, Hannah, and their children, and soon became one of Brisbane's most respected journalists. Between the late 1860's and early 1880's, he was editor of the Guardian, co-founder of the Colonist, and editor of the Courier⁵. With the march of years and an increasingly respectable place in society, O'Carroll's outlook became more conservative. As his obituarist put it, 'though his love of his native country never cooled, he had learned to look at her with the clearer vision of a citizen of the Empire'⁶.

Many more Irish-Catholic immigrants appear to have readily become Fenian fellow-travellers, either in Ireland or after arrival in Australia. We may instance for example, Michael Crowley, from Ennis, County Clare, who disembarked at Sydney in 1858. Crowley proceeded to the Cooma goldfield then settled later at Temora, where he became proprietor of the Harp of Erin hotel. His grand-daughter, authoress Dymphna Cusack, recounts that he was known to spit on the floor if an Englishman entered his bar, and that he often declared he was 'Fenian to the back-bone'⁷. His wife, who was of Irish peasant stock, shared his nationalist sentiment. When the couple moved to a farm outside Temora, she hung a large picture of Robert Emmet on the

- (2) Padraig O'Maidin, 'James O'Mahony, the Bandon Fenian Centre', lecture, Bandon, 9 January 1980 (typescript courtesy of Peter O'Mahony, editor of The O'Mahony Journal, Bantry, Cork).
- (3) O'Mahony to Rossa, 1884, Cork Public Museum (copy courtesy of Peter O'Mahony).
- (4) O'Maidin, loc. cit.
- (5) Queenslander, 23 May 1885; Clem Lack, 'A Century of Brisbane Journalism', JQHS, Vol. 4, No. 4, December 1951, pp. 479-481.
- (6) Queenslander, 23 May 1885.
- (7) Interview, 4 June 1980. See also, Norman Freehill, Dymphna, London, 1975, pp. 11-13.

sitting-room wall and on social occasions would recite from memory Emmet's speech from the dock. Crowley was Catholic, anti-clerical in spirit, and bitterly anti-English. Dymphna Cusack recalls:

He would tell us fascinating stories in his lilting Irish brogue - fairy tales, stories of the history of Ireland, that have stayed with me ever since. So vivid was his recital of them that I was in my teens before I realised that he could not possibly have fought personally against Cromwell in that terrible campaign in the seventeenth century that reduced the Irish population to 500,000. At about the same age I found out that Grandmother's 'Blackorangeman' was not one word! ...Only later I realised how anti-clerical Grandfather was, so different from the religious bigotry common at the time. The first song I learned from him was 'The Wearin' of the Green'. When I asked him who Napper Tandy was, he answered: 'He was a good Prodestan Dublin rebel, like Wolf Tone and Robert Emmet - Prodestans, all of them'⁸.

When two of Michael Crowley's sons joined the army during World War I, he refused to say good-bye to them: they were going to fight he said, for his country's '800 year old enemy'⁹.

Irish colonists sharing Crowley's sentiments would have rejoiced when the first newspaper reports about Fenianism reached Australia early in 1865. Among the earliest were probably those in the Sydney Freeman's Journal, an informative paper which covered world politics, news and literature of particular interest to Irish Catholics. It had been founded in 1850 by Father John McEncroe, a champion of Irish interests in the colony. In February and March 1865 for example, items referred to Fenian activity in Cork, including mention of a demonstration at Skibbereen in support of a Fenian organizer named Cornelius Keane who had been arrested. Some young men, it was said, had paraded the streets of Skibbereen with an effigy of the Rath village priest, Father Collins, whom they accused of informing on Keane¹⁰. It was plain to any reader that the Fenian movement was opposed by at least some Catholic clergy in Ireland.

For a time the Freeman's Journal made no editorial comment on what seemed to be a minor Irish secret society. In any case, its managers

(8) Freehill, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

(9) Interview, 4 June 1980.

(10) Freeman's Journal (Sydney), 18 February, 22 March 1865.

William Bede Dalley, a prominent Catholic lawyer - Australian-born, of Irish convict parents, and his editor William Dolman, an English-born Catholic, clearly favoured more moderate Irish nationalism. Detailed reports were given for example, about Sydney and country meetings of the Irish National League, the INL, an O'Connellite - styled reformist association founded in Ireland in 1863¹¹. The INL had grown rapidly in New South Wales after its first branch was established about mid 1864, and by early 1865 it had over 2,000 members¹². The position of foundation president had been accepted by John Robertson, a leading liberal politician whose Scottish birth and Australian bush upbringing appear to have instilled in him a good measure of reformist zeal, including considerable sympathy for Irish national aspirations. Before a fuller exposure of Fenian news, the INL seems to have been fairly readily accepted by respectable colonial society as a legitimate expression of Irish nationalism. In April 1865 for example, a capacity audience attended an INL meeting at Sydney's Lyceum Theatre to hear the popular orator, Daniel Deniehy, lecture on Irish balladry¹³. On the stage Robertson was joined among others by Reverend John Dunmore Lang, a fiery Scottish-born Presbyterian, and Henry Parkes, an ambitious English-born Anglican: two leading politicians who admired Deniehy's brilliance, but would have been quick to dissociate themselves from any association with revolutionary Irish nationalism.

Within a few months however, there were signs that continuing reports about Fenianism overseas were beginning to arouse loyalist hostility towards expressions of Irish nationalism locally. In September 1865 for example, Robertson felt obliged to defend himself against insinuations that, as president of the INL, he was in some way endorsing Irish disloyalty: the League's principles, he declared, were in no way 'repugnant to the loyalty and affection of her Majesty's subjects' and he would not resign its presidency¹⁴. The Freeman's Journal, also aware that Fenianism was fast becoming a volatile issue, felt moved to observe that Fenians were 'misguided men' whose rash action would inevitably lead to their imprisonment¹⁵. However, the newspaper continued to relay every snippet of Fenian news,

(11) *ibid.*, 11, 14, 21 January 1865, for the INL's January meetings.

(12) *ibid.*, 21 January 1865.

(13) *ibid.*, 8, 12 April 1865.

(14) *ibid.*, 9 September 1865.

(15) *ibid.*, 26 August 1865.

including favourable extracts from Irish-American papers, stating as a justification: 'our readers take an interest in everything relating to Irish "rebels"'¹⁶. The main cause of increasing excitement for and against Fenianism, was a growing recognition that a Fenian rising appeared to be imminent in Ireland.

The Fenian movement had been founded seven years earlier, on St. Patrick's Day 1858, by a group of exiled rebels who had taken part in the short-lived and unsuccessful nationalist rising in Ireland in 1848. Two of them, James Stephens and John O'Mahony, had fled to Paris where they mixed with and were influenced by continental revolutionaries. O'Mahony then went on to America where he found ready support for Irish separatism among embittered Irish emigrants and political exiles. In New York he helped found the Emmet Monument Association, which aimed to fulfil the last request Emmet made before he was hanged in 1803:

Let no man write my epitaph...When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written¹⁷.

In 1858 O'Mahony persuaded Stephens, who had returned to Ireland, to organize a secret revolutionary society to be supported with Irish-American money and arms. The organization thus formed became known as the Irish Revolutionary (later Republican) Brotherhood, the IRB, headed by Stephens, who had insisted that he be commander-in-chief of both the Irish and American wings of the movement. During the early 1860's, the IRB expanded steadily across most Irish counties, its main support coming from poorer Catholics. Organization took the form of a secret network of regional units called 'circles', each headed by a leader known as the 'centre', and every recruit took an oath to maintain secrecy, obey the leaders, and do 'the utmost at every risk..to make Ireland an independent Democratic Republic'¹⁸. Most of these details were of course not known in Australia until much later,

(16) *ibid.*, 9 September 1865.

