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THE IRISH IN COUNTY DURHAM AND NEWCASTLE  
c.1840-1880

Roger James Cooter

Submitted for the M.A.  
Degree in the University  
of Durham, 21 July, 1972

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis explores the largely neglected Irish population of County Durham and Newcastle in the period of their heaviest immigration. After noting the extent of the Irish community an examination is made of their social conditions, their influence upon the Catholic Church, the reaction to their Catholicism from the host community, their place within the labour force of the north east and, finally, their political emergence. It is found that while the Irish themselves were scarcely different from their countrymen elsewhere in England after 1840, the place they assumed within the larger society was considerably more propitious relative to those other regions of Irish settlement.

It is argued that the area's peculiar social, religious, economic and political composition in the period was responsible for the unique position of the Irish—that these factors, collectively, engendered a high degree of toleration. The conclusion is drawn that the scarcity of 19th-century material on the Irish in the north east and, hence, their historical neglect is attributable to the minimal amount of hostility they provoked among the indigenous population.

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## Preface

Innocuous beginnings have a way of progressing into rather unexpected ends. This study unpretentiously set out to chart the record of the Irish in the north east of England as a further chapter in the general history of the Irish immigrants in 19th-century England. Considering that the Victorian history of the north east is largely unwritten and that the place or influence of the area's Irish had been neglected,<sup>1</sup> the project seemed a promising and worthwhile endeavour in a fairly virgin field.

A cursory survey of north-eastern material—largely from the annals of the miners' unions—convinced me that the Irish had definitely been of some importance in the area and that their role had probably been overlooked in the rush to explore the greater Victorian themes in northern, if not north-eastern history. The first task, therefore, was to provide a statistical backdrop: to reveal the extent of the Irish population and to compare this to Irish populations elsewhere in England. This was a tedious arithmetic job with precedents more in demography than in social history. The results, however, clearly substantiated that the Irish had indeed composed a numerically significant substratum of the society and that the north east was roughly the fourth most important area in England for Irish immigration. The study thus undertook to delineate the life and livelihood of these immigrants and to assess their impact on the host population.

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1. J.H. Treble's The Place of the Irish Catholics in the Social Life of the North of England, 1829-51, unpublished Ph.D Thesis, (Leeds, 1969), includes only a minimal amount of information on the north east. Though Dr. Treble covers a very large area containing many Irish communities, his cursory coverage of the north east is axiomatic of the great majority of works in which the 'north of England' generally excludes the north east.

The first part of this job was not easy. Government Blue Books which contain myriad insights on other Irish centres have very little information on the north east. General histories usually have little to say of the Irish immigrants, less to say on the north east and nothing at all to say on the Irish in the north east. The same is true for most works on English Catholicism. Randomly combing the pages of the local press for a forty-year period and finding few articles on the Irish was eminently frustrating and, at first, a great disappointment. Current work on the labour history of the north east, while reinforcing the belief that the Irish were an important sector of the workforce, was not very helpful in leading to specific areas of Irish/<sup>involvement,</sup> other than the well-known use of Irish 'blacklegs' in the miners' strike of 1844. Some valuable information in the Londonderry Papers on the strike of '44 as well as on the Irish Catholics in Seaham Harbour was an encouraging find. And the Catholic Tablet, which intermittently had a correspondent in Newcastle, also proffered a good deal of information. Two collections of Catholic papers at Ushaw College and Seminary,<sup>1</sup> a collection of cuttings and miscellany at the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers,<sup>2</sup> some of the records of the Durham Miners' Association and several volumes of transcriptions available in the Catholic Diocesan Archives, eventually brought together enough information to make the study

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1. Crowe Collection of Pastorals, Circulars and Miscellanea; Ushaw Collection of Pastorals and Circulars of the Vicars Apostolic and Bishops of the Northern Division and Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.
  2. J.G. Bell Collection.

feasible. From these and many lesser sources—none of which dealt exclusively with the Irish in the north east<sup>1</sup>—it was possible to compose something of a historical collag , the value of the scattered details and fragmentary items emerging only when they had been pieced together.

The second aspect of the study, dealing with the relations between the Irish and the larger society, proved to be considerably more enigmatic. There was a great temptation to promote the Irish, to grind a rather juvenile axe to the effect that the importance of the Irish in the area had been foolishly overlooked. Quite unconsciously I began to give them a significance in the eyes of society that was increasingly divorced from reality. But at the bottom of the morass of collected details lay the uncomfortable truth that the Irish were seldom an issue of any local importance. A wide reading of contemporary literature, history, private letters and newspapers verifies that the area's Irish were almost an invisible minority.

While investigators of other Irish communities in England agree that the Victorians generally had little awareness and even less perception of the Irish about them, the lack of commentary in the north east seemed to have greater implications. On the rare occasions when the Irish were mentioned, the comments were singularly lacking in the conventional extremes of racial and religious bigotry. Evidence of the Irish serving as scapegoats for social or economic ills, were almost non-existent.

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1. A partial exception is Felix Lavery ed., Irish Heroes in the War (London, 1917) which contains some undocumented background on the Tyneside Irish.

The further the research went, the greater became the suspicion that the Irish in the north east bore a relation to the non-Irish population that was quite different from that which is recorded in other areas of England. The conclusion was, and it is the interpretive basis of this paper, that the seemingly unobtrusive nature of the Irish was due to the unique social, religious, economic and political fabric of the north east.

In a sense this is a negative and relative thesis explaining why the Irish were seldom a subject of public discussion; why the Irish as Catholics suffered less for their religion; why the Irish as labourers inspired little antagonism; and why the Irish as Nationalists provoked only minimal hostility. But it is positive as well. Before the degree of reaction could be analysed it was necessary to fully depict the role and/or place of the Irish. The thesis thus weaves throughout the paper, being explicit at some points and implicit at others. But it has not been my intention to use the interpretation as a Procrustian Table for every piece of evidence. In aiming at the generalisation, I have felt no compunction in including contradictory evidence where such would enlarge upon the general conditions of the Irish or upon their relation to the rest of society.

In concentrating on County Durham and Newcastle rather than on the whole of the north east or on one narrower location, my purpose has been two-fold. First, the area is small enough that it has been possible to concentrate on specific incidents in considerable detail. At the same time, the area contains enough of the geographic region of the north east that broader

generalisations have been possible. The scarcity of Irish in the interior of Northumberland forced the abandonment of including the whole of that county. Certain towns to the west and east of Newcastle on the north bank of the Tyne had sizeable Irish populations, as did Middlesbrough across the River Tees in Yorkshire. My only alibi for not dealing with these places is that of space in a thesis already overlong.

The second purpose in dealing with this specific locality was to bring to light the inherent differences between the Irish in an urban situation and those rurally situated. Irish immigration in England after 1840 has been viewed, quite rightly, as mainly an urban phenomenon. The Irish quarter in Newcastle provides a good illustration of these urban conditions. Durham,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, had a considerable Irish population scattered about the various iron works and, to a lesser extent, in the colliery villages. In this respect the area had certain parallels with rural Wales. While it may be argued that company towns like Consett (built around the iron works) were nothing less than small urban environments superimposed on rural landscapes, the position of the Irish in these places was significantly different from that of the Irish in the urban ghetto. The stereotyped 'paddy' which has emerged from Henry Mayhew's or General Booth's excursions in London requires an amount of revision when set next to these 'rural' Irish. The Catholic Church in attempting to deal with these scattered groups of Irish also faced problems dissimilar from those it encountered

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1. Throughout this paper Durham refers to the County; the City of Durham will be clearly indicated where such is intended.

in the cities. In dealing with Durham, then, I have tended to avoid the major centres and concentrated more on the outlying communities, though the degree of concentration has had to be decided by the availability of source material.

It is, of course, impossible to deal with an area like Durham and Newcastle without being to a large degree parochial. Asa Briggs has written that "outward-looking rather than inward-looking Northern history is what is most needed, the kind of history which sets out to compare."<sup>1</sup> While this study did not "set out" to compare, it became fundamentally comparative. For in postulating that the north east had a distinctive identity and that this uniqueness was responsible for the different set of attitudes toward the Irish, the comparative basis is explicit. In most cases the regional peculiarities are obvious enough as to require few comments but in exposing how this regionalism affected the Irish, I have drawn upon many alternative examples. Published sources, dissertations and conference papers on the Irish in London, in Cardiff, Bradford, Salford, Liverpool and Scotland have been liberally augmented by the numerous reports of the Select Committees of Inquiry during the period.

What was initiated as a straightforward study of an immigrant population in an unobserved locality thus burgeoned through the course of research into something a good deal more ambitious. The Irish population of Durham and Newcastle became not only a study in themselves but, in effect, a lens for viewing an entire social spectrum, the view of which must perforce alter many of the more fundamental assumptions of the Victorian attitude to the Irish immigrant.

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1. "Themes in Northern History," Northern History, I (1966), p.4.



Acknowledgements

The persons who in one way or another have given assistance in the course of this research are far too numerous to be all mentioned here. To the librarians, the priests, the archivists and the scholars who gave up a part of their valuable time, I return my sincerest thanks. There are some I cannot spare the embarrassment of not mentioning: Mr. A.J. Heesom for labouring through the rough drafts; to Dr. Doyle of Palace Green Library for establishing many fruitful connections on my behalf; to that most Christian and kindly of librarians, Father Payne of Ushaw; to Mr. Bishop of the Newcastle City Archives; to Mr. J.F. Clarke of Newcastle Polytechnic for his valuable criticism on the Irish in the workforce; to Mr. David Huitson for proof-reading several of the chapters; and to Father W. Vincent Smith whose fount of knowledge on local Catholicism has been most gratefully received. Finally, I must record my deepest appreciation to the woman whose financial, domestic and moral support has made this study not only possible but enjoyable, my wife. Naturally, for the mistakes, the omissions or the shortcomings, I alone am responsible.

Crossgate Moor, Durham  
July, 1972.

R.J.C.

Abbreviations

- B.R.S. British Reformation Society
- D.Adver. Durham County Advertiser
- D.Chron. Durham Chronicle
- D/LO/C Durham Co. Record Office: Londonderry Papers
- J.S.S.L. Journal of the Statistical Society of London
- N.C.A. Newcastle City Archives
- N.C.C. Northern Catholic Calendar
- N.C.L. Lts. Newcastle Central Library: Local Tracts Collection.
- N.Chron. Newcastle Chronicle
- N.Cour. Newcastle Courant
- N.D.Chron. Newcastle Daily Chronicle
- P.P. Parliamentary Papers
- T.M. Tyne Mercury
- T.N.A.P.S.S. Transactions of the National Association for the  
Promotion of the Social Sciences.
- U.C. Ushaw Collection of Letters, Pastorals and Circulars of  
the Vicars Apostolic and Bishops for the Northern Division  
and the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, 1753-1869.

I

The Extent of the Irish Population

"a little Irish blood, with its electric vitality, goes a great way in leavening the mass of other races, and is often apparent, even after many generation".

John Denvir, The Brandons: A Story of Irish Life in England (London, 1903), p.13.



When the Committee on Emigration expressed its fears in 1827 of "the wheat-fed population of Great Britain...[being] supplanted by the potatoe-fed population of Ireland,"<sup>1</sup> the Commissioners were thinking least of all of the north east. The labour-hungry revolution in industry that was well under way in other English centres, had barely touched Durham and Newcastle by that date. Agriculture, mining, some metal industry and the small, localised shipbuilding industry provided little inducement to job-hunting Irishmen. Even by 1837 the area gave forth few rumours of vast opportunities attractive to a mass of unskilled Irish. Sunderland, a town that would later thrive with industry, was so stagnant between 1831 and 1841 that its population actually declined.<sup>2</sup> To the Irish emigrant disembarking at a bustling west-coast port, the journey to the north east seemed an unpromising exercise.

Circumstances were greatly altered, however, when the Victorian tide of progress swept over the area after 1840. Once opened, the flood gates allowed an inflow of capital and labour that was unprecedented elsewhere in England. Particularly through the rapid development of the railways and the harbour facilities, the major coal, iron and shipbuilding industries entered a golden age of expansion and profits. As one Tyneside panegyrist has phrased it,

The labour flowed in and the work flowed out and the North East became just about the richest part of the richest country in the world. If you wanted coal you came to the North East, if you wanted

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1. Third Report From the Select Committee on Emigration From the United Kingdom, 1827, P.P., 1826-27, V, p.231.
  2. Robert Rawlinson, Report to the General Board of Health on the Municipal Borough of Sunderland, (London, 1851), p.33.

engineering goods you came, or if you wanted armaments or chemicals, iron or machinery. And in particular [after 1850], you came if you wanted ships.<sup>1</sup>

The still largely rural north east of 1831 proliferated into an industrial beehive: the once serene landscape became defiled by the slag heaps from collieries and the smoke from iron works. By 1851 the urban population of Durham had already reached 42 percent.<sup>2</sup> Barren moors thus became the victims of 'progress' as industrial-company towns like Tow Law and Consett established themselves in virtually unpopulated areas and forty years later were boasting populations of 3,978 and 7,708 respectively.<sup>3</sup> Another company town, Jarrow, was raised by the investments of Charles Palmer from 3,500 in 1841 to 25,000 in 1881.<sup>4</sup> While the township of Seaham, owned by the Marquis of Londonderry, increased in the single decade 1841-51 from 173 to 729,<sup>5</sup> the port of West Hartlepool in the same decade jumped from 2,079 to 11,736 persons.<sup>6</sup> In the older more established cities there were similar, albeit less dramatic, increases.

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1. David Dougan, The History of North East Shipbuilding (London, 1968), p.63.
  2. Population Census, 1851, Appendix, Table 17, p.cvi.
  3. Kelly's Directory of Durham, 1890, p.419, p.55.
  4. Cited in Ellen Wilkinson, The Town That Was Murdered: the Life Story of Jarrow (London, 1939), pp.71-2.
  5. Whellan's Directory of Durham and Newcastle, 1856, p.640.
  6. Cited in Bernard C. Sharratt, Catholic Church in Hartlepool and West Hartlepool: 1834-1964 (West Hartlepool, 1964), p.27.

Between 1841 and 1881 the population of Durham and Newcastle rose by over 180 percent. Newcastle's percentage

Table 1: Population of Durham and Newcastle, 1841-81<sup>1</sup>

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Newcastle: <sup>2</sup>	49,860	89,126	109,108	128,443	147,359
Co. Durham:	324,284	411,679	508,666	685,058	867,258
	374,144	500,805	617,774	813,501	1,014,617

increase was slightly greater at 190 percent. Nowhere else in England was there such a marked rate of growth, at times even double that of the national rate (1861-71, 26.5 percent, north east; 13.2 percent, national<sup>3</sup>).

As Table 2 reveals, as much as 38 percent (1851) of the booming population were born outside the respective counties of Durham and Northumberland. This was an increase over 1841 of 134 percent. By 1851 the immigrant population for the District of Newcastle had attained the staggering proportion of 67.4 percent.<sup>4</sup> Though the population continued to increase through the ensuing decades, 1851 represents the climax with regard to

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1. Population Census, 1841-81; Kelly's Directory of Newcastle, 1886.
  2. The figures for 1841 and 1851 are those of the District of Newcastle; for 1861 and 1871, the municipal and parliamentary borough; for 1881, the Urban Sanitary District. This last figure is only 2,619 greater than that of the municipal borough as given in Kelly's Directory for 1881.
  3. J.W. House, North Eastern England Population Movements and the Landscape Since the Early 19th Century (Newcastle, 1954), p.3. This is the only comprehensive demographic study of the north east. While invaluable, its uses are restricted by its geographical basis—its figures reflecting regional rather than political boundaries.
  4. The majority of these had simply migrated across the River Tyne from Co. Durham.

immigrants. Thereafter the immigrant population rose by only

Table 2: Immigrant Population<sup>1</sup>

	Newcastle	% of Newc. Pop. Not b. in Northum.	Co.Dur.	% of Dur. Pop. Not b. in Dur.	Total Immgs.	% of Total Pop.
1841	16,622	34.0	65,216	20.0	81,838	21.9
1851	59,819	67.4	132,067	32.5	191,886	38.3
1861	40,935	37.6	164,980	32.4	205,915	33.3
1871	36,149	30.5	236,452	34.4	272,601	33.9
1881	51,304	34.7	279,490	32.1	330,794	32.6

7 percent in 1861, increased itself by 33 percent in 1871 and then declined to a 21 percent increase in 1881. After 1851 the population entered upon the gradual stages to maturity and stability wherein it continued to grow more exclusively of its own volition.<sup>2</sup> By 1861 the assembled population was beginning to furnish a large proportion of youths for the industries,<sup>3</sup> but even in 1881 immigrant supplementation was still required.