(17) Quoted *ibid.*, 7 July 1866.

(18) John O'Leary, Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, 2 vols., London, 1896, Vol. 1, p. 120. See also Joseph Denieffe, A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood (1906), Dublin 1969, pp. 159-60. For a concise sketch of the Fenian movement: T.W. Moody (ed.), The Fenian Movement (1968), Dublin, 1978.

but a steady stream of reported incidents nevertheless began to give firm shape to what was developing.

The American movement was far less secretive. It was given the name the Fenian Brotherhood by John O'Mahony, who was inspired by Fenian warriors of the pre-Christian Celtic era¹⁹. During the American civil war, in which Fenians fought on both sides, attention was distracted from Ireland; but when peace returned in April 1865, the movement swelled with an exuberant body of veterans impatient to liberate their native land. News about this reached Australia a few months later. In October, readers of the Freeman's Journal were informed that a gathering of 30,000 Fenians in New York in July, had wildly endorsed militant declarations of such speakers as Colonel William R. Roberts, who had stated:

Ireland must be free and we shall free her (Long and enthusiastic cheers again and again)...the sword shall now be the arbiter of her destinies and her children, and may God defend her right (Vehement cheering). If we fail once with honor in a noble fight, try again, and again. Blood must wash out what blood and crime have stained (Loud cheers)²⁰.

Any elation in the Australian colonies stirred by such news was soon dampened. Towards the end of 1865 it was reported that British authorities in Ireland had acted swiftly and decisively to stem the Fenian tide. On 15 September a troop of seventy Dublin constabulary carried out a night raid on the offices of the IRB newspaper, The Irish People, where they arrested a number of Fenian leaders and seized documentary evidence of revolutionary intent²¹. More arrests followed, including that of James Stephens and several Irish-American officers who had recently crossed the Atlantic to train IRB recruits²². The Americans were afterwards released - on grounds that they could not be convicted for acts committed in America, and Stephens escaped as a result of a carefully planned Fenian mission, but the

(19) A Gaelic scholar, O'Mahony translated into English Geoffrey Keating's History of Ireland. The 'Feni', he noted, was the most ancient tribe of the Gaelic race and 'Fenian' history, a classic Celtic era when native kings ruled in accordance with obligations to their warriors and subjects (Rev. G. Keating, D.D., The History of Ireland, John O'Mahony (trans.), New York, 1857, n. 58, p. 343, n. 64, p. 345, n. 82, p. 355).

(20) Freeman's Journal, 21 October 1865.

(21) ibid., 25 November 1865.

(22) ibid., 25 November 1865, 27 January 1866.

remainder of those arrested were convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from five years to life²³. Cartoons in the London Punch expressed satisfaction that Irish Catholic clergy had condemned Fenianism and that prompt action by Dublin Castle seemed to have brought the contagion to an end²⁴. The London Times was less optimistic, proclaiming solemnly that in the long run Irish disaffection would only be eliminated when that troublesome race was swamped with a more civilised and superior Anglo-Saxon strain; a plainly racist statement which the Sydney Freeman's Journal extracted for its readers:

The nationalities which fill the world with their complaints, but are never able to right them themselves, and cannot even stand alone without aid, are those of pure ancient blood. They are too distinct to assimilate, or get on well with their neighbours. They can neither comprehend nor be comprehended, and are eventually crushed and ground to powder rather than affiliated. Ireland has hitherto been too Irish to make her way with the rest of us. A time may come when the proportion of Irish to English there, or rather of all foreigners to the natives, will put the country into a better condition for the great race of nations. Ireland may then be no more distinct from us than Lancashire or the valley of the Clyde²⁵.

Australian opinion began to polarise on the Fenian issue. An editorial in the Brisbane Courier declared:...'of all the delusions that have glazed the sanguine and impulsive sons of the Emerald Isle, none, surely, has been so preposterous or so contemptible...as that of the 'Fenian Brotherhood'...the separation of Ireland from Great Britain can never appear more than a madman's dream'²⁶. A retort reached the Courier from an Ipswich correspondent who defended both the Fenian cause and the integrity of its leadership; he signed himself 'A Fenian Brother'²⁷. In Sydney, an Irish-born loyalist wrote to the Freeman's Journal strongly condemning Fenianism and adding that he hoped his letter would destroy whatever sympathy might exist for it in New South Wales; he signed himself 'Anti-Fenian Nationalist'²⁸. Again, an opposite view was taken by William McCurtayne, a resident of the mining township of Rocky Water Holes, who wrote to the same newspaper expressing undivided sympathy for this new attempt to liberate

(23) *ibid.*, 27 January, 3 March, 17 June 1866.

(24) 30 September, 21 October 1865.

(25) Reprinted in Freeman's Journal, 11 November 1865.

(26) 9 December 1865.

(27) 21 December 1865.

(28) 2 December 1865.

his 'unfortunate country'. McCurtayne also warned Australian Irish that Britishers at home and in their colonies persisted in 'magnifying the greatness of their country and the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon as the great civiliser of the human family'²⁹.

Debate in Sydney sharpened when David Buchanan, a radical Scottish-born lawyer and member of the Legislative Assembly, wrote a long letter to the Freeman's Journal expressing sympathy both with Irish independence and with the use of force to achieve it: 'I believe the Irish advocates of physical force as a body are influenced by a sincere and earnest love of country', Buchanan declared, '...I therefore hope that the spirit of the Irish people may never die till it has consumed every vestige of wrong which has so ruinously fed upon their very vitals. That they may rise and fight, and fight with resolute, inflexible, iron determination...'³⁰. Such sentiments were too strong for the Freeman's Journal; an editorial opined that the Fenian aim 'if honest, was hopeless', and therefore a dangerous folly in execution. It advised 'would-be Fenian letter writers' to support the INL rather than occupy their time with 'empty declarations about the wrongs of Ireland at the very safe distance of sixteen thousand miles'³¹. Buchanan's firm belief in the universal justice of national self-determination was undeterred by the paper's gratuitous advice. He was offered and accepted a position on the central committee of a 'Fund for the Relief of the Wives and Families of the Irish State Prisoners', and opened its appeal with a spirited address titled 'The Wrongs of Ireland' to a packed audience at Sydney's Temperance Hall on 7 May 1866³². The next morning a leading article in the Empire charged Buchanan with disloyalty, sedition and a violation of his oath of allegiance to the Queen; to which he responded with a libel suit that reached the Supreme Court in August³³. The presiding Chief Justice, Sir James Stephen, heard W.B. Dalley for Buchanan and James Martin for the Empire. He ruled in Buchanan's favour, but awarded him no costs and only one farthing in damages³⁴. Empire loyalty

- (29) 7 April 1866.
- (30) 13 January 1866.
- (31) 17 February 1866.
- (32) *ibid.*, 12 May 1866.
- (33) *ibid.*, 18 August 1866.
- (34) *ibid.*

had clearly won a moral victory in its opening rounds against Fenian sympathy.