Other than those who emigrated from neighbouring English counties, the Irish comprised the largest proportion of the foreign-born. This was true for each intercensal period except

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1. Population Census: Enumeration Abstracts on Place of Birth, 1841: P.P., 1843, XXII, p.223.  
1851: P.P., 1852-3, LXXXVIII, Pt.II, p.303.  
1861: P.P., 1863, LIII, Pt.II, p.485.  
1871: P.P., 1873, LXXI, Pt.I, p.541.  
1881: P.P., 1883, LXXX, p.454.
  2. For a detailed study of the stages of population growth in relation to local coal mining, see, Arthur E. Smailes, "Population Changes in the Colliery Districts of Northumberland and Durham," Geographical J., XCI (Jan. 1938), pp.220-232.
  3. For the whole of the north east, the natural population increase for 1851-61 was 140,995; 1861-71, 175,104; and 1871-81, 252,508. House, op.cit., Table 1, p.56.

1841 when the Scotch outnumbered the Irish in both Durham and Newcastle, and for 1881 in Newcastle only. In both cases the difference was marginal.<sup>1</sup> As with the immigrant population as a whole, the greatest percentage increase of Irish was over

Table 3: Irish-born Population<sup>2</sup>

	Newcastle	% Irish	Co.Durham	% Irish	Total	% of Total Pop.
1841	2,857	5.7	5,407	1.6	8,264	2.2
1851	7,152	7.9	18,501	4.5	25,653	5.1
1861	6,596	6.0	27,719	5.4	34,315	5.5
1871	6,904	5.4	37,515	5.5	44,419	5.5
1881	5,495	3.0	36,794	4.2	42,289	4.1

the decade 1841-51. Comprising only 2.2 percent of the total population of Durham and Newcastle in 1841, the Irish increased their numbers by 209 percent to become 5.1 percent of the total population in 1851. In Newcastle the Irish-born made up 8 percent of its 'cosmopolitan' population.

The potato blight coinciding with the tremendous labour requirements of the north east in the decade is, of course, accountable for such an increase—not only in its effects upon Ireland but upon Scotland as well. For it is evident from the ages of the Scottish children of Irish parents listed in the Enumerators' Manuscripts for 1851 that a good proportion of the Irish immigrants had migrated from Scotland. From the numbers of children listed as having been born in Ireland, however, it

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1. In 1841 only Northumberland and Cumberland had sizeable Scotch populations but, as the Census noted, "even in these two counties they do not rise above 4 per cent on the total numbers enumerated". Census, 1841, p.223.

2. Same sources as Table 2.



is clear that the majority had come almost directly from Ireland to the employment centres of the north east.<sup>1</sup> On Wall Knoll Street in Newcastle, for example, where the Irish and their progeny made up 41.1 percent of the street's population, 60 children or 29 percent of the accountable Irish community were born in Ireland, as compared with 40 children within these families having been born in England or Scotland.<sup>2</sup> Again, an examination of the Ecclesiastical District of Thornley (containing the iron works at Tow Law and Dan's Castle and having an Irish community of 228 or 17 percent of the total population) shows that 40 children were born in Ireland while 36 were born elsewhere.

By 1861 the numbers of Irish-born had risen by an additional 10,000 (a 30 percent increase over 1851) as they composed 16.6 percent of the immigrant population and 5.5 percent of the whole

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1. George Grey, Assistant Overseer for Poor Law in Newcastle, stated that the Irish "mostly land at Whitehaven...[and] so far as I have learned, they make their way directly to Newcastle". Select Committee on Poor Removals, 1855, P.P., 1854-5, XIII, q.425-427, p.31.
  2. Census 1851: Enumerator's Manuscript returns for the parish of All Saints, Newcastle. N.C.L. The total Irish community has been determined by adding to the persons listed as born in Ireland all those children who were still within the family yet not born in Ireland. Non-Irish lodgers and visitors living with Irish families have been excluded. Only the Irish directly on Wall Knoll Street were considered. All 'closes', lanes, alleys and entries were excluded. The numbers of non-Irish were calculated in the same manner.
  3. Census 1851: Enumerator's Manuscript returns for the Ecclesiastical District of Thornley, Parish of Wolsingham, South Durham. Durham County Record Office. Both Wall Knoll and Thornley contained Irish populations throughout the 1840s; thus the ratio of Irish-born to non-Irish-born children is distorted by the number of children born in Durham and Newcastle. For Wall Knoll there were 39 such children, for Thornley, 29.

population. In only three other counties in England and Wales was this last figure to be matched: Cumberland, Lancashire and Cheshire.<sup>1</sup> Maps 1-4 give a rough idea of the relative density and the percentage of Irish-born in the north east for 1841 and 1861. A comparison between maps 2 and 4 clearly shows that the north east came to be about the fourth most important area in England for Irish immigration. This was further confirmed by the figures presented to the Sunderland council in 1867<sup>2</sup> (based on the 1861 statistics) which showed the proportion of Irish to the rest of the population in various major Irish centres to be:

Sunderland, 1:19	Preston, 1:14	Manchester, 1:7
Newcastle, 1:16	Lancashire, 1:10	Liverpool, 1:5
Gateshead, 1:15	Stockport, 1:9	

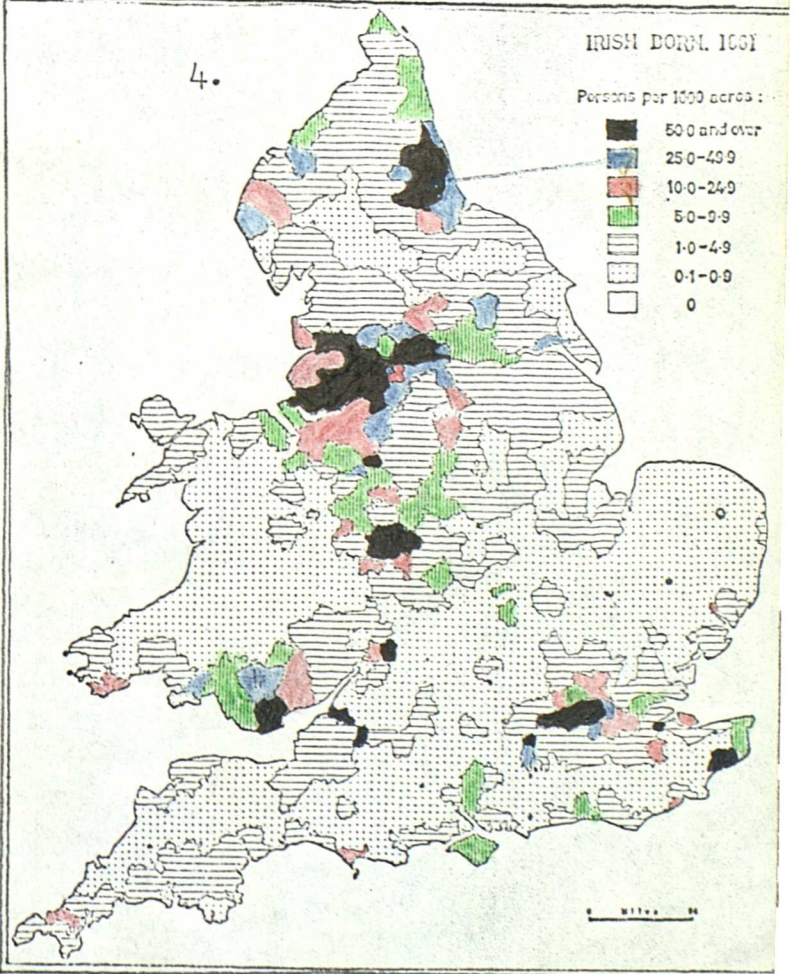
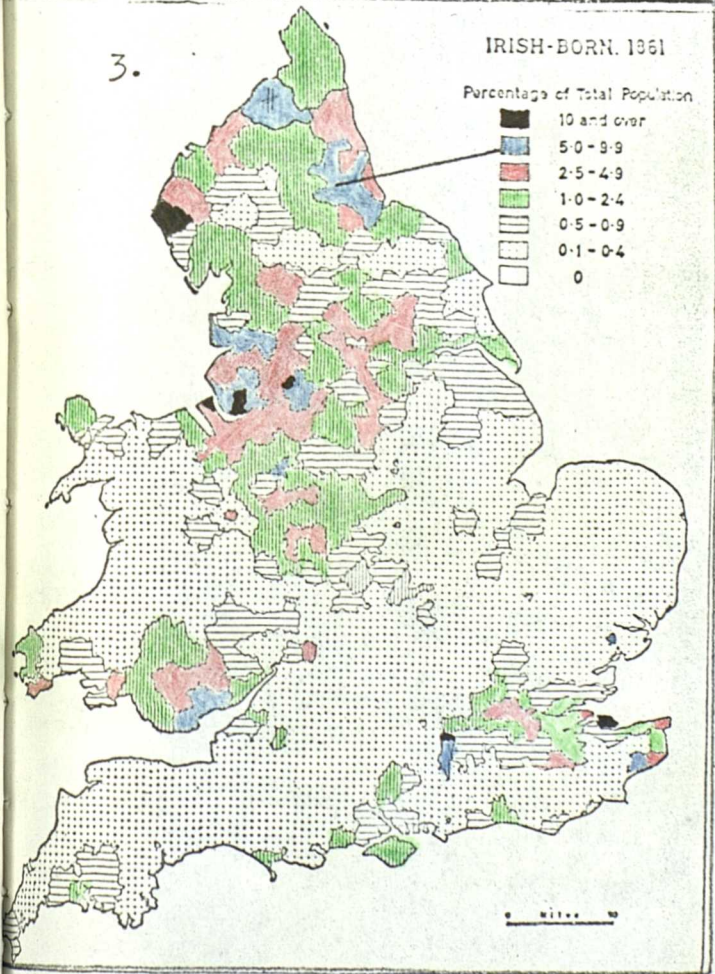
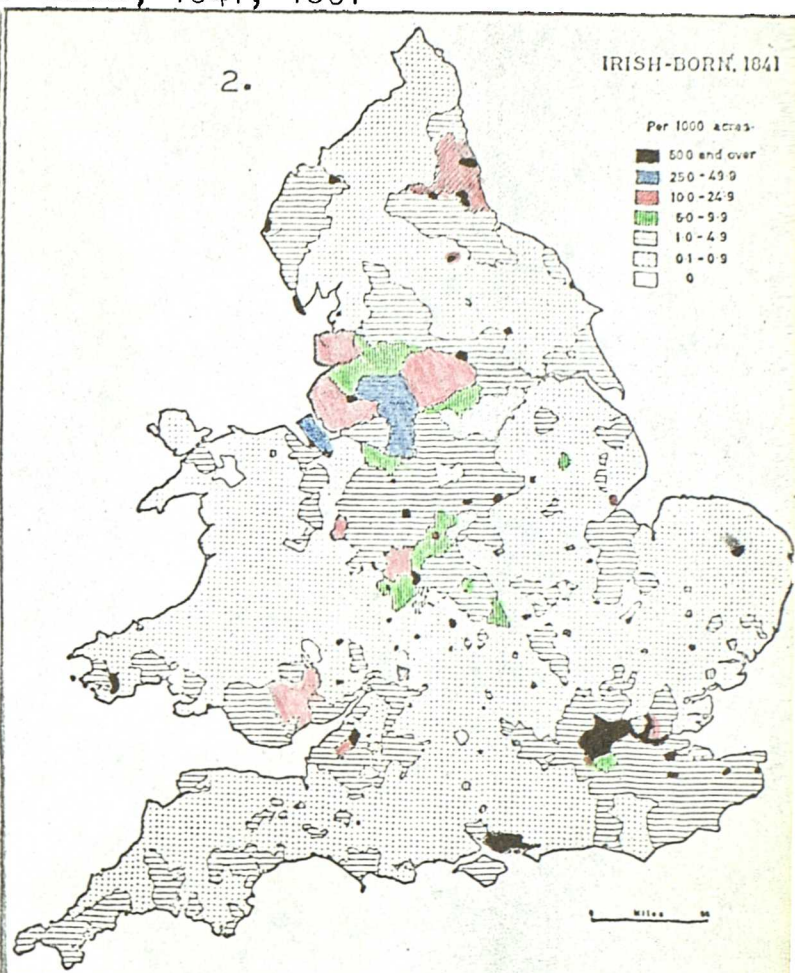
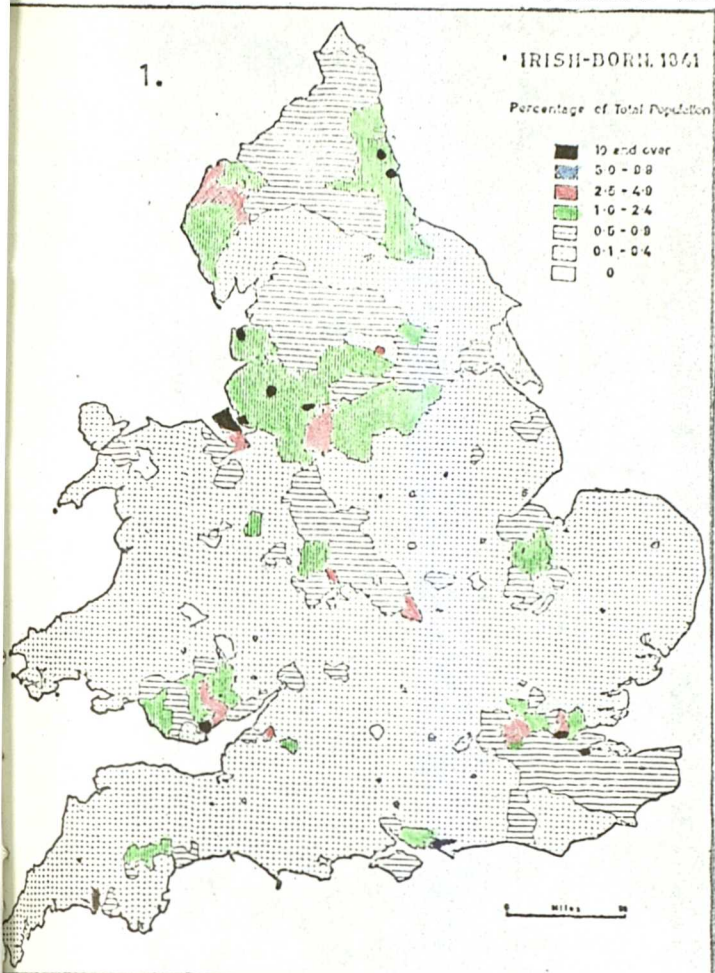
Testimony of the relative strength of the Irish population within a ten-mile radius of Newcastle was also recorded by a 'special correspondent' to the Nation in 1872 who stated that "except in London, Liverpool, and Manchester, there is no such Irish force to be met with in England".<sup>3</sup>

In Co. Durham the Irish-born population were distributed as given in Table 4. Though the reduced amount of information on the Irish-born given in the Census of 1871 and 1881 frustrates any worthwhile attempt to extend the table, the relative distribution exhibited in 1851 and 1861 remained much the same in the following two decades. While the Poor Law District of

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1. John A. Jackson, The Irish in Britain (London, 1963), map, p.12.
  2. N.D.Chron., Oct.10, 1867, p.4.
  3. "Irish in England," Letter XV (Oct.19, 1872), p.662.



PERCENTAGE AND DENSITY OF IRISH-BORN POPULATION OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1841, 1861\*



\* R. Lawton, "Irish Immigration To England and Wales in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," Irish Geography, IV (1959-1963), pp.42-47.



Table 4: Distribution of Irish in Co. Durham, 1851-1861<sup>1</sup>

Poor Law District	1851		1861	
	Irish-born	%	Irish-born	%
Darlington	539	2.5	975	3.8
Stockton	1,868	3.5	3,478	6.1
Auckland	1,222	4.1	3,196	6.3
Teesdale	228	1.2	272	1.3
Weardale	272	1.9	314	1.9
Durham	3,920	7.0	5,746	8.2
Easington	506	2.8	1,325	4.8
Houghton-le-Sp.	1,058	5.2	1,119	5.2
Chester-le-St.	584	2.8	1,172	4.2
Sunderland	4,103	5.8	4,901	5.5
South Shields	1,164	3.3	1,943	4.3
Gateshead	3,028	6.3	4,306	7.2
Hartlepool	n.g.	n.g.	1,184	3.7

Durham appears highest, the majority of these Irish were scattered over the large area of the District and not in the City itself, which in 1871 showed only 5 percent Irish-born. The densest Irish-born area in Co. Durham was in Gateshead, the borough of which still showed 6.7 percent Irish-born in 1871.