The central committee of the Relief Fund on which Buchanan served met regularly at Sydney's Globe Tavern, the proprietor of which, Michael Shalvey, was also a committee man. The executive comprised John Speerin, chairman, James G. O'Connor, treasurer, and William M. Davis and John Coghlan, secretaries³⁵. Almost exclusively committee members were Irish-born immigrants who had arrived in Australia in the 1840's and 1850's, and most had supported earlier Irish nationalist organizations and appeals, including a relief fund launched in 1858 for tenant farmers evicted in Donegal³⁶. They were obviously men who had retained a strong sense of duty to their homeland, a firm belief in its national identity, and a concern for kin and countrymen less fortunate than themselves. Similar appeals were independently organized at Bathurst, Ballarat, Melbourne, and most likely at other colonial centres; apparently in response to news that an appeal in Ireland had been organized by Mrs. O'Donovan Rossa and Mrs. Clarke Luby, the wives of two imprisoned Fenian leaders³⁷.

Funds were collected throughout 1866 amidst considerable controversy. The Ballarat appeal, for example, caused 'An Irishman' to inform the Ballarat Star that such aid would inevitably be diverted to the Fenian movement, and that, knowing this, only Fenian-minded colonists would respond:

Who are those expected to contribute? Will the Roman Catholics? I think not! The Movement, I am happy to say is too strongly condemned by the clergy to let them contribute. Will the Protestants? I rather think not! They are too interested in the maintenance of the Union of Great Britain and Ireland to listen to the charmers, charm they ever so wisely. Will the English or Scotch contribute? Certainly not; they will never be parties to the disruption of the British Empire. Who then can be looked for to aid? Fenians and Fenians alone³⁸.

(35) *ibid.*, 5 May 1866.

(36) Mark Lyons, 'Aspects of Seclasionism in N.S.W., c. 1865-1880', Ph.D. thesis, ANU, 1975, Appendices 1 b, 1 c, pp. 406-14.

(37) Freeman's Journal, 5 May 1866, 31 August 1867; Ballarat Star, 19 April 1866.

(38) Letter to the editor, Ballarat Star, 23 April 1866.

This loyalist logic invited a swift rebuttal from another correspondent, 'Shamrock', who suggested that its author would have to be possessed of a 'satanic malignity' to deny sympathy for an Irish mother 'nursing a languishing child on her milkless breast'; he added that it was clear the writer's heart had 'never once throbbed with the generous warm impulsiveness of the genuine Irishman'³⁹. The source of at least some donations tended to support 'Shamrock's' view. Acknowledgements published in the Freeman's Journal⁴⁰ listed several subscribers who signed themselves 'An Englishman', and the largest donation in New South Wales came from David Buchanan, who advanced £4. A further refutation of the loyalist Irish view was the fact that in New South Wales (no subscription lists were published in Victoria, in the absence of a counterpart to the Freeman's Journal) about a dozen Catholic clergy contributed⁴¹, including Venerable Archdeacon John McEncroe, all apparently moved by the same 'warm impulsiveness' felt by 'Shamrock'. In clear contrast with loyalist opinion, all such contributors, whatever their nationalities or religion, obviously shared a common belief in the legitimacy of Irish freedom as a just expression of democracy.

It is nevertheless evident that many Irish Catholics were lukewarm or wary about the appeal. A keenly nationalist priest collecting in the Berrima district, Reverend William Lanigan, reported that he found it necessary to say that he was not a Fenian⁴². And a Braidwood collector, A. McDonnell, expressed disappointment that his relatively wealthy district, which supported an extensive Irish population, donated only £8/12/6 from twenty-eight subscribers; he deplored the apathy and dissension he had experienced for what he held to be 'a truly charitable and non-sectarian cause' and remarked that many Irish he knew 'had gas enough in their mouths

(39) *ibid.*, 24 April 1866.

(40) *ibid.*, 9 June, 11, 25 August, 15 September, 15 December 1866.

(41) *ibid.*

(42) *ibid.*, 16 June 1866. Lanigan had emigrated from Ireland in 1859. In 1869, while Bishop of Goulburn, he attended a meeting at which Archbishop Polding advised Catholic clergy to avoid reference to nationalities. Lanigan dissented, arguing that it was not his wish 'to forget our Irish national history' (Patrick O'Farrell, The Catholic Church and Community in Australia, Melbourne, 1977, p. 155). See also T.L. Suttor, Hierarchy and Democracy in Australia, Melbourne, 1965, pp. 200, 314.

to force shamrocks out of the sands in the seas, but when the time for union (undivided support) arrived they withheld their sympathy⁴³. A stronger response on the other hand, though individual donations were small, came from the poorer mining or rural districts of West Maitland, Singleton, Morpeth, Dungog and the McLeay River⁴⁴. On the whole, it appears that Irish colonists of the lower orders were less apprehensive about displaying radical national sentiment than wealthier, more settled countrymen, who were undoubtedly more concerned about their social acceptance in a predominantly British and Anglo-Saxon community.

By the time the New South Wales Relief Fund closed in August 1867, about £500 had been sent to Ireland care of Mrs. Rossa and Mrs. Luby⁴⁵. The executive, disappointed with this result, attempted to explain the campaign's lack of success. William Davis directed some of the blame at the Freeman's Journal, complaining that the newspaper had given insufficient publicity and that its proprietors had made clear their own position by making no donations themselves. He added that he had expected the newspaper to show a 'greater concern for the Irish national interest', with less pandering to the 'milk and water Irishmen of this colony'⁴⁶. As it happened, a change in the ownership of the Freeman's Journal produced exactly the radicalisation Davis desired.

The new stance became noticeable after December 1866, when W.B. Dalley sold out to William Dolman, Richard Blundell and Richard O'Sullivan⁴⁷. The most influential of the three was O'Sullivan, the younger brother of A.M. and T.D. Sullivan (the O' surname prefix was optionally applied), the joint owners and editors of the vigorously nationalist Dublin newspaper, the Nation. O'Sullivan joined the Freeman's Journal staff in 1866, shortly after arriving from Ireland, and began to write editorials when he became part-owner. His first major statement on Fenianism, in January 1867, was a hard-hitting endorsement of its cause, concluding with a belated and subdued recognition that its methods were unwise:

This is not the first time that Ireland has risen in rebellion,

(43) Freeman's Journal, 16 June 1866.

(44) ibid., 9 June, 11, 25 August, 15 September, 15 December 1866.

(45) ibid., 24, 31 August 1867.

(46) ibid., 6 April 1867.

(47) ibid.

and should she be defeated it most assuredly won't be the last.- There is no mistaking the issue; it is not a question of reform; it is not a quarrel about Tenant Right or the Established Church, or Education; it is a matter more important, nobler and holier than any of these or all of them put together; it is a question of the national independence of Ireland.

...just men and honourable men who will inquire why the Irish people have flung down the gage to mighty England can learn their motives and learning them will not fail to respect and honour patriotism though rash and miscalculating⁴⁸.

Warm approval was expressed in a letter to the editor from 'Green to the Peak', who remarked that whereas the paper's tone in 1866 had failed to meet the requirements of nineteen-twentieths of its subscribers, he was pleased to note that it was now more in tune with principles of justice to Ireland and its people⁴⁹. The Sydney Morning Herald reacted in an opposite manner; firmly criticising the Freeman's Journal for publishing articles 'calculated to excite the most bitter animosity in the section they influence'⁵⁰. O'Sullivan was unrepentant:

We have given in our news columns both sides of the statement, pro-Fenian and anti-Fenian, and where we have held up the balance ourselves we have endeavoured to give simple facts and left inferences to our readers...The Herald⁵¹ may say peace, where peace cannot be, but Irishmen will not⁵¹.