Despite the death rate and those who emigrated after 1861, the Irish-born still made up 5.5 percent of the population of Durham and Newcastle in 1871, indicating a considerable immigration for the period. Not surprisingly there was a decrease in the Irish-born population between 1871-81 but they still continued to make up 12.8 percent of all immigrants and 4.1 percent of the total population. As we approach 1881, however, the figures for Irish-born become increasingly misleading as to the

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1. Population Census: Abstracts on Place of Birth, 1851, pp. 280-82; 1861, pp.543-44.

actual extent of the Irish community. As alluded to above, the Wall Knoll and Thornley sample areas already showed in 1851 a sizeable proportion of second generation Irish not included in the Census abstracts. An attempt to rectify this situation must cause us first to examine the extent of the Irish community previous to 1841 and then to approximate its decennial expansion.

From at least the beginning of the century the Irish had been present in Durham and Newcastle though they failed to constitute any significant proportion of the population prior to c.1838. Seasonal migrations of Irish agricultural labourers occurred annually and each year a few more Irishmen remained behind.<sup>1</sup> While this annual tide was of little significance in itself, it did establish connections which developed and attracted larger numbers in the years that followed. The failure of the Irish potato crop in 1821-2 gave impetus to emigration and strengthened the numbers of agricultural labourers seeking employment. Some of these would have ended up in the agricultural north east. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that the decimation of the Irish textile industry in 1825-6 would have contributed many 'hands' to the rural farms and even fewer to the collieries.

Well into the 1830s the relative positioning of the Irish was west of an imaginary line running from Glasgow to London. Though they would constitute nearly 6 percent of Newcastle's

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1. See, B.M. Kerr, "Irish Seasonal Migrations to Great Britain 1800-1838," Irish Historical Studies, III (1942-3), pp. 365-80.

population in 1841, the dearth of Irish in that town ten years before, hardly merited comment. In a letter from the very knowledgeable judge and Whig reformer, James Losh, to Lord Brougham in November 1831, Losh makes the passing reference that the Irish "are not numerous here."<sup>1</sup> Certainly they were not numerous in the established coal pits for, besides the Irish unfamiliarity with that occupation, the colliers at that time still formed inbred and exclusive communities in which strangers were not welcome. The idea that the pitman had to be bred to his work from childhood was popular among both owners and pitmen.<sup>2</sup> In 1831 only 8 Irish children were to be found in the pits of south Durham,<sup>3</sup> a clear indication of the scarcity of Irish adults in the trade. Though on northern railway construction in the 'forties, the Irish made up "perhaps one-half of the navigators,"<sup>4</sup> in the 'thirties they were as resented in this trade as they were in the collieries. The "serious riot [which] took place at Hartlepool, between the Irish and English labourers employed on the railway," in which "the English party searched the town, and drove out every Irishman they could find,"<sup>5</sup>

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1. Nov.9, 1831. Edward Hughes ed., The Diaries and Correspondence of James Losh, II: Diary, 1824-33, Surtees Society, v.174 (1959), (London, 1963), pp.200-1.
  2. William Fordyce, The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham (Newcastle, London, 1857), I, p.183.
  3. Appendix to the First Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring into the Employment and Condition of Children in Mines and Manufactories, Mines, Pt.I: Report by James Mitchell, P.P., 1842, XX, q.201, p.142.
  4. Evidence of Robert Rawlinson before the Select Committee on Railway Labourers, 1846, P.P., 1846, XIII, q.1043, p.501.
  5. Thomas Richmond, Local Records of Stockton-on-Tees and the Neighbourhood (London, 1868), Feb.17, 1833, p.165.

was typical of early railway construction throughout England and was a major reason why some employers were reluctant to hire Irish. The Irish were confined, therefore, to the traditional agricultural roles, to miscellaneous factory jobs and, as often as not, to the self-employed labours of rag-picking, clothes dealing, tinkering, hawking and the handling of junk. Such "crowds of miserable Irish," as Carlyle called them, with "their rags and laughing savagery"<sup>1</sup> could be found hidden in small pockets of destitution primarily within the urban centres.

Throughout the 'thirties the Irish continued to increase their numbers in England and as the immigrant population rose, so too did English concern. The 1841 enumeration of those born in Ireland was one manifestation of this heightened concern. A clearer indication of the reaction was the Commission appointed to enquire into the poor of Ireland in 1836—a Commission which felt a need to include a lengthy appendix on the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain. But 'Appendix G', like its precedents, concentrated on the west coast immigration ports—on Glasgow and Liverpool in particular—and gave no mention to the Irish in Durham or Newcastle.<sup>2</sup> Commissioner G. Cornwall Lewis made no claims to comprehensiveness, however, and fully admitted that

Upon the whole...the general diffusion of the Irish over Scotland and England is more remarkable than their numbers. They are to be found, in greater or less strength, in every manufacturing and commer-

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1. Thomas Carlyle, Chartism 2nd ed. (London, 1842), pp.25-29. Quoted in James E. Handley, The Irish in Modern Scotland (Cork, 1947), p.9.
  2. Report of the Poor Inquiry (Ireland) Commission, Appendix G, "Report of the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain," P.P., 1836, XXXIV, p.427. [Hereafter, 'Appendix G', 1836].

cial town, from Aberdeen, Dundee, and Greenock, to the central counties of England and the metropolis ....Their roaming and restless habits appear to have carried them to every place where there was any prospect of obtaining profitable employment.<sup>1</sup>

The first real signs of these 'restless habits' in the north east were witnessed in the last years of the third decade. This had less to do with expansion in the major industries, which, with the exception of coal, did not get under way until the 'forties, than with the commencement of the 'famine' conditions in Ireland. As more than one Irish historian has pointed out, "the 'hungry forties' began as early as 1838 with the first of five calamitous harvests, both for grain and potatoes. The sheer impossibility of making ends meet in a year of bad potato yields produced a staggering increase in emigration figures."<sup>2</sup> The general effect of this wave of immigration in England was to force the Irish labourers further afield in search of employment. Because of the Poor Law Removal Acts, new immigrants in England were denied parish relief and hence had a freedom of mobility which allowed them to flood into underemployed areas. By this undesigned freedom the Irish could take advantage of employment opportunities from which the majority of unemployed English were restricted by the "operation of the poor laws, by which the unemployed poor has been chained to the soil, and confined within the narrow limits of his own parish."<sup>3</sup> Thus, from the late 'thirties onward increasing numbers of Irish went unopposed into the tertiary chemical, earthenware, and glass industries

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1. 'Appendix G', 1836, p.433.

2. Emil Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (London, 1951), pp.103-4; George O'Brein, The Economic History of Ireland from the Union to the Famine (London, 1921), pp.231-2.

3. 'Appendix G', p.452.



while others found employment in the developing iron works and in the numerous quarries throughout the area. As well, to a limited extent, they made inroads in the coal mines, though primarily in the new pits and then mainly as surface labourers. In 1841 in Bishop Auckland, for example, there were "not less than 400 [Catholic] souls," the result "of the numerous coal mines opened in this neighbourhood, and the establishment of several public works".<sup>1</sup> At the same time "scattered over a wide extent of country" in the Stockton-upon-Tees area, Vicar Apostolic, Mostyn, saw enough Irish Catholics "employed in the coal mines of this part of his district [to]...attempt the establishment of a resident priest in the locality".<sup>2</sup> Both of these areas contained new pits and both of these entries in the Catholic Directory were the first to make appeals on behalf of new immigrant congregations in Durham and Newcastle.<sup>3</sup>

The Irish, then, had not long been resident in the north east.<sup>4</sup> This unique fact means that the figures given in 1841 for the Irish-born come closer to the actual numbers of Irish

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1. Ordo and Catholic Directory, 1842, p.38.
  2. Ibid., p.39.
  3. Dr. Treble in his Ph.D. Thesis, The Place of the Irish Catholics in the Social Life of the North of England unpublished (Leeds, 1969), p.67, draws attention to earlier references to Catholic missions at Birtley and Houghton-le-Spring where the congregations were described as consisting of colliers. While we cannot be certain of the nationality of these congregations, evidence presented in Chp.III, pp.66-68, will show that these Catholics were likely not Irish.
  4. The late arrival of the Irish in the area was also remarked upon by the correspondent to the Nation in 1872. "Irish in England," Letter XV (Oct.19, 1872), p.662; see also, Chp.III, p.66 n.

than those recorded for Irish populations elsewhere in England, Scotland or Wales. Detailed sampling suggests that the birth rate among the Irish in the early decades of emigration was, contrary to popular belief, slightly lower than that of the population as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Hence the total for the first and second generation Irish in our study area for 1841 amounted to roughly (8,264 + 9% [the average natural increase for the north east]) 9,008. If we apply these same calculations over the next thirty-year period, it is possible to ascertain a rough estimate of the total size of the Irish community. (See Table 5)

Several assumptions are implicit in these estimates which require further explanation. Firstly, the figures make no allowance for Irish emigration from either Durham or Newcastle. "All along", as one well-informed Catholic remarked of the national scene in 1892, "there has been more or less of emigration at the same time with immigration...and for some years past, many of the Irish have left and are leaving England. But

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1. On Wall Knoll and St. Mary (alias Sandgate) Streets between 1841 and 1871 there was on the average 2.7 children per set of Irish parents with children. It is interesting to note the gradual increase in this average over the decennial periods: 1841, 2.2; 1851, 2.7; 1861, 2.8; and 1871, 3.1. There were, of course, many fatherless children but these nearly equally offset by the number of couples with no children. Thus, as one clergyman pointed out, "I am convinced that the fallacy of the Irish being more prolific arises from the fact that they live in small houses, often several families in a house, the houses frequently packed in long courts, whence the children swarm into the main streets for a breath of air and for a sight of life, and hence passers-by are astounded at the number of children". Quoted in Rev. John Morris, Catholic England in Modern Times (London, 1892), p.95. To this must be added that infant mortality was always higher in the slum areas in which many Irish resided. And finally, there were no easily accesible birth-control devices for the English Protestants—Goodyear's mass-produced rubber condoms not appearing until the 1890s.

still a great many remain".<sup>1</sup> In the north east evidence suggests that the amount of Irish emigration previous to 1881 was pro-

Table 5: Approximate Growth of Irish Population<sup>2</sup>

	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
	Increase of Irish-born	% Natural Increase	Pop. Available for Increase	Natural Increase	Growth	Total Irish Pop.
1841		9.0	8,264	744	744	9,000
1851	17,389	14.7	26,397	3,880	21,269	30,227
1861	9,662	15.0	39,939	5,990	15,625	45,929
1871	10,104	15.0	47,025	7,054	17,158	63,087

portionately less than in the other Irish centres of England. Though this country was often regarded by the Irish as a mere stop-gap before the departure to the American 'promised land', those who came to the north east relinquished the more convenient access to the emigration ports of the west coast. Thus, enticing accounts in letters and the local press of Irishmen 'making good' in America (the "land of plenty [where]...the meanest labourer has beef and mutton, with bread, bacon, tea, coffee, sugar, and even pies, the whole year round"<sup>3</sup>) had much less

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1. Morris, op.cit., p.79. Rev. Morris was secretary to both Cardinal Wiseman and Archbishop Manning, 1861-67.
  2. Column A: derived from Table 3  
" B: calculated from House, op.cit., Table 1, p.56.  
" C: F of previous line plus A. The figures are based on the assumption that "the typical age of [Irish] emigrants at all periods was 20-25 years of age." Jackson, op.cit., p.19. Hence the majority of those immigrants who were capable of reproduction in 1841 (assuming that they had not long been resident) would have been incapable, if not dead, by 1871. The figure given for 1871 takes this into account.  
" D: B multiplied by C  
" E: A plus D.  
" F: E plus F of previous decade
  3. N.Cour., Pt.II, May 17, 1850, p.4.

motivating influence on the Irishman in South Shields than it did on his brother in Liverpool. And despite the lure of the El Dorado which caused a "great tide of emigration from Durham to Australia"<sup>1</sup> in the years 1854-5, there were few Irishmen at that time who could afford to avail themselves of the opportunity. Financial limitations also prevented the Irish from emigrating during the many strikes and lock-outs—an alternative that was decided upon by many of the skilled workers.<sup>2</sup> In the late 1870s when there was a recession in the coal trade various emigration schemes were acted upon by the Durham Miners' Association which, by that time, contained several hundreds of first and second generation Irish. While among the indigenous workforce these schemes met with some success,<sup>3</sup> the Irish took little part in them, preferring usually to accept the reduction in wages. Indeed, many more Irish entered pit employment in this period of depression to replace the emigrating natives.<sup>4</sup> Hence, geographic isolation combined with poverty, on the one hand, or economic security on the other, meant that few Irish left the area in the period under study.

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1. John Wilson, Memoires of a Labour Leader: the Autobiography of (London, 1910), p.90. There does not appear to have been the same amount of interest in either the California rush of '49 or the British Columbia rush of '58.
  2. See, for example, "Important to Miners Intending to Emigrate," D.Chron., Aug.13, 1869, p.5; "The Ironmasters and Emigration," D.Chron., Mar.24, 1865, p.5.
  3. It has been estimated that by 1881 some 3,000 miners left Durham for the United States. G.H. Metcalf, A History of the Durham Miners' Association 1869-1915, unpublished M.A. Thesis ([? Durham], 1947), p.386; E. Welbourne, The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham (Cambridge, 1923), p.213.
  4. See, Chp.V, pp.170-171.

Secondly, Table 5 fails to inform us of the number of Irish paupers deported to Ireland in accordance with the numerous Removal Acts. Here, as elsewhere, the available material affords no definitive statistics. Although some contradictory estimates of removals were recorded in 1854,<sup>1</sup> no complete national tabulations were undertaken until 1861. The extant records reveal, however, that the removals which took place had only the slightest effect upon the numbers of Irish in the north east. Of those Irish who approached the formidable doors of the Poor House without the five-year residency requirements (as per 1834 Act), very few appear to have been actually shipped back to Ireland.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps in all, as many as 1,000 Irish were returned to Ireland before 1863—the last date for the listing of poor removals—the great majority of these being sent from Stockton, Sunderland and Newcastle.<sup>3</sup> After this date, Irish removals greatly diminished, for the earlier Irish pauper hordes had subsided while at the same time the removal legislation was relaxed.

Thirdly, and finally, Table 5 supposes that the successive generations of Irish remained with/<sup>in</sup>a social and cultural milieu that was predominately Irish. While this is not exactly true, within the forty-year period of this study we can, for the most

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1. Robert Pashley stated to the Select Committee on Poor Removals, 1854, that "the number of removals of the Irish is about 10,000, that is, two per cent", q.6453, p.473; but the Commissioner for the Poor Law in Ireland insisted that "no inference can safely be drawn as to the whole number of removals in each year", q.471, p.45. (The quotes are in reference to all England), P.P., 1854, XVII.
  2. See, Chp.II, pp.57-60.
  3. Poor Law Removals: P.P., 1860, LVIII, p.791; P.P., 1863, LIII, p.267; P.P., 1864, LII, p.305.

part, speak of Irish communities in a fairly exclusive sense. Though the anguish and turmoil caused by the Irishman's adjustment to the foreign experience resulted in much 'leakage' from the Catholic Church, there was less of a comparable leakage of Irish sons from the community. Religious beliefs might be dropped or discarded or even expropriated,<sup>1</sup> but the habits and customs of living, the accents and manners of speaking and the inherited national pride were exceedingly hard to abandon. Nor did many wish to leave the security afforded by the community—a security enhanced by the nearby Catholic Church and the engaging Irish public-house. It is clear from the Enumerators' Manuscripts that in areas where the Irish resided, they did so in close proximity. To face the Anglo-Saxon majority alone was only to encounter alienation. As for the operation of a 'melting pot': the majority of immigrants had no desire to be assimilated into what they considered to be a 'foreign' society. Irish Catholicism and Irish nationalism (particularly after 1865) gave the Irish a religious and political distinctiveness that they were eager to sustain.

Sheer necessity also kept the Irish together. From the very first, and continuing throughout the period, the Irish were forced to depend on one another. When the Rev. Hardcastle took a 'soulful' interest in some local Irish harvesters, for example, the harvesters were convinced that he must be Irish. When he inquired why this was so, one of the harvesters replied "Because...we never saw English people take any interest in us."<sup>2</sup>

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1. See, Chp.IV, pp.125-141.

2. Rev. Hardcastle's speech, Mar.9, 1840, in Henry French Etherington, Full Report of...a Public Meeting Held in the Wesleyan Chapel, Hartlepool...to Establish an Auxiliary in Aid of the British Reformation Society (Sunderland 1840), p.18. Brit.Mus.

Later, when the English did take an interest, the motivation was most often fear or anger, at best a bigoted solicitude for the evils of the Irishman's faith. The net result was that by the 1870s the immigrants and their progeny had coalesced into sharply defined and exclusive areas. Places like Ushaw Moor and Framwelgate in Durham became visibly Irish centres, while Wall Knoll Street, which in 1851 was 41 percent Irish, was by 1871 almost 100 percent Irish.<sup>1</sup> It is naive, therefore, to pretend that before 1880 there had been any significant diminution of Irishness by those who had not been born in Ireland. As Raphael Samuel has pointed out about the later generations of Irish in London: they "shared a good deal of the belligerent fidelity of the first [generation]. The walls of the Irish home continued to be adorned by a free intermixture of sacred and patriotic subjects, as they had been when Mayhew described them in the middle of the century."<sup>2</sup> It could scarcely have been otherwise, for not only did new immigrants preserve a direct communications link with the homeland, but increasingly, religious pressures and nationalistic movements served to reinforce Irish ethnocentricity.

Though our calculations must at best remain tenuous, we can postulate with a measure of safety that by 1881 from 65,000 to 70,000 or about 6.5 percent of Durham and Newcastle's population was part of or directly descended from those Irish immigrants who had migrated to the north east from the late

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1. Census 1871: Enumerators' Manuscripts for the Parish of All Saints, Newcastle. Public Records Office.
  2. "The Catholic Church and the Irish Poor," unpublished paper presented to the Past and Present Conference, July 1966, p.36.

'thirties onward. In specific areas, of course, the percentage of Irish was much greater than that for the region as a whole. Contemporary estimates of the Irish to non-Irish populations in 1872 put the ratio in South Shields at 1:9, in Hebburn and Jarrow at 1:3 and in Gateshead at 1:4.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, then, the Irish constituted a numerically significant proportion of the population. That this ubiquity could no longer be ignored was evidenced in Kelly's Directory of Durham for 1890 when the not unguarded compilers admitted for the first time that "the population is chiefly of Northumbrian descent...there are a few Welsh; but there is a large body of Celts from Ireland".<sup>2</sup> If, therefore, the relations between the Irish and non-Irish in the north east were more relaxed than in other areas of Great Britain, it was not because the Irish population was comparatively insignificant. Indeed, from their later and more sudden inundation in the north east and from their heavy concentration in certain centres, one might well have expected a sharper and more forceful reaction by the non-Irish than was witnessed even in the other Irish centres of Great Britain.

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1. "Irish in England," Nation, Letter XV (Oct.19, 1872), p.662.

2. p.1.



## II

### Living Conditions and Social Place

"In the storey above, which I got at by a staircase, in the most shameful condition, I found in one room two families. 'How many are there of you?' 'Only nine of us!' There were three beds. An old man lay ill on one, another man on the second, and a woman on the third. They had no blankets. 'Devil a stitch,' they said. They were Irish. Rent 1s."

Inquiry into the Condition of the Poor of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1850, p.17.

"Of the many asylums to which the Irish fled after the great exodus of the forties, there was none in which, owing to many circumstances, they were able ultimately to find more favourable surroundings than the Tyneside."

T.P. O'Connor, "The Irish in Great Britain," in Felix Lavery ed., Irish Heroes in the War (London, 1917), p.21.

## (i)

The place assumed by any immigrant population must be contingent firstly upon the conditions antecedent to emigration. The 'famine' conditions which served as the watershed of Irish emigration to England need not long detain us here, for as a modern decimation, the records are abundant and familiar. The stark reality facing the Irish peasantry in the 'forties—starvation, filth, disease and the putrescence of death—was so universal that few of those who came to England could anywhere approach even the limited respectability of the earlier Irish peasant. As the local press described them coming into Glasgow in 1847,

The last arrivals of Irish with which we have been afflicted are quite different from all previous importations. Formerly men came who could work, but now we see only squalid and debilitated lads, accompanied by frail old men and women, and young children, reduced to the last stage of sickness and misery.<sup>1</sup>

Those who made their way to Durham and Newcastle were in no less deplorable condition, the available evidence suggesting that they had come primarily from the most depressed western counties of Ireland. While no official records of their place of origin were kept, in the Irish quarter of Newcastle the Census Enumerators often exceeded their duty and listed the Irish county of birth. Scattered and incomplete as these records are, Counties Mayo and Sligo seem to predominate. Though Assistant Overseer of Newcastle Poor Law, George Grey, hesitated to be precise, saying "I think they are just as frequently from the southern and western parts of Ireland as from the north",<sup>2</sup> a correspondent

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1. Glasgow Argus, quoted in N.Chron., Jan.20, 1847, p.8.

2. Select Committee on Poor Removals, 1855, q.425, p.31.

to the Tablet in 1851 unequivocally called the Irish in Sandgate "Connoughtmen [sic]".<sup>1</sup> This same correspondent, who was by no means unsympathetic to the Irish, spoke with an equal authority when he stated that "the Gateshead Irishmen are chiefly from Ulster".<sup>2</sup> But if Ulstermen, they displayed no more affluence than their brethren across the Tyne. By all reports the Irishmen of Gateshead were some of the most impoverished in the north east.<sup>3</sup> Further evidence of origin was given by the Assistant Overseer for Sunderland who stated that the Irish in his area came "out of the interior of Ireland and not from Dublin", and singled out Roscommon as "a very fruitful source".<sup>4</sup> For the other Irish in Durham there are no testimonials of birth place. The comments upon their general condition, however, clearly indicate that those who came to Durham were rural in background and scarcely predisposed to life in England.

The greatest proportion of Irish entering the area found their way to the city of Newcastle and if they were unfamiliar

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1. XII (May 24, 1851), p.325.
  2. Ibid.
  3. By the tremendous growth of Catholicism in Gateshead it would appear that the majority of Irish were Catholic. In 1852 the Catholic Directory listed upwards of 3,000 Catholics for the borough while citing the Census figure for the Irish-born of 1,544; p.48. A typical comment on their condition was given by the Tablet when they spoke of the "indefatigable Pastor of the new Mission at Gateshead [who]...continues to breast the difficulties common to the establishment of most all Missions, but in the case of St. Edmond's difficulties (owing to the almost entire absence of affluent persons) of more than ordinary character. The work proposed to be accomplished in such a locality is fit only for a priest who counts every thing worthless as compared with the salvation of souls." XII (June 21, 1851), p.388.
  4. Evidence of Thomas Hedley, Select Committee on the Irremovable Poor, 1860, P.P., 1860, XVII, q.2840, p.149.

with city life, perhaps no other city in England was more ill-equipped to receive them. The slums of Newcastle in the 19th century, containing the notorious Sandgate area, existed as they had for hundreds of years,<sup>1</sup> except that in the passage of those years the squalor had increased.<sup>2</sup> In 1850 the 3,000 souls of Sandgate Street were

crammed into a space which, if properly laid out, would be four or five times as extensive. There are about twenty-five entries on each side of the street, with from eight to ten houses in each, containing on an average, eight rooms in each house.... From ten to twenty people are very often to be found in one room.<sup>3</sup>

When the staff of the Builder, an architectural magazine, visited Newcastle in 1861 they were appalled by the conditions and declared, "Cologne has a bad name, Cairo has a worse reputation, but that part of Newcastle called Sandgate, must be allowed to exceed either city in stench, filth, overcrowding, and pestilential ills."<sup>4</sup> Conditions were so bad that even newer clusters of tenements in the area could reach a death rate of 47.7 per 1,000,<sup>5</sup> allowing Newcastle to compete with Liverpool and Manchester for the "unenviable notoriety"<sup>6</sup> of the highest death

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1. "Report of the Committee Appointed to Act in Conjunction with the Board of Guardians During the Prevalence of Cholera," in Proceedings of the Newcastle Common Council, Oct.12, 1853, p.137. N.C.A.
  2. An idea of the conditions in the 18th century may be seen in George Balmer's painting, "Grey Horse Inn, Quayside", Laing Gallery, Newcastle.
  3. Inquiry into Newcastle Poor, p.23.
  4. "Condition of our Chief Towns—Newcastle-Upon-Tyne," XIX (April 13, 1861), p.242.
  5. Henry Armstrong, Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 1877, p.22. N.C.L. Lts.
  6. N.Cour., Aug.6, 1875, on the occasion of Newcastle having the highest death rate of the 18 large towns listed in the Register-General's returns.

rate in England.<sup>1</sup> Little wonder that after the great fire of 1854 there were silent regrets that not more of the slum area had been razed. The chroniclers of the conflagration noted "if it were not for the fearful loss of life, and large amount of personal suffering, which it has occasioned, it might be regarded as a public benefit."<sup>2</sup>

Though the Irish by no means eased the slum conditions, they were not responsible for a situation that was already intolerable before their arrival. It was into a situation of unmitigated filth that the Irish brought their rural habits to contribute to the existing squalor and disease. Nor was the overcrowding at mid-century simply a manifestation of Irish poverty. The chronic housing shortage due to the influx of native and immigrant labourers forced the working classes to share the slums with the Irish. "The dwelling for the working classes", it was reported, "are not much better than those for the poor ....Single rooms...are charged £5 per annum. Few mechanics can afford to pay for more than one room."<sup>3</sup> Not surprising, then, that the obnoxious area that became the Irish ghetto was the same spot at which every sanitary report reached its most polemic.

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1. Newcastle first gained this distinction in 1866 with an overall death rate of 36.7 per 1,000. Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds were next in line with 33.1, 29.6, and 28.4, respectively. "Report of the Public Health," 1866, presented to Council, Mar.6, 1867, p.193. The average death rate for the city between 1851 and 1871 was 35.5.
  2. An Account of the Great Fire and Explosion Which Occurred in Newcastle and Gateshead on the 6th of October 1854 (Newcastle, 1854), p.4.
  3. Inquiry into Newcastle Poor, p.47.

The keeping of pigs in particular, a habit peculiar to the Irish,<sup>1</sup> was the bane of every inspector. Indeed, it was an indirect measure of the Irish presence in Newcastle in 1848 when the City Council was forced to establish a by-law "that swine shall not be kept within any dwelling-house...or in any room or building occupied by man."<sup>2</sup> And it is indicative of the Irishman's indifference to the law that twenty years later the Inspector of Nuisances was still reporting numerous cases of infringement of the swine law.<sup>3</sup>

While the extent of slum conditions was greatest in Newcastle, the city was not untypical of the surrounding centres. Dr. Reid's report for the Royal Commission on the Health of Towns, 1845, emphatically stated that it ~~is not~~<sup>ought</sup> "to be supposed that such [deplorable] lodging-houses exist only in the metropolis or in the manufacturing towns".<sup>4</sup> In Durham City he found lodging houses "not greatly different from those in other places".<sup>5</sup> In the Pipewellgate and Barn Close areas of Gateshead he found

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1. "What the horse is to the Arab, or the dog to the Greenlander, the pig is to an Irishman. He feeds it quite as well as he does his children, assigns to it a corner in his sitting-room, shares his potatoes, his milk, and his bread with it, and all these favours, he confidently expects, the pig will in due time gratefully repay. Upon the pig it is that the best hopes of the poor peasant often repose. J.G. Kohl, Ireland: Dublin, The Shannon, Limerick...O'Connell and the Repeal Association (London, 1844), p.25.
  2. Proceedings of the Newcastle Common Council, Oct.4, 1848, p.202.
  3. Twenty-four cases were brought before the magistrates in 1866. Proceedings of Council, Mar.6, 1867, p.213.
  4. D.B. Reid, Report on the Sanitary Conditions of Newcastle, Gateshead, North Shields, Sunderland, Durham and Carlisle. Appendix II, Second Report of the Commissioners on the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts, P.P., 1845, XVIII, p.529.
  5. Ibid., p.563.

an average mortality rate exceeding that in Newcastle;<sup>1</sup> in Sunderland he cited even worse conditions with "one room generally containing a whole family, consisting in many cases, of seven, or even more individuals, and not unfrequently pigs are admitted within the houses."<sup>2</sup> In south Durham, an area not included in Reid's report, town conditions were much the same and, as elsewhere in Victorian England, the Irish inhabited the worst housing with the lowest sanitation. The Medical Officer for Darlington in 1851 described the colony of Irish in that town as "existing in low, crowded and ill-ventilated hovels".<sup>3</sup>

But the Irish in Durham (as revealed in Table 4) were not all confined to the slums of the larger towns. Some could be found in the colliery villages, accommodated in the clusters of small houses that were generally provided by the employers. Through the annals of the local coal trade there emerges a picture of these pit-houses as bastions of 'homey comfort', inevitably equipped with a red-knuckled wife, a good coal grate, and a plot out back for growing leeks. Like most such conceptions, the basis for this one lies more in romanticization than in reality. Some of the 'objective' accounts of pit life and the sanitary inquiries reveal a picture quite different. John Holland, writing in 1835, commented that the pitmen's dwellings are "often more remarkable for the amount of population, than

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1. Ibid., p.533.

2. Ibid., p.549.

3. Medical Officer's Report Book for July 1851, quoted in Public Health Act Report to the General Board of Health on Darlington, 1850, John Smith ed., Durham Local History Society, 1967, pp.10-11.

the neatness or cleanness of their domestic arrangements".<sup>1</sup>

The Durham Directory of 1856 was slightly more precise, stating that "the space between the fronts of the houses, forming the street, is unpaved and undrained, but that between the backs of the houses not unfrequently exhibits a joint-stock dust-heap and dung-hill running along the avenue, flanked here and there by pig-sties and heaps of coal."<sup>2</sup> And later, when the Irish became more numerous in the trade, the reputed improvement of the housing was not quite as universal as the panegyrists claimed. The following quote from a miner's letter to the editor of the Durham Chronicle in 1865 shows just how much 'improvement' was met through rebuilding:

at the village of Byers Green they recently built 80 new houses, without showing the least thought for the comfort of the pitmen. There are neither public nor private refuges or ashpits, but stinking muck-heaps are lying within six feet of a man's fireside....One single room is the sole habitation of men, women, and five or six children.<sup>3</sup>

As late as 1882 at Ushaw Moor, a predominantly Irish colliery, it came as a surprise to those who had not seen the interior of the houses before, that the 'huts' or the 'stables', as the miners dubbed them, were "the most wretched dwellings it is possible to conceive."<sup>4</sup>

There can be little doubt that the Irish in the colliery towns, just as in the slums, did little to enhance the standard

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1. The History and Description of Fossil Fuel, the Collieries and Coal Trade of Great Britain (London, 1835), p.292. See also, Report of the Commissioner...to Inquire into the State of the Population in the Mining Districts, P.P., 1846, XXIV, pp.383-446; "Aspects of the Working Classes," N.Chron., Mar.7-May 16, 1851.
  2. Whellan, p.98.
  3. July 21, 1865, p.6.
  4. D.Chron., Jan.6, 1882, p.7.



of life as they found it. But again, as in the case of Newcastle, factors either preceding the Irish influx or factors totally outside their control were at the root of the poor conditions. Such things as the emergence of unions, which weakened the owner's paternalism, or the instability of the coal market, which tightened expenditure, or the habit of annual migrations of labourers, all contributed to make social improvement more difficult. As 'foreigners', the Irish were generally placed in the worst houses, a fact that often served to heighten the impression that they were the instigators of the poor conditions rather than the victims.