Both sides were in fact responding to firm indications that the Fenian movement had recovered from the police raids and arrests of 1865. From America came news that several thousand Fenians had stormed across the Niagara River into Canada, won a minor victory over a British force at Ridgeway, then retreated back to the United States. Inspired by this initial Fenian success, a Dublin correspondent for the Freeman's Journal jubilantly informed its readers that Fenians had 'burst like a tornado through the English ranks, trampled the Union Jack in the dust and bore the Green flag of Old Ireland over the field', and he added, 'I enter into details, for the accounts you are likely to get out in Australia are all English, and are in nowise trustworthy'⁵². The other Sydney papers universally condemned the incident; the Sydney Morning Herald warning solemnly, 'That

(48) *ibid.*, 19 January 1867.

(49) *ibid.*, 30 March 1867.

(50) 13 March 1867.

(51) Freeman's Journal, 16 March 1867.

(52) *ibid.*, 18 August 1866.

which was done in Canada in the same spirit might be attempted in Australia,⁵³. From Ireland came news that the British Government was seriously concerned about the growing strength of Fenianism: more than two hundred suspected rebels had been arrested in 1866, including forty Irish-Americans, and on 17 February the House of Commons had approved - by 346 votes to 6 - a six months' suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland⁵⁴. An international resurgence of radical Irish nationalism was in the air; and in Australia it was being sensed by loyalists and Irish alike.

Respectable middle-class Irish colonists were therefore careful to celebrate St. Patrick's Day 1867 in a manner that did not offend even conservative loyalists. In Sydney, a public holiday was declared and the customary yachting regatta was attended by the well-to-do. A luncheon after the regatta began with loyal toasts to the Queen, the royal family and the Governor of New South Wales, followed by a toast to St. Patrick proposed by W.B. Dalley, who expressed satisfaction that those present, men of different nationalities and religions, had laid all sectarian prejudices aside. Richard O'Sullivan restrained his radicalism when he proposed the next toast 'Our Fatherland' in a similar vein, after which the band played 'Exile of Erin'. The final toast, 'The land we live in', was proposed by Mr. Hourigan, who trusted that nothing would transpire to mar the harmony that existed among all classes of the community. Then the band struck up 'Cornstalk Polka', a song popularly considered to represent a sense of Australian colonial identity⁵⁵. In Melbourne the main function was a banquet attended by seventy representatives of respectable Irish-Catholic society, among them the Hon. Charles Gavan Duffy. Almost identical toasts and speeches were made, with the exception of a mention by Duffy about his recent visit to Ireland. The mass of the Irish population, he said, were as discontented as ever with English 'mis-government', and he added that Ireland would only be thoroughly loyal when it enjoyed the same liberty they possessed in Australia⁵⁶.

By contrast, some other Irish colonists who were less conscious about their social position, celebrated St. Patrick's Day in a manner

(53) Cited Mark Lyons, op. cit., p. 49.

(54) Freeman's Journal, 21 April 1866.

(55) ibid., 23 March 1867.

(56) Australasian n.d., reprinted ibid., 30 March 1867.

uninhibited by any concern for British loyalty. At the Castlemaine goldfield north of Ballarat, for example, a local police sergeant filed the following report on an Irish celebration:

Thirty or forty men headed by a brass band marched from Deep Creek to Blanket Flat setting law and order at defiance and many of them was heard to declare themselves Fenians. The police after considerable difficulty stopped the band from playing but was unable to disperse the mob (at 1.06 a.m.) who kept marching about in fives and sixes until morning. The english(sic) mail which arrived a few days previous to the procession brought a great deal of Fenian intelligence from Ireland relative to the breaking out of them in that Country and there is not the slightest doubt but this meeting was got up under the cloak of St. Pat's day. Owing to 17th falling on a Sun. the 18th was observed as a holiday by the greater portion of the Irish here. A few of the ring leaders was prosecuted at the Day before a Police Court on 21st inst. and some of them fined £5 and others cleared out of the district⁵⁷.

Legally these demonstrators had disturbed the peace and, perhaps in ignorance, had broken the Party Processions Act. It could be suggested that warmed by drink they found courage to create a stir, by deliberately identifying with a rebel body feared and hated by the most loyal sector of respectable society - as Mark Lyons contends in his explanation of similar pro-Fenian conduct in New South Wales in 1868⁵⁸. But while this may have been a contributing factor, it seems fair to state that among recent Irish immigrants particularly, a genuine sympathy for Fenianism existed, together with a firm conviction that Irish independence could only be won through force.

In response to the greater militancy of Irish nationalism in Australia, there was a marked increase in support for the Orange Order. By 1867 there were eleven lodges established in Sydney alone, and the total membership in New South Wales had trebled since 1865⁵⁹. On 12 July 1867, a Battle of the Boyne celebration banquet at Sydney was attended by 350 Orangemen and their wives, who toasted King William III to the airs of 'Boyne Water' and 'Protestant Boys'⁶⁰. Those present congratulated Brother Andrew Alexander

(57) Sen. Sergeant Rogers to Supt. C.H. Nicholson, police report of events at Blanket Flat on 18 March 1867, 'Fenianism 1868-9', CSO Supplementary Police Box 10, VPRO.

(58) Lyons, op. cit., p. 130.

(59) Loyal Orange Lodge, Sydney, Minute Book 1866-72, ML MSS 749; Lyons, op. cit., p. 64.

(60) Freeman's Journal, 20 July 1867.

on his initiative in bringing the first Orange warrant to the colony, sewn in the lining of his jacket; and Alexander returned thanks, adding that he had only that morning laid the foundation stone of the first Protestant Hall in New South Wales. A toast was then given to the Protestant clergy of the colony, to which Grand Chaplain Reverend Kenny replied, reminding his audience that the Order was a 'safeguard and defence...(that) would enable those likely to be influenced by Popish devices to withstand every attack made on their faith'⁶¹. In response to another toast, Mr. Garrett, MLA, stated that he believed the Order had been unfairly criticised: 'It was an association of great value in New South Wales', he declared, 'guided by an active, consistent and liberal policy which proved a complete refutation of the charge of bigotry and intolerance in politics or religion, which was sometimes brought against them'⁶². Sydney Punch took the opposite view, casting satiric barbs in a verse titled, 'To the Orangemen of Sydney':

Where there is room for all, right for all, work for all
 Why raise the spectre of bigotry's flag...
 Better go back again, you and your folly
 Back to the bogs whence both you and it sprung⁶³.

Victorian Orangemen were equally active. In June 1867 a two day conference of the Grand Orange Lodge was held at Ballarat, much to the heated indignation of local Irish Catholics⁶⁴. While in November, as part of Melbourne's decorations for Prince Alfred's royal visit, the Order erected a large transparency for illumination on the front of Protestant Hall. It portrayed William III crossing the Boyne, with a figure of Britannia on one side and the motto, 'This we will maintain', on the other. On the night it was lit up, a crowd gathered as some Irish Catholics jeered and threatened to destroy the image if it were not taken down. The image stayed up, and on Wednesday night, 27 November, a large crowd hurled stones at it, jeered at the Orangemen in the hall, and sang with gusto 'The Wearing of the Green'. From the upper windows a volley of shots was suddenly fired at the crowd, seriously wounding two men and fatally injuring a fifteen year

(61) *ibid.*

(62) *ibid.*

(63) 20 July 1867.

(64) Ballarat Star, 25, 27 June 1867

old Protestant onlooker, William Cross. The police arrested one assailant trying to escape and several more inside the building, where they also found a rifle, a shot-gun and several revolvers. When the news reached a Royal Ball in the Exhibition Building, at 2 o'clock in the morning, it was rumoured that 'some Fenians were on the look-out to shoot the Prince'. Without delay Alfred was whisked under escort back to Government House⁶⁵.