In the company towns, like Palmer's complex at Jarrow or the Derwent-Consett iron plant at Consett, conditions roughly paralleled those in the colliery towns. The houses—chiefly cottages—were either owned or leased by the works. There was, however, a fairly rigid class structure in these towns and the allocation of the industrial houses reflected the gradations of labour. The Irish, forming the lowest order of the working population, were therefore housed in most inferior conditions. Lodging houses in South Shields were reported in January 1853 as containing 499 English persons, 375 Scots, but 803 Irish.<sup>1</sup> Nearby in Jarrow, the Newcastle Chronicle noted that "the substratum of society...is composed of Irish. These inhabit the old pit houses...consist[ing] mostly of one room".<sup>2</sup> The article

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1. N.Cour., Mar.4, 1853, cited in J.F. Clarke, Labour Relations in Engineering and Shipbuilding on the North East Coast, 1850-1900, unpublished M.A. Thesis (Newcastle, 1966), p.28.
  2. N.D.Chron., May 13, 1865, quoted in Wilkinson, op.cit., pp.73-74; also, "Launch of the Hudson," N.Chron., June 18, 1858, p.6.

went on to state that

In these rows there is overcrowding of the most frightful character, and every condition essential to producing a pestilence exist....

Many of these cottages lodge from 15 to 19 people in one night. There is no regard to sex....Many of the beds in these cottages are never cold, for as soon as they are vacated by the men who are going on the day shift they are occupied by the men who have come off the night shift.

In Consett there was an "immense number of our brethren from the 'Sister Isle,'" <sup>1</sup> who, by one report, were "made to have about half a dozen more representatives in that neighbourhood than all the rest [of the inhabitants ] put together."<sup>2</sup> Though this "rough census of the population" was dismissed as unreliable, there is no doubt that the Irish formed a large proportion of Consett's population and made up the bulk of its common labourers. As in Jarrow, the Irish living conditions were less than tolerable. Because the Irish were mainly contracted in labour gangs, they were not considered as employees by the company and little provision was made for their accommodation. Some were allocated decrepit and well-used cottages but the majority slept in overcrowded lodging houses or barrack-like tenements. Hence, while the managers wrote corporate eulogies on the 'good life' of Consett, <sup>3</sup> the Inspector of Nuisances was applying to the justices for the power to close houses and complained of the nuisances "created by piggeries in the main street."<sup>4</sup>

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1. "History and Progress of the Consett Iron Works," N.Chron., July 9, 1858, p.6.
  2. Ibid., p.6.
  3. For example, Consett Iron Co. Ltd., Description of the Works (Newcastle, 1893).
  4. Minutes of the Nuisance Removal Committee, Feb.1861, quoted in George Neasham, History and Biography of West Durham (1881), p.25n.

Despite the similarity of the living conditions they acquired, there were several differences between the Irish in the urban centres and those in the outlying districts of Durham. Where in the small towns the Irish, though poor, normally had some means of sustenance, in Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland there was a much higher proportion of destitute poor. According to B. Seebohm Rowntree these types of poverty could be termed 'secondary' and 'primary', respectively. While in secondary poverty a family's earnings are sufficient to maintain mere physical efficiency ("were it not that some portion of it is absorbed by other expenditure, either useful or wasteful"), in primary poverty a family's total earnings are below a level necessary "for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency."<sup>1</sup> As epitomized in Newcastle, one could find a great many Irish who by their employment were unable to procure a subsistence income. Within this class could be found the seasonal harvesters who remained behind and the "lodgers, prostitutes and vendors of fish and all classes of goods," which the Enumerator found inhabiting that part of Sandgate from the Trolley to the Blue Bell Entry.<sup>2</sup> It was to this class that George Grey referred when he spoke of those "Irish poor who do not seem to settle down to any kind of labour—not fixedly—but who move about from one kind of labour to another."<sup>3</sup> A local report had earlier coined these Irish as "the vagrant class,—half mendicant, half

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1. B.S. Rowntree, Poverty: A Study of Town Life, 4th ed. (London, 1902), pp.86-7.
  2. Enumerator's prefatory note for St. Mary Street ("Bearing the assumed name of Sandgate") for the above described places. Manuscript Returns for the parish of All Saints, 1861.
  3. Select Committee on Poor Removals, 1855, q.411, p.30.

hawkers".<sup>1</sup> This class of Irish were almost equally matched by the "Irish who are very industrious, who are employed as labourers about manufactories, foundaries, glass-houses, and in labour generally".<sup>2</sup> Typical of this group were the entries in the Enumerators' Manuscripts that defined, for example, John Galliger of Cox Entry as a 54 year old labourer born in Ireland, with his wife Bridget and their 19 year old son who worked on the docks.<sup>3</sup> It was this latter group of secondary poor which chiefly marked the Irish in the industrial towns of Durham.

A further quantitative difference between the Irish in Durham and Newcastle was the greater propensity of the Irish in Newcastle to coalesce into a ghetto.<sup>4</sup> In part this was simply the difference between a larger population in the city as opposed to the more dispersed population in the county, and in part, a reflection of the above degrees of poverty. But the number and the relative poorness of the Irish in Newcastle did not in themselves account for the ghetto. Nor would the standard inter-

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1. "Report of the Newcastle Committee to D.B. Reid," Second Report...on the State of Large Towns, 1845, p.526.
  2. George Grey, Select Committee on Poor Removals, 1855, q.411, p.30.
  3. Manuscript Returns for the parish of All Saints, 1861, for the north side of St. Mary-Sandgate from the White House entry to Johnson's entry.
  4. The term ghetto is used here to denote a loose containment of Irish within the larger slum area. In Newcastle the Irish never entirely dominated one whole area of the slum but, rather, formed numerous pockets of settlement primarily in the Sandgate area. Certain entries or closes such as Nags Head off Sandgate and Mount Pleasant or Craig-alley Stairs were inhabited entirely by Irish, while others like Young's Entry were nearly void of Irish. In later years when the Irish were more dominant in the area, one could still find many closes void of Irish.

pretation of religious and racial intolerance toward the Irish seem wholly applicable in this case.<sup>1</sup> There does not appear to have been any deliberate or intended action by the indigenous population that would have initially pressed the Irish into a confined area, that would have made them draw closer together and thus accentuate their Irishness. The explanation for the ghetto would seem, rather, to lie more in a subtle combination of these and other factors, than in the exclusiveness of any single influence.

In the first place, the general overcrowding in Newcastle plus the poverty of the Irish necessitated their occupying the most inferior areas. Once thus grouped, the Irish themselves created enough pull to attract increasing numbers of their kinsmen to the same locale. Carlyle had pointed to this positive causation of the Irish ghetto in 1840; and Engels, though chastising the English society that tolerated and perpetuated the Irish conditions, agreed with Carlyle that the Irishman "drives the Saxon native out."<sup>2</sup> More and more Irish poured into the slum for nowhere else could they find to the same extent those common bonds of language, background and occupation. Progressively they took over public houses and lodging houses until the markets of the slum in certain areas were completely dominated by Irish.

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1. A recent expression of this *raison d'etre* of the Irish ghetto may be found in K. Boyle, "The Irish Immigrant in Britain," Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly, No.4, XIX (Dec. 1968), pp.418-45. A variation on this theme may also be found in another recent and totally unsubstantiated article, J. Augustine O'Gorman, "The Irish Ghetto Originated in Ireland; Not in the United States," Eire-Ireland, No.4, III (1969), pp.147-150.
  2. Engels used the Irish as a further example of the exploitation of the English proletariat. The Condition of the Working Class in England (1845), panther ed. intro. by Eric Hobsbawm (London, 1969), p.123.

In 1874 Newcastle's Medical Officer reported that in only three other provincial towns—Liverpool, Manchester and Bradford—was there a higher proportion of Irish.<sup>1</sup> And of the over 7,000 Irish in Newcastle by that date, the greatest number were contained in that labyrinth of alleys and closes collectively termed Sandgate. Just as Henry Mayhew and his imitators had depicted the other 'Little Irelands' in England, so in Newcastle there came to be preserved a viable and distinctive way of life in the heart of the slum. "Why if you go there," exclaimed one interloper, "you will find yourselves almost in a strange land. A language is spoken you hardly know; habits are in operation unfamiliar to you; work is done you know not of. Verily, it seems like another nation."<sup>2</sup> As the correspondent to the Tablet wrote in 1852, "Sandgate, the scene of crime, of misery and poverty, of filth and pestilence" is the "one spot, one locality in Newcastle, which may be emphatically termed the St. Giles' of the north".<sup>3</sup>

Though connected less with the actual formation of the ghetto, the Catholic Church exerted a disproportionate influence on its subsequent development. While not all the Irish who came to the north east were Roman Catholic<sup>4</sup> (and many who were had

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1. "Report of the Medical Officer of Health to Council," 1874, cited in S. Middlebrook, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Its Growth and Achievement (Newcastle, 1950), p.273.
  2. James C. Street, The Night-side of Newcastle: A Lecture Delivered in the Church of Divine Unity (Newcastle, 1865), p.14. Northumberland County Records Office, Pamphlets X.
  3. XIII (Mar.20, 1852), p.180.
  4. It is not possible to discern the exact proportions of Catholic to Protestant Irish. Evidence presented in the following two chapters points to a fairly low percentage of Protestant Irish.

since lapsed to infidelity) the overwhelming majority were of the Catholic faith. Since the time that first Irish Catholics had been resident in the parish of All Saints, the slums had been served by priests, though it is doubtful that they exerted much influence on the actual place of Irish settlement. But in 1846 the Brotherhood of St. Vincent de Paul was introduced into the area and in 1851 a Catholic chapel of ease was established in the heart of Sandgate in an old Presbyterian Church on Wall Knoll Street. In the 'forties, then, and especially after 1851, the church, together with the above mentioned factors, served as a direct incentive for Irish settlement.

Beyond its drawing ability, the church also played an important role in the actual coalescence of the ghetto. Particularly through the use of priests who 'speak the Gaelic',<sup>1</sup> the church strengthened the bonds of kinship among the Irish and gave them "a means of self-identification with the larger society".<sup>2</sup> In that the religion was inextricably woven with the nationality, the church further served as "a nexus of communal solidarity"<sup>3</sup> by the negative forces it generated in the English community. The amount of this reaction will be the subject of later discussion; what is important to distinguish here, is that that ghetto preceded any hostility rather than being the product of animosity.

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1. "Newcastle, St. Andrews—A Rev. gentleman is expected shortly to join this mission from Ireland, who, it is understood, is well acquainted with the Irish language, and who will in consequence be more adapted to a district in which such vast numbers of the Faithful are natives of the sister country." Tablet, XII (Aug.16, 1851), p.517. Such importations of Irish priests were the exception in the north east, cf. p.97.
  2. J. Hickey, Urban Catholics (London, 1967), p.57.
  3. Samuel, op.cit., p.48.

In Durham these same agents towards the congregation of Irish were in operation. In the larger villages such as Thornley, Wolsingham or Tow Law, similar 'pull factors' operated to draw the Irish together and the Catholic missions later arrived to solidify the community. The chief difference between the Irish in these towns and those in the larger urban centres might be described as the difference between a 'social association' on the one hand, and a 'socio-economic community' on the other. In Newcastle the ghetto was independent enough that many of its inhabitants could pursue their livelihoods, meagre as they were, with little or no contact with the larger society, but in the coal and iron towns, the Irish were united with all the inhabitants by the single economic concern. By their employment, therefore, the Irish in the small towns of Durham were in greater contact with their non-Irish neighbours. Thus the segregation of the Irish in the single-industry towns was dependent more purely on social and religious factors than on the economic pressures determining the ghetto.

(ii)

The unprecedented influx of all labourers to meet the economic expansion of the north east at mid-century inevitably resulted in considerable social upheaval. Quiet rural parishes suddenly inundated with migrant labourers awoke to find their former stability shattered and their indigenous population restless and mobile. "Shifting, continually shifting...the order of the day", moaned an incumbent in the diocese of Durham.<sup>1</sup>

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1. A Few Brief Observations, Illustrations and Anecdotes Respecting Pitmen in a Northern Colliery Village by an Incumbent in the Diocese of Durham (Sunderland, 1862), p.4.



With so large a proportion of the population without native roots the structure and order of society were severely strained to keep in check a population easily given to violence, lawlessness and wild behaviour. Into this situation and contributing to the chaos and disorder came the rural, ill-educated and unskilled Irish: predominantly young, predominantly male, and with a set of priorities that placed an amoral indulgence in violence and pleasure above those of thrift, sobriety and domesticity. It was little wonder that the proceedings of the courts related in the local press abounded with Irish names. And it is not surprising that after the initial influx the press tended to place the disorders involving Irish in small type. A two-hour riot involving over 50 Irishmen in Durham City in 1865, for example, was relegated to an obscure corner of the Durham Chronicle and titled "A Sunday Scene in Framwelgate",<sup>1</sup> as if prefaced by 'typical'. This particular riot, like innumerable others, began in the local public house and was terminated only by the intervention of the priest.

In the industrial frontier of the north east, drink was not merely a fortification against the strains of labour, it was one of the very few recreations available. It was observed in the slums of Newcastle that there were "no open places or recreation, no playgrounds, no clubs, no means of amusement; but there were public-houses and beer-houses in great abundance.... There was music in them; here perhaps only a barrel-organ, there simply a fiddler screaming out his Irish jigs".<sup>2</sup> In every town

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1. July 21, 1865, p.2.

2. J.C. Street, op.cit., p.6.

that had over a dozen Irish there was always at least one beer house that/<sup>was</sup> Irish by occupation if not by ownership. While in 1865 Hartlepool, typical of the older established towns, had 32 public houses for a population of 12,000, Tow Law, the site of new iron works and many Irish employees, had 17 beer houses for a population of 2,500.<sup>1</sup> The Irish public house served as a club, immigrant information and clearing house and, all too often, an arena for battles among the clientele.

Before the late 'sixties, little was done to curb the excesses of Irish drinking other than punitive action by the law. Though there were priests who did everything in their power to contend with the drinking—including the use of a 'stout blackthorn' every pay-night to keep the flock in check<sup>2</sup>—until the mid-'sixties priests were shorthanded and heavily overworked. Not every priest could devote himself to discovering the Irish drinking haunts and policing them "as late as 12 at night", as Bishop Hogarth is reputed to have done in Darlington.<sup>3</sup> As the Rambler pointed out in 1854, "our clergy...have such an enormous amount to work, both present and prospective, before them, in the discharge of their ordinary and purely clerical duties, that it is impossible to expect from them any thing more than an encouragement and supervision of those other works of charity".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Whellan's Directory of Durham, 1865, p.90.

2. Cited in John C. Kirk, "The History of Thornley," Northern Daily Mail, Mar.24, 1970, p.12.

3. Francis Mewburn, The Larchfield Diary: Extracts from the Diary of the Late Mr. Mewburn, First Railway Solicitor (London, 1876), entry for Mar.25, 1863, p.186.

4. "An Appeal to the Catholic Laity on the Present Condition of the Poor," II (Oct. 1854), pp.279-80.

There were problems as well with many of the English priests who tended to be oversympathetic with the Irish, at best pointing out "the agony which pierces the soul of every priest, when he sees any of his sheep or lambs...[in] the public-house in place of God's service".<sup>1</sup> Further, some of the Irish priests—themselves not without intemperate yearnings—were far too familiar with the Irish habits to do much correction. Not only was the 'Apostle of Temperance', Father Theobald Mathew, scarcely supported by the Catholic Church in the north east<sup>2</sup> and his influence weakest there, but the famine influx had largely undone his work throughout England. Long before Mathew's death in 1856, temperance work among Irish Catholics had fallen neglected beside the more determined effort to build churches for the new congregations.<sup>3</sup> Occasional 'retreats' by visiting priests often devoted a portion of their time to administering the abstinence pledge to the flocks<sup>4</sup> but the results were seldom lasting. While the terrorisation of towns by gangs of inebriate Irishmen such as that which occurred in Southwick in 1867<sup>5</sup> or that which is reputed to

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1. Rev. R. Belaney, The Reign of Sin and the Reign of Grace, A Sermon Preached at St. Wilfrid's Church, Bishop Auckland (Dec.13, 1863), p.13. Ushaw Pamphlets Collection.
  2. The only prominent Catholic to attend a public meeting to raise funds to help Father Mathew was Rev. Dr. Riddell. N.Chron., Jan.1, 1841. Cited in W. Donald Cooper, The Teetotal Movement with Particular Reference to the North-East of England: 1835-1860, unpublished Honours Paper (Durham, 1968), p.35.
  3. Rev. Patrick Rogers, Father Theobald Mathew: Apostle of Temperance (Dublin, 1943), pp.149-50.
  4. See, for example, "South Shields Retreat," Tablet, XV (July 1, 1854), p.446.
  5. "Irish Riot at Southwick [near Sunderland]," N.D.Chron., July 19, 1867, p.2. The town was described as having a population of "from 5,000 to 6,000, and one-half of them Irish."

have caused a white line being painted across the main street of Thornley to divide the nationalities,<sup>1</sup> were not wholly representative of Irish drinking habits, the number of smaller drunken affrays involving the Irish were far too numerous for either the church or the populace to be content with.