Six Orange gunmen were committed for trial at the March 1868 sittings of the Criminal Court, before Judge Redmond Barry, a representative by birth and education of Irish Protestant ascendancy⁶⁶. As in the case of the first shooting from windows by Melbourne Orangemen in 1846, none of those arrested were convicted⁶⁷. Apart from any bias on the part of Judge Barry, the fact that the case was heard in the midst of Protestant outrage at the attempted assassination of Alfred, would certainly have influenced proceedings. Even so, the acquittals surprised two relatively objective Protestant observers, Reverend John Milner and Chaplain Oswald Brierly, who were accompanying Alfred on board the royal cruiser, Galatea. Both blamed Orange prejudice and notions of supremacy, not only for inciting Irish-Catholic responses of the sort that occurred at Protestant Hall, but also for directly encouraging the birth and growth of Fenianism:

Nothing can excuse the Orangemen for having in the first instance exhibited a party device, which they knew would provoke retaliation, and lead to a breach of the peace. Amongst the numerous causes which have combined to produce Fenianism, it becomes a question whether the constant irritation and annoyance inflicted on their enemies by Orangemen in their noisy celebrations of the 'Battle of the Boyne' for the last 200 years, have not had a much greater effect than all other grievances - fancy or real - put together. It is scarcely possible to conceive that even less excitable people than the Roman Catholic population of Ireland would tamely submit to incessant taunts and most provokingly contrived devices and emblems to remind them of defeat and subjection⁶⁸.

Colonial justice then, meted out £5 fines to some Irish diggers who had noisily proclaimed their belief in Irish independence, but acquitted four Orangemen who had used arms responsible for the death of a youth and the

- (65) Rev. John Milner, B.A., and Oswald W. Brierly, The Cruise of the Galatea, London, 1869, pp. 245-6; Freeman's Journal, 30 November 1867; Advocate (Melbourne), 5 July 1919.
- (66) C.M.H. Clark, A History of Australia, Vol. 4, Melbourne, 1978, p. 89.
- (67) Milner and Brierly, op. cit.; p. 245; Age (Melbourne) 21 March 1868; Advocate, 5 July 1919.
- (68) Milner and Brierly, op. cit., p. 246.

wounding of two men. One conclusion reached by Mark Lyons in regard to the growth of sectarianism in New South Wales is that the Orange institution was in itself insignificant - 'a refuge for a few hundred nostalgic, socially frustrated, largely Ulster-born Protestants' - but that it had the effect of causing Irish Catholics to confirm 'their mistaken belief in the similarity between colonial and Irish society'⁶⁹. It would appear, however, that an obvious legal bias in favour of Protestant ultra-loyalty, in Victoria at least, might have given some Irish nationalists good reason to suspect that the interests and prejudice of the Protestant ruling class in Britain and Australia had much in common.

The administration of justice aside, there were other sound reasons for discerning a degree of similarity between colonial and Irish society in the mid-nineteenth century. As R.J. Schultz points out, forty-nine percent of assisted immigrants who arrived in eastern Australia between 1837 and 1850 were Irish⁷⁰, and in the 1860's the Irish 'flood' was even more pronounced. Over the seven year period 1862-68 inclusive, 14,876 assisted Irish immigrants arrived in New South Wales - 71.6 percent of the total assisted immigrants in that period⁷¹. The proportion of Protestant Irish among them is not certain, but it would have been a considerable minority since twenty-eight percent of all Protestant immigrants who arrived in eastern Australia 1837-1850 had an Irish upbringing⁷². In no small way then, an Irish 'enclave' was established in Australian society, particularly on the outskirts of Sydney and Melbourne and in agricultural and mining districts where the Irish congregated⁷³.

Not surprisingly, this trend alarmed many ultra-loyal colonists who feared that British culture and dominance might ultimately be swamped by Irish influence. In 1841 when the Irish portion of immigrants arriving in New South Wales touched seventy percent, Reverend John Dunmore Lang exclaimed

(69) Lyons, op. cit., p. 64.

(70) 'Immigration into Eastern Australia, 1788-1851', Historical Studies, Vol. 14, No. 54, April 1970, pp. 279-80.

(71) Advocate, 30 October 1869.

(72) R.J. Schultz, 'The Free Settlers of N.S.W., 1837-50', Ph.D. thesis, ANU, 1971, pp. 314, 374.

(73) Anthony Trollope refers to the Irish 'quarter' in Melbourne in his travelogue, Australia and New Zealand (2 vols, London, 1873, Vol. 1, pp. 385-6). See also Oliver MacDonagh, 'The Irish in Victoria, 1851-91', ANUJ, Nos. 10 and 11, 1973-74, pp. 26-39; and Lyons, op. cit., pp. 404-5.

that civilisation in the antipodes was in danger of being transformed into a 'Province of Popedom'; while the Sydney Morning Herald pronounced gravely that the day was not far off when the plains of the colony would be inundated with Romanists⁷⁴. That such fears and prejudice were continually revived by loyal Protestant emigrants arriving in Australia, is vividly clear in a comment one made en route to Victoria in 1861:

The Papists had what they called prayers in the steerage as usual this morning and were hardly off their knees till they had a hard box among themselves - a most infernal lot of Blackguards are the dirty Irish Papists. Never had such an opportunity of judging⁷⁵.

Attitudes such as this, deeply ingrained as they were, died slowly in the Australian colonies.

Prince Alfred's royal tour was an opportunity for loyalists of all nationalities to celebrate the glory of British civilisation in the antipodes with all the splendour that pomp and pageantry could muster. South Australia, the first colony to receive the Prince, set the pace with a thoroughly organized display that overlooked no section of the community. Adelaide's welcome included even the inmates of the gaol-stockade, destitute asylum and lunatic asylum, Milner and Brierly observed, the lunatics being given a picnic in the paddock behind the asylum where they enjoyed themselves heartily⁷⁶. From Adelaide Alfred headed inland on a hunting expedition, during which four hundred Aborigines at Point Macleay mission, on the shore of Lake Alexandrina, were given their opportunity to express gratitude for the benefits of British enlightenment:

(They) were drawn up on the shore in two lines...and gave three tremendous cheers as he walked through their ranks. One of them bore a union jack, another a banner with the words 'Point Macleay' and 'Welcome to Our Country'; another stood at the top of the avenue with a red, white and blue flag, bearing the inscription 'Goolwa blackfellow big one glad see im Queen picaninny'.

(74) Clark, op. cit., p. 187.

(75) Cited Gregory Tobin, 'The Sea-Divided Gael: A Study of the Irish Home Rule Movement in Victoria and New South Wales, 1880-1916', M.A. thesis, ANU, 1969, p. 17, n. 2.

(76) Milner and Brierly, op. cit., p. 170.

Afterwards, as an introduction to a corroboree, one native read a prepared speech which assured the Prince:

...we do not wish you to think that we are wild blacks...
Every Sunday more than fifty of us meet together to pray to
the same God and hear the same Jesus as your Royal Highness
does. Some have given up native customs and become real christians,
and many others are learning the way. Many of us get an honest
living by working like the white people⁷⁷.