In the 'sixties some efforts were made to broaden Irish social life in order that the drinking might be reduced. Accordingly, St. Patrick's Day was selected as an ambitious and symbolic goal. In 1865 Bishop Hogarth

seriously exerted himself to inaugurate something like decency and order among that unruly portion of his flock; and without in the least interfering with their national hilarity, has organized from year to year something new in the shape of rational amusement, inculcating also, in every possible way, the virtue of sobriety.<sup>2</sup>

The Durham Chronicle commented that such an effort was necessary because "for years in [Darlington] the anniversary taking place on the 17th of March was one continual orgie [sic] and row amongst the low Irish of both sexes." The Bishop's directive was followed and only a year later the Chronicle was reporting that "St. Patrick's Day in Durham passed off very quietly; and people were congratulating themselves on the fact."<sup>3</sup> By 1875 St. Patrick's Day had become fairly respectable in Durham and Newcastle, being noted for the abundance of amateur concerts in the schools and peaceful Irish political meetings. Finally, by 1883 the "festival of the Shamrock Saint" was being looked upon, in West Cornforth at least, "as a red-letter day."<sup>4</sup>

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1. J.C. Kirk, op.cit., Mar.24, 1970, p.12.

2. D.Chron., Mar.17, 1865, p.8.

3. Ibid., Mar.23, 1866, p.5.

4. Ibid., Mar.23, 1883, p.5.

But if St. Patrick's Day was taken firmly in hand and showed what could be done, it stood until the 'seventies as only a symbolic victory untypical of the rest of the year. Equally unreliable were the general press reports of events in which the Irish were involved. If one were to judge merely from the coverage they received, the Irish would appear to be chiefly noted for murders, secondly for brutal assaults, thirdly for petty thefts and fourthly for drunken behaviour. If one read the court columns, however, it was clear that the exact reverse was true.<sup>1</sup> Though the statistics released by the Newcastle police in 1861 showed for the first time the number of Irish-born criminals,<sup>2</sup> the actual offences were not related to birth place. The figures reveal though that 18.5 percent of those apprehended were born in Ireland (or three times the proportion of Irish to English in the city).<sup>3</sup> By 1869 this figure had risen to 21.3 percent of those taken into custody (or nearly four times their proportion in the city).<sup>4</sup> Available statistics for Roman Catholic prisoners in Durham on January 1st, 1862 and 1864, also depict an increase from 17 percent to 26 percent of all prisoners.<sup>5</sup>

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1. The Commissioners for 'Appendix G', 1836 came to similar conclusions, p.446.
  2. It is doubtful that the specificity of Irish-born bears much reflection on the attitude of the Newcastle police toward the Irish, for other towns, Bradford for example, had earlier set this precedent.
  3. Criminal and Miscellaneous Statistical Returns of the Newcastle Police for the Year Ending 29th Sept., 1861 (Newcastle, 1861), Table 4, p.4. N.C.L. Lts.
  4. Borough of Newcastle: Criminal and Miscellaneous Statistical Returns of the Constabulary for the Year Ending 29th Sept., 1869 (Newcastle, 1869), Table 9, p.11. N.C.L. Lts.
  5. W.G. Lumley, "The Statistics of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales," J.S.S.L., XXVII (Sept. 1864), pp.317-8.

Throughout England police statistics were showing a similar increase in Irish-born criminals<sup>1</sup> and alcohol was cited as the chief inducing factor. It thus became increasingly obvious to the Catholic Church that thorough remedial action was necessary to alleviate what the Tablet called "the disproportionate space they [the Irish] fill upon the prison register".<sup>2</sup>

The job of reform lent itself to the strong social conscience of Archbishop Manning. He had first become interested in the temperance movement in 1867 through the agency of the United Kingdom Alliance (1856) which forced him, he declared in Newcastle in 1882, "to a knowledge of the real demoralizing power of this drink traffic."<sup>3</sup> Unlike earlier movements, Manning's intention was not only to reform moral habits, but to create a powerful body of dedicated total abstainers that would be able to exert political pressure. With this in mind he formed the League of the Cross in 1872. That the League was directed at the Irish Catholics was clear from the outset. At the first convention in London in 1875, Father Nugent presented Manning with a cross made of Irish marble, declaring,

the next generation of Irish people in this country, would be different to what they were at present. He understood well the influences that had led their people into intemperance and moral degradation. The

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1. On Bradford, see, C. Richardson, "The Irish in Victorian Bradford," unpublished paper delivered to the conference at Durham University Sept.16, 1969, pp.15-16. (The criminal statistics are not reproduced in the published version of this article in Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research, XX (May 1968), pp.40-57.)
  2. XXVIII (Oct.19, 1867), p.669.
  3. "The Temperance Reformation, the United Kingdom Alliance and Local Option," Sept.4, 1882, quoted in Vincent A. McClelland, Cardinal Manning, His Public Life and Influence, 1865-1892 (London, 1962), p.200.

tide which flowed into this country from 1847 to 1856 was so overwhelming that they had neither churches, schools, nor pastors to look after the people....<sup>1</sup>

Though there was no representation from the north east either at this conference or at the following one in Manchester, Manning kept the Hierarchy well informed on the League's action and progress. Few branches of the League were set up in Durham or Newcastle but the impetus for Catholic temperance resulted in the establishment of many similar bodies. In the colliery town of Sacriston, for example, Father Lescher began a temperance association in 1876 under the patronage of St. John the Baptist. Unable to draw enough total abstainers, "it was thought best to include all who were willing to take any kind of pledge, of Total or Partial Abstinence", and children were admitted as half-members.<sup>2</sup> In South Shields a temperance group titled the Confraternity of the Holy Cross was in operation by 1874<sup>3</sup> while in Consett there was established for temperance purposes the Society of the Holy Family.<sup>4</sup> It was not until Manning's 'Northern Crusade of the League of the Cross' between 1880 and 1882 that the League became fully operative in the north and not until March 1885 that a branch was established in Newcastle,<sup>5</sup> but by that date the spade work for temperance success had been well done.

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1. The League of the Cross and Crusade Against Intemperance: Official Report of the Conventions of [July 12] 1875 and [October 11] 1876 (Manchester, 1877), p.16. Brit. Mus.
  2. Quoted in Rev. J. Lenders, History of the Parish of Sacriston (Minsteracres, 1930), p.22. Ushaw Pamphlets Collection.
  3. Tablet, XI (May 30, 1874), p.693.
  4. G. Neasham, op.cit., p.75.
  5. Tablet, XXXIII (Mar.7, 1885), p.391.

By the late 'seventies, concerts, annual picnics and various outings were replacing the former dependence on the public house and the press were quick to note, as in one pilgrimage to Holy Island in 1887, that "their appearance, their going and coming, their decorous but cheerful bearing, their comportment from first to last—those were the features most striking".<sup>1</sup>

A narrower facet of Irish social life, which also came to be supervised by the church, were the Irish clubs, particularly the Ribbon Lodges and the Hibernian Societies.<sup>2</sup> While the Ribbon Lodges have a clear place in the history of Ireland as secret, agrarian, anti-Protestant, anti-landlord organisations, the extent of their operations in England are fairly obscure. In the north east, at least, there is no evidence from either Irish or English sources to substantiate their existence. Most references to Ribbonmen came from the Catholic Church which lingered under the impression that any group of Irishmen not directly under her control were probably Ribbonmen or Ribbon-like in composition. The Ancient Order of Hibernians,<sup>3</sup> a vigilantly Catholic society that could trace its roots as far back as 1565,<sup>4</sup> did not long escape the church's condemnation of it being a dangerous 'secret society' with Ribbon connections.

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1. N.D.Chron., Aug.12, 1887, quoted in N.C.C., 1888, p.10.
  2. In the mid-'sixties Fenians also came under church attack, though not church control. See, Chp.VI, pp.242-3.
  3. As distinct from the London Hibernian Society, a Protestant evangelical society which for a short while in the 1830s had auxiliaries in Newcastle and Stockton. See, "Report of the Hibernian Society Meeting on Monday, the 11th October, 1830," John Bull, unpaginated. N.C.L. Lts.
  4. James A. McFaul, "Hibernians," Catholic Encyclopedia, 1910.



To become a Hibernian one had to be Catholic, "Irish or of Irish decent, ...of good moral character," and not belong to any secret societies. At all times their motto was to be "Friendship, Unity, and True Christian Charity."<sup>1</sup> The Order played an important role as an organiser and leader of poor Irish Catholics in the industrial centres of England and Wales and basically fulfilled, as they did in America, "that desire in human nature, and especially in Celtic nature, to belong to some guild, confraternity, or other society."<sup>2</sup> A branch of the Order was in existence in Newcastle in 1844, for they conducted negotiations with the miners' unions to prevent importations of Irish strike-breakers.<sup>3</sup> But in 1838, according to one author, because of a letter from the General Secretary of the Ribbonmen in Dublin to the Liverpool Hibernians, the latter society was accused of being 'secret' and was condemned by the church.<sup>4</sup> This caused some Hibernian Societies to reform themselves into sick and burial clubs and upon these Vicar Apostolic Briggs of the Northern District consented to bestow his blessings as long as they were in approval with the Bishop of Ireland.<sup>5</sup> The relationship between the church and the Hibernians was never very stable, however,

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1. Such were the instructions issued by the Society of Hibernians in Ireland to the Irish in New York (c.1830), ? Shahan, Lecture on the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Chicago, 1904), quoted in McFaul.
  2. John O'Leary, Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism (London, 1896), I, p.111. O'Leary, when in America, also supposed that the Ancient Order of Hibernians were a Ribbon organisation "but neither then nor since could I at all gather ...what business they had there."
  3. See, Chp.V, p.196.
  4. John Denvir, The Irish in Britain from the Earliest Times to the Fall and Death of Parnell (London, 1892), pp.128-9.
  5. Treble, Ph.D. Thesis, p.223.

for the church could not be convinced that Hibernians were not simply another type of Ribbon organisation. The church also disliked the fact that the Society was independent and outside her control.

What exactly prompted Bishop Hogarth to renew the attack on the Hibernians in 1852 is not apparent. During the St. Patrick's Day proceedings of that year the Hibernians had played their usually conspicuous part "after attending Divine Service at the respective churches of St. Andrew and St. Mary".<sup>1</sup> This church attendance bears quoting, for only five days later Bishop Hogarth accused the Hibernians of secrecy and wrote to his clergy:

We know that many of the worst crimes, which disgrace human nature, have been the offspring of SECRET SOCIETIES, to which many misguided men have associated themselves.... We are moreover informed that, for some time past, a very considerable section of one of the secret Societies has assumed the fictitious name of the HIBERNIAN SICK-CLUB, in order to conceal their identity with the HIBERNIAN SOCIETY...and we once more repeat...THAT ALL THE MEMBERS OF SECRET SOCIETIES, AMONG WHICH WE NUMBER THE HIBERNIAN SOCIETIES...ARE NOT TO BE ADMITTED TO A PARTICIPATION IN THE HOLY SACRAMENTS.<sup>2</sup>

Again on St. Patrick's Day, 1854, the Hibernian Society paraded through the streets of Gateshead and Newcastle and "made a collection at the close of their festivities, and presented the proceeds £8, to the Infirmary of Newcastle, through the Mayor, accompanied by a letter of thanks from his worship."<sup>3</sup> But in July of that year the priests at South Shields made "a strong but affectionate appeal...to the 'Hibernians,' or 'Ribbonmen,'

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1. Tablet, XIII (Mar.27, 1852), p.197.
  2. Pastoral, Mar.22, 1852, U.C. III.
  3. N.Chron., Mar.24, 1854, p.4.

to withdraw themselves from those illegal 'secret societies,' so strongly condemned by the Church".<sup>1</sup> The Bishop repeated his charge in April 1857 and drew up a "Declaration to be Made By Members of the Hibernian and other Secret Societies Before They Are Admitted to the Sacraments."<sup>2</sup> Less than a year later the Bishop was lamenting that "the Hibernian Society, We regret to find, is too widely spread among the industrious poor of our Diocese."<sup>3</sup> In May of 1858 he was again compelled to speak out, for, the notion "that We...shall finally be compelled to yield to their urgent and often repeated demands..., has so far prevailed as to induce some to retrace their steps and return to that Society which they had lately renounced".<sup>4</sup> He ended this address by reminding the clergy that the church required "the most perfect obedience and submission". Finally, by February 1859 the situation was nearly in hand and the Bishop expressed his pleasure that there had been a "gradual decrease...of unlawful and secret societies, effected under the blessing of God, by the zeal and preserving energies of our Clergy."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Tablet, XV (July 1, 1854), p.466.

2. Hogarth to Clergy, April 3, 1857, U.C. IV.

3. Hogarth, Pastoral, Feb.9, 1858, U.C. IV.

4. Ibid., May 1, 1858.

5. Ibid., Feb.23, 1859. An example of this 'zeal' and the methods used by some of the clergy to eliminate the Hibernians can be seen in the action of Rev. F. Betham of Gateshead who in 1851 tacked onto the door of his chapel the various statements of the Holy Pontiffs condemning secret societies. The following could be read at the bottom of his notification: "I earnestly call upon these misguided men to seek pardon and reconciliation with the Church, lest perhaps the Lord in His anger overtake them and they cry out for mercy when there is no longer mercy to be found; but if they neglect this invitation, then it will be my painful duty to collect the names of the contumacious, and to post them on the doors of the church, as persons excommunicated, and to be avoided by the Faithful." Tablet, XII (Dec.13, 1851), p.790.

Here, as when dealing with intemperance, the church ultimately thwarted the 'dangerous' social activity. In its stead, Holy Guilds,<sup>1</sup> branches of the Catholic Institute, Catholic Friendly Societies, Catholic Young Mens' Societies, Catholic Orders of Odd Fellows and innumerable confraternities and benefit societies were promoted to provide harmless amusements and instruction and to put the church at the centre of Irish social life. As one member of the Newcastle branch of the Young Men's Society wrote to the editor of the Tablet, "What Sir, has the heart-broken, expatriated Celt, to console him in his myriad woes? Nothing but God and the Church, burning love for Eternal Rome, and undying affection for the Soggarth Aroon."<sup>2</sup> Though in 1880 the new Bishop of the diocese in his first Pastoral spoke of "the besetting sin of drunkenness, [and] the seduction of secret societies" as two of the "arch-enemies, against whom we must wage implacable war",<sup>3</sup> he was mainly echoing the issues of the past and attempting to retain the amount of control which the church had at last obtained.