At a royal levee in Melbourne, one unusual deputation was a group of Chinese in full oriental costume, who begged the Prince to convey their devotion: 'to the great Queen whose power excels that of all earthly monarchs, whose virtues illuminate the world, and whose happiness consists in the happiness of her people..(among) whose subjects it was their pride to be accounted'⁷⁸. Mercantile loyalists demonstrated their fealty at the Prince's last official function in Victoria, the laying of a foundation stone for a new dock at Williamstown on 4 January 1868. The trowel used by the Prince, and afterwards presented to him, was of solid gold, over three pounds in weight, with a cluster of diamonds and rubies set in its handle⁷⁸.

In view of events in Ireland, elaborate displays of homage to the British Crown would have been most galling to radically nationalist Irish colonists. Earlier indications of this were evident in Sydney for example, when a proposal to petition the Queen to grant Irish independence was put to an INL meeting in August 1866. Words in the motion to the effect that 'her Majesty had always given her gracious consideration to the grievances of Ireland' aroused heated debate, and were finally struck out when a majority supported the view of one speaker that the Queen had 'never troubled her royal brains about Ireland'⁸⁰. Ever watchful, the Sydney Morning Herald praised the meeting's minority who, it claimed, had tried to demonstrate their loyalty only to be out-voted by a disaffected majority⁸¹. In reply, the Freeman's Journal stated plainly the exact position of radical Irish opinion in the colony in regard to the Queen:

....we must say that...Irishmen can deny that Queen Victoria ever displayed a special interest in the condition, or ever initiated or encouraged any measures promoting the prosperity of

(77) ibid., p. 177.

(78) ibid., p. 242.

(79) ibid., pp. 287-8.

(80) Freeman's Journal, 11 August 1866.

(81) ibid.

their country. They can do and will do this even at the risk of being denounced as disloyal⁸².

Throughout 1867, the issue of Irish nationality became increasingly sensitive as news reached the colonies that Fenians had risen in Ireland and were skirmishing against British authority even in England. The February home mails brought news that a brief Fenian rising in County Kerry had been put down, and that a Fenian plan to seize a large stock of arms from Chester Castle, near Liverpool, involving more than a thousand rebels, had been frustrated only hours before it was due to proceed⁸³. The March news conveyed that a widespread Fenian rising had broken out in Dublin, Clare, Cork, Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford; police barracks and coastguard stations had been attacked, and communications cut, but the rebels had been dispersed by Irish constabulary and British troops with comparatively small loss of life on either side⁸⁴. Reports that Irish-Americans had helped lead the rising, were substantiated by news that a Fenian privateer had been sighted off the Waterford coast in June, and that thirty civil-war veterans who landed from it had been arrested⁸⁵.

The September mail carried the most startling news of all: that in Manchester, in broad daylight, Fenians had succeeded in releasing two of their Irish-American leaders, Colonel Kelly and Captain Deasy, from a police van conveying them to custody. The unarmed police escort had surrendered but a police sergeant named Brett, who was locked inside with the keys, had been fatally injured by a shot fired into the van - whether at Brett, or at the rear-door lock, was never clearly established⁸⁶. In January 1868 it was learned that five Fenians arrested after the incident had been sentenced to death. Two were later reprieved but the others, Allen, Larkin and O'Brien, all of whom had made defiant Fenian speeches from the dock, were publicly executed on 23 November 1867, despite urgent appeals for clemency and dark threats of Fenian retribution⁸⁷. It was not until Brett's death

(82) *ibid.*

(83) *Freeman's Journal*, 27 April, 4 May 1867; *Ballarat Star*, 15 April 1867; *Perth Gazette*, 19 April 1867.

(84) *Freeman's Journal*, 4, 18 May, 8 June, 6 July 1867; *Ballarat Star*, 11, 13 May 1867; *Perth Gazette*, 17 May 1867.

(85) *Cork Examiner*, 15 June 1867, reprinted in *Freeman's Journal*, 17 August 1867.

(86) *Freeman's Journal*, 23 November 1867; *Perth Gazette*, 15 November 1867.

(87) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 January 1868; *Age*, 13 January 1868; *Perth Gazette*, 17 January 1868.

that British public opinion as a whole began to take the Fenian threat seriously: and it was not until the Manchester executions that anti-British feeling, even among moderate Irish nationalists, became widespread. A detailed report written by an Irish correspondent for the Freeman's Journal concluded:

Thus have died these martyrs to British rule and injustice, guiltless alike of murder or treason, and let us hope that an Almighty and just God will look with pity on the unhappy country for which they gave their lives - and may a just, full and bitter retribution follow this act of oppression and tyranny⁸⁸.

What made the impact of the Manchester incident all the more pronounced was the fact that it was closely followed by a second Fenian foray in England. News reached Australia in February 1868 that Fenians in London had made a startling attempt to rescue a comrade from Clerkenwell prison. On this occasion the mission failed, but a massive explosion destroyed the prison wall, damaged surrounding houses, killed twelve Londoners and maimed another thirty, including women and children⁸⁹. A public outcry in England, denouncing Fenians as deranged monsters capable of terrible atrocities, reverberated in the colonies: 'Fenianism must now be put down whatever the cost', proclaimed the Ballarat Star,... 'the worst passions of the British people are fast being aroused by the foolish and wicked acts of those who pass for patriots'⁹⁰.

The attempted raid on Chester Castle, the Manchester incident, and now Clerkenwell, convinced most British loyalists at home and abroad that Fenianism had a phoenix-like quality that constituted a chronically serious threat, not only as before in Canada and Ireland, but now in England or in any other part of the Empire it might choose to attack. A wider English public shaken from complacency towards Ireland, struggled to understand Fenianism, and began to fear it: 'Up to this time there has been no clear definition of what Fenianism means'. the Fremantle Herald's English correspondent informed colonists, 'What are its principles - its aims?

(88) Freeman's Journal, 8 February 1868.

(89) Ballarat Star, 13 February 1868.

(90) ibid.

Without unity of purpose, congruity of religious feeling, or homogeneity of races, its leaders seem bent only on destruction of life and property'⁹¹.

Such reports show the extent of British ignorance in regard to the Irish national question. It seemed inconceivable to the average English mind that a revolutionary Irish minority would defy the dictates of the ~~Irish~~ Catholic Church and try to rise against British rule when the odds of success were so remote. To the average Irish mind however, there was no doubt as to the nature and precise object of the Fenian cause. As the Melbourne Advocate (Victoria's counterpart of the Freeman's Journal) contended in its first issue in February 1868, England had only reaped what it had sown: 'Rash and driftless as Fenianism is, it must be credited with having awakened statesmen to the truth that a people cannot be misgoverned with impunity'⁹².

As predicted by liberal-minded opinion in Britain and Ireland, the Manchester executions added three more martyrs to the Irish national cause. On 1 December 1867, the Manchester Irish community organized a funeral procession attended by thousands despite heavy rain⁹³. But when notice was given that similar demonstrations were planned for Liverpool, Leeds and Glasgow, prompt action was taken by the British Government to prevent them from being held⁹⁴. And since there remained a possibility that similar processions might be organized in the colonies, the Secretary of State for the Colonies informed Australian governors that it was desirable 'in view of recent circumstances' to incorporate the Treason Felony Act - in operation in the United Kingdom since 1848 - in colonial legislation: 'This Act has been... found to work well', the Duke of Buckingham advised on 11 December 1867, 'and I am anxious that enactments similar to that Act should be passed by the several legislatures of Her Majesty's colonial Possessions'⁹⁵. As we shall see in the next chapter, the first colony to adopt the Act was New South Wales, in March 1868. Western Australia followed suit in August⁹⁶, but the

(91) 15 February 1868.

(92) 1 February 1868.

(93) Ballarat Star, 13 February 1868.

(94) ibid.

(95) Circular despatch, Colonial Office Despatches, 4-1356, NSWAO.

(96) Governor Hampton, despatch to Buckingham, 11 August 1868, CO 18-159, PRO 1658, AJCP.

Victorian Government, after initial approval⁹⁷, quietly shelved the legislation after witnessing the furore aroused by its enactment in New South Wales.

Impressionable colonists throughout Australia were fast becoming convinced that sooner or later the antipodes would suffer a Fenian raid. In January a rumour swept Sydney about a steamer being ordered from Adelaide to intercept a Fenian warship en route to Western Australia⁹⁸. If it seemed alarmist to many, the rumour nevertheless gained credibility when the British naval base at Sydney was alerted, and one of its warships, H.M.S. Brisk, a corvette armed with fourteen broadside guns and carrying nearly two hundred men, hurriedly set sail for Western Australia on 20 January⁹⁹. The vessel had, in fact, been despatched in response to an urgent request for assistance against a Fenian threat in that colony, as will be later discussed¹⁰⁰. Other rumours about Fenian activity caused the Governor of New South Wales, Earl Belmore, to comment in a home despatch: 'I am told there are rumours of a spirit of Fenianism abroad, particularly in the Country districts...(but) have seen no occasion for alarm at present...I think the respectable majority in the Colony are to be depended on for loyalty'¹⁰¹. The same rumours concerned the government, prompting Henry Parkes, Colonial Secretary and Minister of Police, to urge the Inspector General of Police, John McLerie, to try to establish their substance, using if necessary 500 special constables he requested for the task¹⁰². No Fenians were found; but as an added precaution prior to the

- (97) Attorney General George Higinbotham advised the Victorian Chief Secretary; 'it is desirable that the Act...should be adopted in the Colony of Victoria - I shall be glad to introduce a Bill for that purpose as soon as the business of legislation can be resumed' (Memo, 11 March 1868, 'Fenianism 1868-9', CSO Supplementary Police Box 10, VPRO).
- (98) Dr. Joseph Colville's evidence, transcript of Henry O'Farrell's trial, March 1868, The Late Attempt to Assassinate H.R.H. Prince Alfred, pamphlet, Sydney, April 1868, p. 40.
- (99) Perth Gazette, 7 February 1868; Fremantle Herald, 8 February 1868.
- (100) See Ch. 4, pp. 116-9.
- (101) Belmore to Adderley, 29 February 1868, Belmore Papers, 1862-72, A 2542-2, ML.
- (102) McLerie to Parkes, 10 August 1868, 'Papers related to the attempt to assassinate H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh', Legislative Assembly of N.S.W., Votes and Proceedings 1868-9, Vol. 1, p. 729.

Prince's arrival, a hundred men of the 50th Regiment were stationed at Hyde Park in a large temporary pavilion¹⁰³. After Melbourne's experience at Protestant Hall, the government's main concern was not that the Prince's life was in danger, but that violence might occur between Orangemen and Irish Catholics, particularly if the former attempted to march in honour of the Prince. Archdeacon McEncroe shared this concern; and cautioned the police to prevent badges or colours being displayed, or other acts that would tend to excite hostile feelings among Irish Catholics¹⁰⁴.

Melbourne responded to the Fenian warship rumour by adopting a virtual state of seige. A gunboat was positioned in Port Phillip Bay, the military placed at strategic points, and the volunteers put on full alert¹⁰⁵. The Victorian police meanwhile, were covertly investigating rumours that some local Fenians had been sighted drilling at Keilor, about eleven miles west of Melbourne, and also at the Castlemaine goldfield. From Keilor, a plain clothes detective named O'Callaghan reported that about two-thirds of the local population were Irish, 'principally of the lower class', and that judging from those he spoke to, 'all expressed themselves in favour of Fenianism as far as assisting them in Ireland went but did not seem to think of having a society here for any other purpose'¹⁰⁶. The most radical individual he met, O'Callaghan added, was the local schoolmaster, Mr. Savage, about whom he surmised: 'if a Fenian society existed in Keilor this man would be one of the prime movers in it'¹⁰⁷. From Castlemaine, Detective Rourke returned a similar report¹⁰⁸. On the basis of these and other investigations in Melbourne, Police Superintendent C.H. Nicholson assured his superiors that although Fenian sympathy existed, there appeared to be no threat from it at present. He concluded:

Among the poorer and most ignorant of the Irish Roman Catholics in Victoria a feeling of sympathy with the Fenian movement is

(103) Lyons, op. cit., p. 80.

(104) Evidence of Edmund Fosbery, Deputy Inspector General of Police, 'Select Committee on alleged conspiracy for purposes of treason and assassination', Legislative Assembly of N.S.W., Votes and Proceedings 1868-9, Vol. 1, p. 807.

(105) O'Farrell, op. cit., p. 156.

(106) Report, 18 February 1868, 'Fenianism 1868-9', CSO Supplementary Police Box 10, VPRO.

(107) *ibid.*

(108) Report, 2 March 1868, *ibid.*

widespread but it is not believed to have assumed a more dangerous aspect than the collection of subscriptions ostensibly for the support of the families of those convicted in the United Kingdom for which purpose meetings have at various times been held by advert't.

The detectives do not believe that any organization exists in Victoria for getting arms or for drill although during the ensuing St. Pat's day some excitement may be expected¹⁰⁹.

Nicholson's assessment is largely valid, not only for Victoria but for Australia as a whole. A 'spirit' of Fenianism was widespread among the lower orders of Irish colonists particularly, but at this stage it does not appear to have taken any organizational form. One inaccuracy though, is his opinion that Fenian sympathy was confined to the 'most ignorant Irish Roman Catholics'. While it is correct to imply that wealthier Irish Catholics were either opposed to Fenianism or wary of any identification with it that might be branded as disloyalty, and correct too to suggest that sympathy was strongest among poorer Irish Catholics, Nicholson's prejudice is evident when he links radical Irish nationalism with ignorance. 'Ignorant' Irish-Catholics, an expression commonly used by conservative, middle-class British Protestants, reflected deeply-ingrained national, racial, class and religious notions of supremacy shared by this group; though in fact, the operation since 1831 of the national schools system in Ireland, of which there was no English equivalent until 1870, very likely resulted in a wider level of literacy in Ireland than in England in the mid-nineteenth century. And Detective O'Callaghan's opinion, it should be noted, held that the Keilor schoolmaster - poor perhaps, but hardly ignorant, was potentially the town's keenest Fenian. Nor was Fenian sympathy confined exclusively to Irish Catholics, as Nicholson suggests. As we have seen above, David Buchanan publicly and unequivocally announced his sympathy: an action not likely to be taken by a prominent politician if he suspected it would alienate all non-Irish support.