(iii)

English responses to the social place of the Irish in England conformed to a pattern ranging from outright hostility

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1. Holy Guilds were established in Newcastle and Stockton in 1844 and in Bishopwearmouth in 1845 in order to "withdraw individuals from the societies of Odd-Fellows, Hibernians, et.hoc. genus omne." Tablet, V (April 19, 1845), p.247.
  2. "Hibernicus to editor," XV (Dec.16, 1854), p.790.
  3. Bishop Bewick, Pastoral, Tablet, XXVIII (Oct.28, 1880), p.713. The two evils were often cited side by side in order that it might appear, as Dr. Cullen stated, that "Drunkenness is encouraged by the meeting of such societies". Pastoral, Dec.1, 1861, Times, Dec.5, 1861, p.4.

to apologetic eulogy. At one extreme were the bigoted and condescending attitudes which claimed that

the influx of starving exiles from Ireland [who were] so unprepared for superior civilization that they could not carry beer with propriety and good fellowship; so ready to fight as to add largely to the statistics of crime; yet, poor souls, seldom able to fight with the success that earns at least the consideration of fellow roughs.<sup>1</sup>

From a pool of such statements it was not difficult for Irish-Catholic writers to infer that "the lower class of Irish are to the rest of the population of England what the Hebrews were to the Egyptians".<sup>2</sup> This, it was claimed, was the product of racial discrimination that the "Catholicity of the Irish, no doubt, magnifies and increases".<sup>3</sup> But at the opposite pole could be found that exalted view which showed the Irish to have "willingness, alacrity, and perseverance",<sup>4</sup> to have a "superior steadiness and docility",<sup>5</sup> and to have a modesty so great that they "frequently made excuses for themselves or their children, for not attending chapel or school, on the ground of want of proper clothing".<sup>6</sup> This sympathetic approach was a favourite among investigators like Mayhew or among apologetic Christians like General Booth, who preferred to call Irish sins "frailties" and Irish

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1. M.C. Bishop, "The Social Methods of Roman Catholicism in England," Contemporary Review, XXXIX (Mar. 1877), p.611.
  2. William G. Todd, The Irish in England, reprinted from the Dublin Review [LXXXI (Dec. 1856)] (London, 1857), p.2.
  3. Ibid., p.3.
  4. 'Appendix G', 1836, p.456.
  5. Edwin Chadwick, Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population (1842), M.W. Flinn ed. (Edinburgh, 1965), p.199.
  6. 'Appendix G', 1836, p.438.

crime "disorder."<sup>1</sup>

To a certain extent this same spectrum of attitudes could be found in Durham and Newcastle. Stephen Edward Piper, Medical Officer for Darlington in 1851, singled out the Irish as the principal culprits in the housing shortage, employing the adjectives: "dirty ragged", "swarming vagrant", "squalid half clad" and "deplorably ignorant".<sup>2</sup> The investigator of Sandgate in 1850 was also of the conviction "that the influx of Irish into our large towns has had the most deteriorating influence both upon themselves and the native population with which they have come in contact."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, some sympathy could be evoked even for an Irishman who had murdered his wife when it was considered that the couple lived in "underground rooms in Blandford-street" and that they were surrounded by the "evil of poverty."<sup>4</sup> There are also numerous accounts which point to Irish wit, conviviality and simple-mindedness. Such was the stereotyped Irish 'Paddy', long a favourite fictional character.<sup>5</sup> In local accounts like "An Irishman's Revenge on his Pig", this stereotype was reinforced, while it was humourously suggested that perhaps "the household affections of the Irish people—which all travellers

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1. Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the London Poor, 3rd series, VII, pp.243-4, quoted in Samuel, op.cit., p.23.
  2. Public Health Act Report to the General Board of Health on Darlington, 1850, pp.10-11.
  3. Inquiry into Newcastle Poor, p.43. It should be noted that the author of this article had lived in Ireland and held fairly strong Protestant views which had been moulded there.
  4. T. Fordyce, Local Register of Remarkable Events of Northumberland, and Durham, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne and Berwick-Upon-Tweed (Newcastle, 1867), III, Mar.14, 1844, pp.182-3.
  5. For a fuller depiction of this stereotype, see, Lewis Perry Curtis Jr., Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England (New York, 1968), chp.1.

agree contain many traits of excellent character—become warped and distorted during their voluntary exile from the land of birth".<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, however, commentary on the Irish in the north east tended to be less hostile than that which has been recorded of other Irish populations in England. One aspect of the more tolerant attitude can be seen in the singular lack of references to them. Where in other areas there was little hesitation in calling an Irishman an Irishman, or in denouncing the Irish for anything which faintly suggested their culpability, in Durham and Newcastle there was almost a reticence to implicate the Irish. When they were mentioned, it was frequently as 'from the Sister Isle' or 'Hibernian friend' or 'Celtic Cousins'.

In English Catholic circles the lack of references to Irish was often due to a certain hesitation in admitting that the advance of Catholicism in a particular parish was the result of an influx of 'low Irish'.<sup>2</sup> More important was the fact that Irish and Catholic became increasingly synonymous terms, making it fatuous for Catholic leaders to qualify their flocks as 'Irish' Catholics. But from the Protestant majority there was also a similar lack of outspokenness on the Irish and, when spoken of at all, it was generally with a surprising level of toleration. An example of this local regard for the Irish might be seen by examining the record of epidemics in the area in comparison to the role of the Irish in epidemics elsewhere in England.

Between 1846 and 1849 there were several particularly virulent outbreaks of typhus, scarlatina and cholera throughout

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1. D.Chron., Aug.25, 1865, p.5.

2. See, Chp.III, p.90.

England and it was commonplace to blame the generation and communication of these diseases on the Irish immigrants. The existence of typhus being unknown, the disease was commonly referred to as 'Irish fever'. A writer in Leeds, bitterly reflected that the swarms of Irish who arrived in that city, "famished, in rags and without money [and]...with no thought of the decencies of life", had caused "a terrible outbreak of typhus fever",<sup>1</sup> and the president of the Manchester Statistical Society commented after the epidemic there, that "its dissemination and virulence were co-extensive, not with the prevalence of nuisances, but rather with the current of Irish immigration so remarkable in that year [1846-7]."<sup>2</sup> But contemporary observers in Newcastle made no such accusations, even though the number of deaths from the fever was highest in the Sandgate area. Dr. Robinson, after making a thorough investigation of the epidemic's causes in Newcastle, placed no blame on the Irish and in fact did not even mention the Irish.<sup>3</sup> Another doctor investigating the fever-dens blamed the epidemic on the overcrowding and lack of ventilation and drainage, but not on the Irish.<sup>4</sup> Where in other areas the outbreaks "earned [the Irish] the prejudice of the contemporary

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1. S. Baring-Gould, The Church Revival: Thoughts Thereon and Reminiscences (London, 1914), p.277.
  2. Quoted in T.S. Ashton, Economic and Social Investigations In Manchester, 1833-1933 (London, 1934), pp.52-3.
  3. George Robinson, Lecture on the Sanitary Condition of Newcastle delivered before the Literary and Philosophical Society, 10th Feb., 1847 (Newcastle), p.5. N.C.L. Lts.
  4. Cited in W. Young, Public Health in Newcastle 1845-54 With Special Reference to the Cholera Epidemic of 1853, unpublished Honours Paper (Newcastle, 1965), p.19.



press",<sup>1</sup> in Newcastle and Durham the press duly reported the deaths without any mention of the Irish—this, despite the fact that the Catholic Bishop of the diocese (William Riddell) lost his life in administering to the Irish-Catholic victims.<sup>2</sup>

When the cholera raged in the area in the summer and autumn of 1853 the press again referred to it as an issue of public health of which "neither the causes which produce the malady, its diagnosis, or the antidote are known."<sup>3</sup> Though the Newcastle Corporation "voted the Catholic priests £10 for cab hire" to administer to stricken Catholics,<sup>4</sup> the Irish were not held up to public execration. To the Anglican incumbent of St. Mary's, Gateshead, where over 350 lives were lost in a single month, the outbreak was described as God's wrath for the sins of the "Infidels, Sabbath breakers, drunkards and blasphemers."<sup>5</sup> It is significant that the only body of persons who attempted to implicate the Irish in this epidemic were the outside Commissioners for the Board of Health's Report...to Inquire into the Causes which have led to...the Late Outbreak of Cholera in the Towns of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Gateshead, and Tynemouth.<sup>6</sup> In the Report

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1. J.Kitching, "The Catholic Poor Schools 1800 to 1845: The Catholic Poor: Relief, Welfare and Schools," J. of Educational Administration and History, I (June 1969), p.3.
  2. J. Gillow, Bibliographical Dictionary of English Catholics (London, 1885-98), V, pp.418-19.
  3. D.Adver., Sept.7, 1849, p.4.
  4. Larchfield Diary: entry for Sept. 1853, p.121.
  5. Rev. J. Davies, Sermon on Public Thanksgiving Day October 27, 1853 (Gateshead), p.7. N.C.L. Lts.
  6. P.P., 1854, XXXV.

the Commissioners referred to the Irish fever epidemic in Newcastle of 1846-8 and made it abundantly clear that the Irish and their habitations were the seedbed of the city's ill-health.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas Headlam of Newcastle in giving evidence before the Commissioners was forced to admit that the epidemic of '47 "prevailed chiefly from the immigration of Irish trampers who had been suffering from famine."<sup>2</sup> But when the Commissioners attempted to attribute the cholera of 1852-3 on "the old seats of Irish fever", Headlam replied that this was not so, for the cholera "extended over the whole town, and to places usually considered healthy."<sup>3</sup> It is also worthy of note that when the Sunderland Herald printed that "English dogs were cleaner than Irish people" they were quoting the Commissioners' Report.<sup>4</sup> But the local press (irrespective of political creed) did not attempt to use the Irish as a convenient exculpation for the sanitary neglect of the Newcastle Corporation; relative to other areas of Irish habitation, public and private statements (so far as they can be determined) were decidedly lacking in conventional anti-Irishness.

Earlier sanitary reports also bear out the lack of any specific castigation of the Irish. When Alderman Dunn headed the local sanitation committee in 1844-5, for example, he was

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1. Ibid., p.vi.

2. Ibid., q.19, p.2.

3. Ibid., q.56, p.3.

4. Sept.8, 1854, quoted in T.J. Nossiter, Elections and Political Behaviour In County Durham and Newcastle, 1832-74, unpublished D.Phil. Thesis (Oxford, 1968), p.98.

adamant in his belief that if you give the poor better housing "they will turn it into a noisome hovel,"<sup>1</sup> and though he cited the Irish on Wall Knoll and Sandgate Streets, he noticeably did not single them out as the instigators of the insanitary conditions. Like James Losh before him, Dunn merely grouped the Irish with the "low lodging-house keepers, prostitutes, thieves, and vagrants."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, almost all of the available evidence on the Irish in the north east fails to point to any consensus of opinion that the Irish lowered the Englishman's 'superior prudence', morals, drinking habits or living conditions. While the Irish were forced to exist at a lower standard, were more given to strong drink and rowdy behaviour and lived in more slovenly conditions, their influx was not regarded as having a "disastrous social effect" on the larger community—"always tending to drag down their neighbours to a lower level of living."<sup>3</sup> Looking back on the famine influx some years later, the Newcastle Chronicle could only remark, "their invasion, peaceful and industrious, brought no cause for alarm."<sup>4</sup>

A further example of the attitude toward the Irish can be seen in the behaviour of the Poor Law Officials with regard to Irish removals. According to one Poor Law expert the "northern part of Great Britain" exercised much greater forbearance with

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1. Committee's 'Report' to D.B. Reid for the State of Large Towns, 1845, p.527.

2. Ibid., p.527; Losh, op.cit., Diary, 1824-33, pp.200-1.

3. Arthur Redford, Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850 (Manchester, 1926), pp.159-60.

4. "Irishmen in England," editorial, Dec.24, 1867, p.2.

the Irish than did the south, "inasmuch as only one Irishmen is removed out of three liable to removal".<sup>1</sup> But even this modest estimate seems swollen, for of the numerous entries in the Newcastle minute books for 'Removal to Ireland', much less than half of these correlate to the signed and sealed Removal Warrants. Between 20th February and 9th October, 1849, for instance, only 39 individuals and/or families were removed from Newcastle,<sup>2</sup> while the pages of the Poor Law books are filled with removal entries.<sup>3</sup> In many cases the threat of removal was sufficient to ward off the intended victim, for there are abundant entries that read simply: "Martha Cunan and family ordered into the House to be sent to Ireland—Did not go into House—Disposed of."<sup>4</sup> No doubt the 'scare technique' as practiced in London to reduce expenses was put to equally effective use in Newcastle. But it is also obvious from the Poor Law books that many Irish were receiving relief despite their failure to comply with the residency requirements. Even before the great famine influx, the Guardians of the Poor Law were not following their instructions from London. When in June 1845 the House of Commons ordered information on whether the regulations of the non-resident relief order had been adopted, the Newcastle Guardians replied that "the Regulations have not been adopted in this Union."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Select Committee on Poor Removals, 1854, Appendix 17, p.664.
  2. Removal Warrant Papers, 1849, 20/75/1249. N.C.A. The papers appear to be complete for 1849, containing as well, 8 removals to Scotland.
  3. All Saints Parish: Guardians Meeting 1840-48. N.C.A.
  4. Ibid., May.16, 1844, p.206.
  5. Minutes of the Newcastle Board of Guardians, Aug.15, 1844, p.2. N.C.A.

They stated, in fact, that 368 non-residents, adults and children, had received relief in their Union between the 21st of December 1844 and the 25th of March 1845.<sup>1</sup>

When the full implications of the famine conditions in Ireland were eventually realised, the act of returning the Irish to their homeland was viewed as wilfully absurd. Beginning in March 1847, 70 Irish persons are listed in the Poor Law books of Newcastle as receiving relief varying from one shilling per week plus food, to six shillings per week for two months.<sup>2</sup> This leniency to Irish paupers was observed by the investigator of Sandgate in 1850, who wrote:

I am informed that fully one third of the persons receiving parochial relief in this Union are Irish and Scotch, and that in All Saints' parish one half are Irish. This corresponds with a statement which reached me from another quarter, and by which it appears that fourteen years since there was but one Irish family receiving relief under the Poor Law in All Saints' parish, whereas there are now at least 1,200 natives of Ireland weekly relieved in the same district.

The system of deportation...does not seem to have been vigorously adopted by the Newcastle Board of Guardians, and the few experiments made afforded very little encouragement for its repetition on a larger scale.<sup>3</sup>

There can be no doubt that the relief given to the Irish was in part attributable to the sheer bother of removal procedure, to financial considerations and to the distance of local officials from the administrative seat in London. But these factors can only provide a partial explanation, for at the root of the attitude taken by the Newcastle officials lies a fundamental

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1. Ibid., p.2.

2. All Saints Parish: Guardians Meeting, Mar.11, 1847, pp.365-70.

3. Inquiry into Newcastle Poor, p.73.

lack of ill-feeling toward the Irish which can be readily seen by comparing their evidence before the Select Committees on Poor Removals with the evidence given by other Poor Law spokesmen. That the removal laws were not strictly enforced and that non-resident relief was carried out in Newcastle until July 1853<sup>1</sup> would seem to be heavily dependent on this rather genuine sympathy for the plight of the Irish.

Though in no way regarded in a spirit of camaraderie or in any way exalted in the normal course of affairs, the Irish did not elicit in the host population a great deal of hostility. They did not become an omnipresent evil for the expiation of social shortcomings or the appeasement for any social psychosis—a role they sometimes assumed for other Anglo-Saxon and Scotch populations. Within the context of other immigrant groups at least, the Irish were treated with an unparalleled equanimity. If a murderer were Irish it was always drawn to the attention of the public, but equal attention was given to murderers such as 'Scotch Charlie' and his comrade 'Scotch Jock'.<sup>2</sup> Or when "an outrage was perpetrated by pitmen", the press did not fail to mention that the scene of the crime, Hedley Hill, had lost some of its former respectability by "an influx of Irish and Cornish miners."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the single most important factor to emerge from the examination of the conditions and social life of the Irish in the north east and which contributes to an understanding of their unique position relative to other areas was

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1. All Saints Parish: Guardians Meeting, July 1, 1853, p.157.
  2. Gateshead Observer, Jan.24, 1852, p.5.
  3. D.Chron., July 16, 1875, p.6 (italics mine).

the solvent nature of the society into which they entered. The sheer amount of immigration and the mobility of the population made it difficult to isolate the Irish as the cause for any disorder. In other areas, where the industrial expansion was antecedent to the famine influx, the Irish, as the single greatest immigrant group, could more easily be singled out as the chief source of social ills and unrest.

But the fluidity of north-eastern society in the period under study and the relative place of the sizeable Irish community within the social milieu can only provide the most cursory reasons for the toleration shown them. For the other factors determining the attitudes toward the Irish, we must have recourse to the religious, economic and political fabric of the region and to the Irish influence within and upon that fabric.

### III

#### The Irish and the Catholic Church

"The Catholics in the place are wretchedly poor, and nothing but zeal of a high order could have induced the purchase of even so humble a structure".

"Thornley," Tablet, XI July 20, 1850), p.461.

"He looked upon the North of England as the hope of the Catholic Church in England. In the North they had the vigour and the courage, and the unbroken tradition, and, as he said a little while ago, a compact solidity to give the Church of this diocese a weight, a momentum, of fruitfulness which they did not possess in the South."

Cardinal Manning in Newcastle. D.Chron., October 20, 1882, p.7.