What, then, was the nature of social tension caused by Fenian influences in Australia between 1865 and 1868? Was it, as Mark Lyons suggests, one aspect of a sectarian conflict in which Catholics were very largely responsible for bringing hostility upon themselves?¹¹⁰ To begin

(109) Report, 9 March 1868, *ibid.*

(110) Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. VIII.

with, discussion is dependent on what is meant by sectarianism. Usually it is associated with narrow-minded religious conflict; a sect being a bigoted, strongly prejudiced group intent on advancing its particular cause beyond fair and reasonable bounds generally accepted by the community of which it is a part. Within this broad context, Lyons identifies twin Protestant and Catholic 'sub-cultures' in New South Wales and traces in both the development of extremist or radical wings, the behaviour of which is supposed to have weakened liberal-minded centre ground and polarised colonial society in the 1860's and 1870's¹¹¹. This is a neat, even handed thesis, but in relation to Fenian influences it has limitations. As we have seen, radical Irish nationalists were opposed to British rule in Ireland and to the Irish Protestant ascendancy which supported it, but they were not opposed to Protestants or Protestantism as such. In their view, and in the Fenian view, any Irish Protestant who believed in his country's independence was a 'good patriot' in the mould of Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, John Mitchel or other such prominent Protestant nationalists. There were, as we have seen, British and Australian Protestants who sympathised with pre-Fenian Irish nationalism - the Field brothers who assisted Mitchel's escape for example; there were at least some Protestants in the Fenian movement itself¹¹²; and there were Australian Protestants who sympathised with Fenianism. Fenians and their sympathisers were not attempting to advance Catholicism: quite the contrary, they were very often in conflict with it. The opposition of Bishop Moriarty to the 1867 rising, for example: '..eternity is not long enough nor hell hot enough to punish such miscreants'¹¹³ was widely reported and long remembered by Irish nationalists. Very few historians would in fact argue that Fenianism was anything other than a non-sectarian, revolutionary nationalist movement.

Can it be suggested therefore, that Australian Fenian sympathisers behaved in a sectarian manner? When Mark Lyons contends that the fund to assist the families of Fenian prisoners was a sectarian organization¹¹⁴, or that Richard O'Sullivan's radical nationalism amounted to a sectarian outlook¹¹⁵, his interpretation is obviously influenced by criticism both

(111) *ibid.*, *passim*.

(112) See Ch. 4, p.

(113) Moriarty quoted, Freeman's Journal (Sydney), 15 April, 20 April 1867.

(114) Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

(115) *ibid.*, pp. 24, 50-1.

received from conservative Irish Catholics and conservative newspapers such as the Sydney Morning Herald. In Lyons' view, the appearance of such criticism represented an assertion of liberal-minded opinion against Irish-Catholic nationalist prejudice. But in these terms, Australian colonists could only be non-sectarian if they refrained completely from any overt expression of sympathy for Irish independence and gave instead every indication that they were loyal to the British throne and to its lawful authority in Ireland. Most Irish nationalists in Australia, and many non-Irish colonists who had empathy with them, were not prepared to conform to such restraints. At the risk of being branded 'disloyal' or 'sectarian', they reserved the right to protest against what they considered to be an unjust British suppression of Ireland's right to national self-determination. In short, what Fenian sympathisers in Australia had in common, irrespective of whether they were Irish, English, Scots, Australian, Catholic or Protestant by birth, was not sectarian bigotry but radical democratic sentiment.

Colonial Orangemen, on the other hand, were part of an anti-nationalist Irish movement dependent on the perpetuation of British rule in Ireland. With the characteristic insecurity of an embattled minority, they relied on an anti-Catholic ideology that looked back to William III to give legitimacy to their position in Ireland. The Orange institution exploited and encouraged exclusively Protestant passions to gain support for its implacable opposition to Irish separatism, because it feared that Irish independence would clear the way for a Catholic tyranny involving persecution of Protestant loyalists and the confiscation of their property. As we have seen, colonial Orangemen in pursuit of their cause attracted Irish nationalist hostility, and occasionally resorted to arms to keep their position secure. As Lyons points out, Orange sectarianism was for the most part condemned by liberal-minded Catholics and Protestants; but in regard to the Protestant Hall incident, colonial justice was remarkably lenient to Orange violence, and the Victorian press remarkably quiet about the case. It is also most doubtful that any Irish nationalists would have been acquitted had they wounded two men and killed a Protestant boy.

Social tension arising from Fenian influences in Australia between 1865 and 1868 is therefore best explained not in terms of sectarian conflict, but as a manifestation of a centuries-old culture clash related to Irish nationality and involving racial, religious, class, and economic factors. A

great many poorer Irish-Catholic colonists, and those who had empathy with them, appear to have readily identified with the Fenian cause, though not always with its methods. Sympathy is also evident to a greater or lesser extent among some Catholic clergy and some middle-class colonists, Irish and non-Irish, such as Richard O'Sullivan and David Buchanan. Many wealthier Irish colonists however, either disapproved of Fenianism entirely or else suppressed private sympathy in the interest of their social position in a predominantly British and Protestant society. At the extremity of antipathy was a minority of Orangemen and other ultra-conservative loyalists who considered themselves champions of British imperialism. A sharp edge to the tension between these two groups arose from a simultaneous impact of three influences: first, the royal tour of Prince Alfred; secondly, the arrival of news about Fenian activity overseas, particularly some startling incidents in England; and thirdly, a circulation of rumours that Australia, as part of the Empire, was no more immune to Fenian violence than England or Canada.



ERIN'S LITTLE DIFFICULTY.

BRITANNIA. "YES, MY DEAR! THAT'S THE SORT OF DRILLING TO DO HIM MOST GOOD!"

FENIANISM AS A MINOR ANTI-BRITISH THREAT, SEPTEMBER 1865



THE FENIAN-PEST.

HIBERNIA. "O MY DEAR SISTER, WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH THESE TROUBLESOME PEOPLE!"
BRITANNIA. "TRY ISOLATION FIRST, MY DEAR, AND THEN——"

FENIANISM AS A MORE SERIOUS ANTI-BRITISH THREAT, MARCH 1866



NEWS BY THE PANAMA MAIL.
The Cossacks fraternise with the Fenians.

ANTI-FENIAN REPORTING IN AUSTRALIA, SEPTEMBER 1867

AN ODE

TO

THE IRISH PATRIOTS,

WHO WERE EXECUTED AT MANCHESTER, NOVEMBER 23, 1867.

ALLEN'S SPEECH.

WILLIAM PHILIP ALLEN was a native of Bandon, in the county of Cork. He was twenty years of age; and stood five feet six inches in height; was a joiner, by trade. When about to receive his sentence he said, boldly and firmly:—

"No man in this court regrets the death of Sergeant Brett more than I do; and I positively say in the presence of the

My theme is of the brave, the bold,
Old Ireland to regain,

Upon the scaffold slain!

Oh! never sun so darkly set
As on that fatal day

Those gallant heroes nobly met
Their death, amidst great array.

A patriot's life was deemed too good
By stern, relentless foes,

So with felon's doom they mocked
Brave hearts that now repose.

But see with what unflinching steps
They trod the weary way,

And smiled beneath the scaffold tree
As on a bright day.

GOULD'S SPEECH.

WILLIAM GOULD, a native of Cork, was thirty years of age; and stood five feet nine and a half inches high. He said:—

"Ireland—with its beautiful scenery, its delightful climate, its rich and productive lands—is capable of supporting more than treble its present population in ease and comfort. Yet no man, except a paid official of the British Government, can say there is a shadow of liberty—that there

ODE.



THE STATE OF THE CASE.

Rabid Fenian.—"Now's your time—JOIN US—TAKE THE OATH AND BE A FANIAN!"
Well-to-do Irishman.—"Why should I? HERE I HAVE ME BIT OF LAND, ME HOME, WIFE, AND CHILDHER; SHALL I RAISE MY HAND AGAINST A GOVERNMENT UNDER WHICH I HAVE PROSPERED SO WELL?—NOT IF I KNOW IT."

ANTI-FENIAN ASSESSMENT OF IRISH-AUSTRALIAN LOYALTY, MARCH 1868