## (i)

Though the armchair theologians were slow to realise and acknowledge it, it was the Irish who made the 'second spring' of Catholicism in England much more than a seasonal phenomenon. Yet, as other investigators of the Anglo-Irish have readily perceived,<sup>1</sup> the volume of contemporary as well as modern writing on the subject easily leads one to the conclusion that Oxford, not Ireland, was responsible for the inflated position of the Roman Catholic Church after mid-century. While Newman, Ward and Pusey indeed reawoke both the advocates and opponents of Catholicism, the converts resulting from the Oxford Movement represented only the smallest fraction of the swollen Catholic congregations. In the north east, where the impact of the conversion movement was but slightly felt, converts accounted for less than 5 percent of the estimated Catholic population.<sup>2</sup> And of those who were converted, evidence suggests that it was due more to the vogue than any dedicated thought, with the subsequent result that many of the conversions were ephemeral. As one priest noted in his return for the Status Animarum of the diocese:

I am sorry to have to remark that the greater number of Converts whose baptisms are registered and who are still resident in the parish, are not worthy of the name of Catholics, as they cannot now be induced to enter the Church. I can only point to one convert as a most exemplary member of the congregation.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See, for example, Treble, Ph.D. Thesis, p.369.
  2. Appendices 1-5. Except where indicated all tables and figures in this chapter are taken from the appendices.
  3. Return of Rev. Edward O'Duyer of Cockermouth, Cumberland, 1865, for the "Status of Baptisms and Marriages, 1850-65," transcribed by Rev. J. Lenders in Status Animarum etc., II p.51. Catholic Diocesan Archives.

The growth of the Catholic population of Durham and Newcastle, in the neighbourhood of 350 percent between 1847 and 1882, was almost wholly dependent on the Irish. Though no complete statistics survive to show the size of the population previous to the Irish inundation, piecemeal evidence suggests that the Catholics probably numbered less than 10,000. The returns made to the House of Lords in 1767 put the Catholics of Durham at 2,733.<sup>1</sup> It seems unlikely that this figure increased greatly until at least the turn of the century. If Darlington is at all typical of the inland towns, there was a decrease in population, for there had been 84 Catholics in 1767, yet only 20 remained in 1800.<sup>2</sup> Within the three large port parishes of Bishopwearmouth, Sunderland and Monkwearmouth, there were 136 Catholics in 1767. By 1808 this figure is reputed to have risen to only 300.<sup>3</sup>

From the turn of the century to the late 1830s there was enough of a rise in the Catholic population to instill a new sense of mission in the Catholic Church. This new growth was mainly confined to the urban centres of Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham and Darlington.<sup>4</sup> While some of these Catholics would have

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1. Cited in A.C.M. Forester, "Catholicism in the Diocese of Durham in 1767," Ushaw Magazine, LXXII (Mar. 1962), p.91.
  2. W.H.D. Longstaffe, History of Darlington (1854), p.250.
  3. R. Surtees, History of Durham (London, 1816-1840), cited in N.C.C., 1885, p.47.
  4. One exception to this urban growth could be found at Brooms in 1836 where a "singular and unlooked for change took place" by the opening of "the Railroad and a new Colliery." John Smith to Miss Taylor of Cornsay, Bròoms, Mar.11, 1836. Smith, calling it an extraordinary case, makes no reference to any Irish and in speaking of the increased number of 'children from the rails' at Sunday school, states that "1/3 at least of the 54 children are of protestant parents." Ushaw MSS. A copy of this letter is in the possession of Rev. W. Vincent Smith to whom I am indebted for its use.

been Irish, the majority were the residuum from the decay of signeurial estates and the result of the movement of sons of the Catholic yeomanry to the towns. As John Bóssy has shown through a study of some rural Catholic estates in Northumberland; the growth of the independent town congregations between 1750 and 1850 was partially the result of the migration of the labourers from the estates of the Catholic gentry.<sup>1</sup> Durham and Northumberland along with Cumberland retained the highest proportion of English Catholics and these were primarily attached to the land, either on the estates of the Catholic gentry or, particularly in Durham, as independent small farmers. Thus the migration off the land played a more important role in changing the social balance of urban congregations in the north east than elsewhere in England. In view of this migration, it is absurd to imply that because the figures for the Irish-born in 1841 nearly matched those of the estimated Catholic population of 1821, most Catholics in England in 1821 were therefore Irish!<sup>2</sup> Such a statement does not even allow for any immigration between 1821 and 1841. Without detailed examination of record books—which are generally lacking—it is difficult to state with any certitude what proportion of the 180,000 Catholics claimed to be in the

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1. "Four Catholic Congregations in Rural Northumberland 1750-1850," Recusant History, IX (April 1967), pp.88-119; "More Northumbrian Congregations," X (Jan. 1969), pp.11-34.
  2. J. Kitching: "No official government estimates of the size of the [Irish] migration are available until 1841, when the first census revealed 289,404 Irish people living in England and Wales, a figure within a few hundred of the Catholic population calculated by the vicar apostolic over 20 years before!" "The Catholic Poor Schools 1800-1845: Pt.II the Schools: Development and Distribution," J. of Educational Administration and History, II (Dec. 1969), p.2.

Northern District in 1839 were Irish.<sup>1</sup> And of the 1,500 Catholics found in the parish of All Saints, Newcastle, in 1838,<sup>2</sup> who can say what proportion were Irish when the pecuniary situation of the English Catholic labourer was often such as to make him the neighbour of his co-religionist from Ireland?

In the decade previous to the famine influx, there is still a lack of evidence to support the assumption that the Irish played any major part in the progress of north-eastern Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> The Irish-born figures bear little relation to Catholic figures and in the building of some of the churches in the decade 1835-45 the Irish played only the most incidental role. Only in the erection of St. Patrick's, Felling, can we see the direct results of a mainly Irish congregation which, in 1841, "amounted to nearly four hundred persons."<sup>4</sup> The opening of St. Mary's, Sunderland, in 1835 was not the result of any pressing need from a swarming Irish population; Father P. Kearney was thought to be acting with the greatest presumption in opening a church for which there were insufficient Catholics.<sup>5</sup> The cathedral of St. Mary in Newcastle,

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1. Ibid., p.3. The figure is that given by Vicar Apostolic Briggs.
  2. "A Statement of the Number of Seats in the Several Churches and Chapels...Within the Parish of All Saints...in the Month of August, 1838," J.S.S.L., I (Oct. 1838), p.379.
  3. John Denvir, writing in 1892, seems to have substantiated the rather late arrival of the Irish in the area in his statement: "In our days, since the Catholic Hierarchy was reestablished, the see of Hexham and Newcastle has been filled by men of the same race as St. Cuthbert, the patron of the diocese. Dr. Chadwick, the second bishop, was a native of Drogheda, and Dr. O'Callaghan, the fourth bishop, was born in London of Irish parentage." The Irish in Britain, p.444.
  4. Catholic Directory, 1843, p.43.
  5. N.C.C., 1936, p.97. In the 1870s the N.C.C. began to publish brief histories of the missions. Most of these were written by the priests and were submitted to the Calendar. They are, in the main, fairly accurate.

1844, is another case in point, for such pretentious structures were seldom built to serve the Irish hordes nor were the Irish particularly attracted to the places of worship for the affluent.

The immediate pre-famine church building in Durham and Newcastle was more the reflection of the church's increased confidence than the direct result of Irish immigration. In the mid-'forties toleration towards Catholics in the north east had reached a new height. Catholics were gradually emerging from their garrets in back alleys and their sequestered chapels. Quite independent of trends elsewhere in England there was a new life-blood in northern Catholicism that soon overcame the former stigma. Counting the heads of Irish Catholics may have accounted for some of this increased confidence but the level of toleration that allowed, for example, Thomas Dunn to become the first Catholic Lord Mayor of Newcastle in 1842, bears no relation to the Irish Catholics. Though assailed by the Tory press "for presuming publicly to attend his own church in preference to accompanying the judges to the Protestant Church of St. Nicholas,"<sup>1</sup> when Dunn's term of office was finished in 1845, he was elected an alderman by a majority of 27 to 2.<sup>2</sup> And in the same year that the cathedral was opened, the first 'Month of Mary' was celebrated in Newcastle and was received so successfully that the Tablet commented, "Perhaps in no place has this devotion been introduced under such favourable circumstances, or responded to with so much spirit as in Newcastle."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Tablet, V (April 19, 1845), p.247.

2. Ibid., p.247; C.H. Blair, The Mayors and Lord Mayors of Newcastle, 1216-1940 (Newcastle, 1940).

3. IV (June 8, 1844), p.358.

In Durham the renewed confidence of the church manifested itself in the establishment of new missions and in the rebuilding of old ones. The mission at Birtley was obscure and dwindling in the hands of the Benedictines: the flock was "a mere handful, widely scattered", the church, "a small, damp, dark, and dilapidated building, in an unfrequented corner of the village".<sup>1</sup> When Rev. J.J. Sheridan O.B.S. took over the management of this mission in 1842, he asserted all the church's new-felt confidence. In two years he transformed the flock "into a large and respectable congregation, producing ten times the original number of communicants," while replacing the obscure church with "a very handsome Gothic building of stone".<sup>2</sup> The new church would soon become overcrowded with Irish workers from the Birtley iron works, but in 1842 they did not provide the motivation for the genesis. Certainly Rev. McEvoy at Houghton-le-Spring was not referring to the Irish when he described in 1835 the "great number of nominal Catholics in this part of the country" as "exceedingly fastidious in their notions of accomodation".<sup>3</sup> Like Rev. Kearney's "massive and imposing fabric designed by Bonomi"<sup>4</sup> in Sunderland, McEvoy's vision of "a new chapel erected on the noble Site"<sup>5</sup> was the product of a more self-assured priesthood.

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1. Tablet, IV (Aug.24, 1844), p.533.

2. Ibid., p.533.

3. Letter: J.A. McEvoy to Rt. Rev. Dr. Penswick of Liverpool, Houghton-le-Spring, Oct.26, 1835. Included in the 10 volumes transcribed by Rev. W. Vincent Smith, vol.I, p.244. Diocesan Archives.

4. N.C.C., 1885, pp.47-8.

5. McEvoy to Penswick, p.244.

But if the earlier period leaves some doubt as to the actual extent of the Irish influence on the church, from the late 'forties onwards there is no doubt of the Irish predominance— a fact which allowed the terms Catholic and Irish to become virtually interchangeable. In the first extant and comprehensive census listing the missions in Durham and Newcastle, that of 1847-49, the Catholic population is revealed to be in excess of 23,000. This figure would have already contained numerous Irish Catholics but from the extant census to 1882, it is clear that

Table 6: Estimated Catholic Population of Durham and Newcastle<sup>1</sup>

	Population		Population
1847-49	23,250	1874	86,397
1852	38,636	1875	92,031
1855	45,684	1882	106,564
1861	56,688		

subsequent to 1850 the pattern of growth is closely identifiable with the proportionate growth of the Irish population. Consistently, however, the Catholic figures exceed those of the estimated Irish population (see Table 5)—a reflection of the indigenous Catholic population and its continued natural increase.

The extent of growth in real terms is easily measured in the expansion of missions, churches and schools.<sup>2</sup> During the

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1. These estimates were compiled from the returns given by the priests and do not appear to have been calculated merely from the baptisms. In some instances the priests indicated that they had undertaken door to door census. Generally, the individual returns reveal that the smaller the area or the later the date, the greater the accuracy.
  2. On the development of schools and Catholic education, see, John F. Hayes, Roman Catholic Education in County Durham, 1580-1870, unpublished M.Ed. Thesis (Durham, 1969). In the early 'forties there were no Catholic poor schools in the area, by 1876 the diocese had 77 such schools. N.C.C., 1876, pp.43-4.

26-year incumbency of Rev. J. Bamber in Sunderland (1852-78), for example, "Catholics multiplied, and from hundreds became thousands"<sup>1</sup>: from the mother church of St. Mary, missions were established at Monkwearmouth, Seaham Harbour and New Tunstall as well as St. Patrick's and St. Joseph's being built in the city itself. Seating accomodation rose from 800 in 1851<sup>2</sup> to 2,700 places in 1872.<sup>3</sup> Where two priests sufficed in 1850, nine were required in 1885. While Sunderland was typical of the coastal towns, there was a simultaneous expansion in the rural iron and coal areas. Representative of many such parishes, Brooms progressed from a struggling mission with one priest ministering to a congregation said to number about 100 farmers in 1832,<sup>4</sup> to be the parent of churches at Blackhill, Byer-Moor, Consett and Stanley with a population over 7,000 Catholics (the densest area in Durham) requiring five priests in 1882.

By 1876 Durham and Newcastle had a total of 56 Catholic Churches, chapels and missions. Thirty-one churches, or 70 per cent, had been built after 1846, as well as the establishment of 10 more missions which would receive churches later in the century. That the greatest part of this development was the

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1. N.C.C., 1885, p.49.

2. The Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship: England and Wales, P.P., 1852-3, LXXXIX, p.cclxix, puts this figure at 80 which is most definitely a mistake that can be confirmed by the original plans for the church plus numerous other primary sources. This mistake should be borne in mind when examining map 9.

3. "An Ecclesiastical Census," editorial, N.D.Chron, Oct.26, 1872, p.2.

4. Catholic Magazine, 1832, cited in N.C.C., 1886, p.47.



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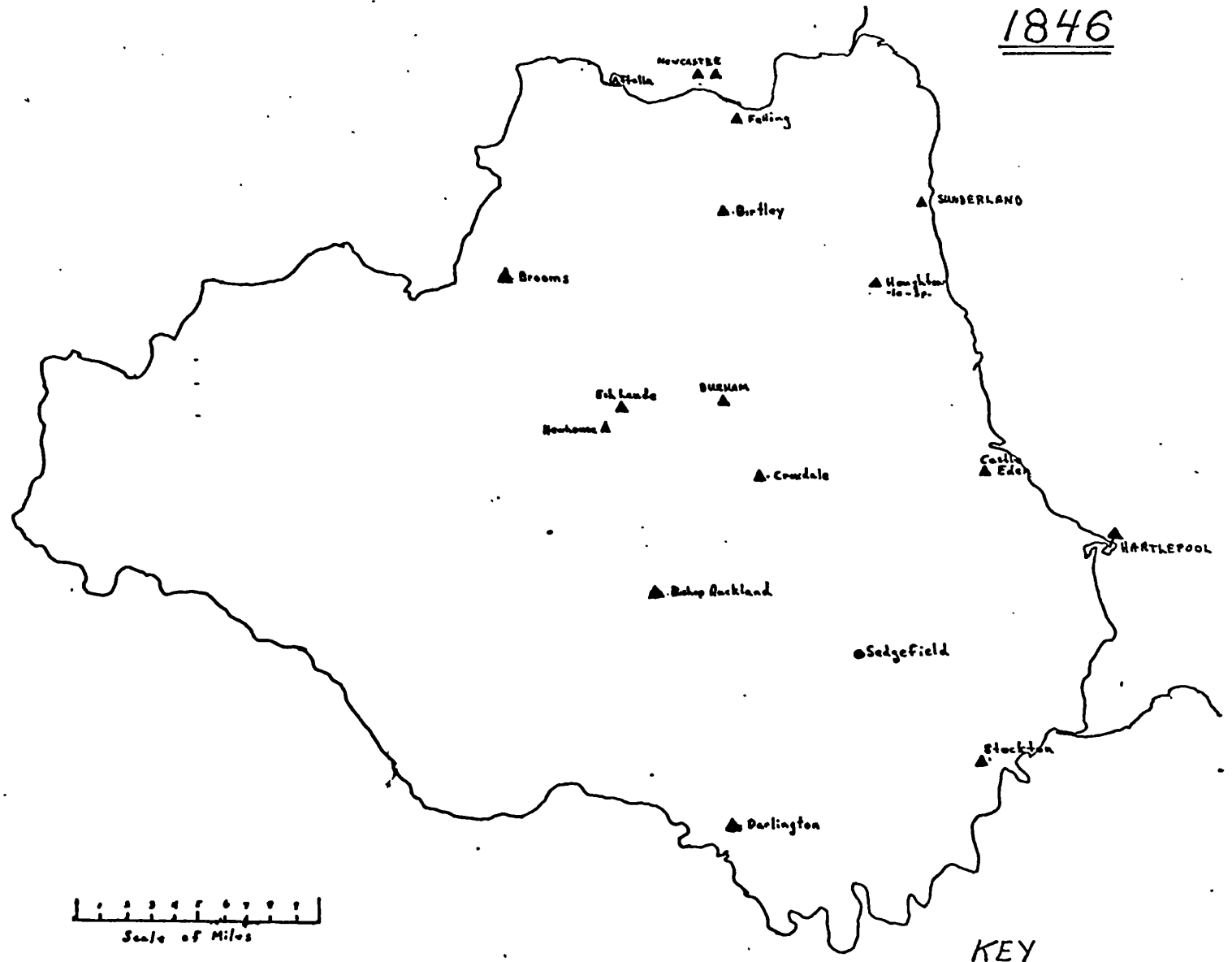
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CATHOLIC CHURCHES &  
MISSIONS OF CO. DURHAM  
& NEWCASTLE,

1846

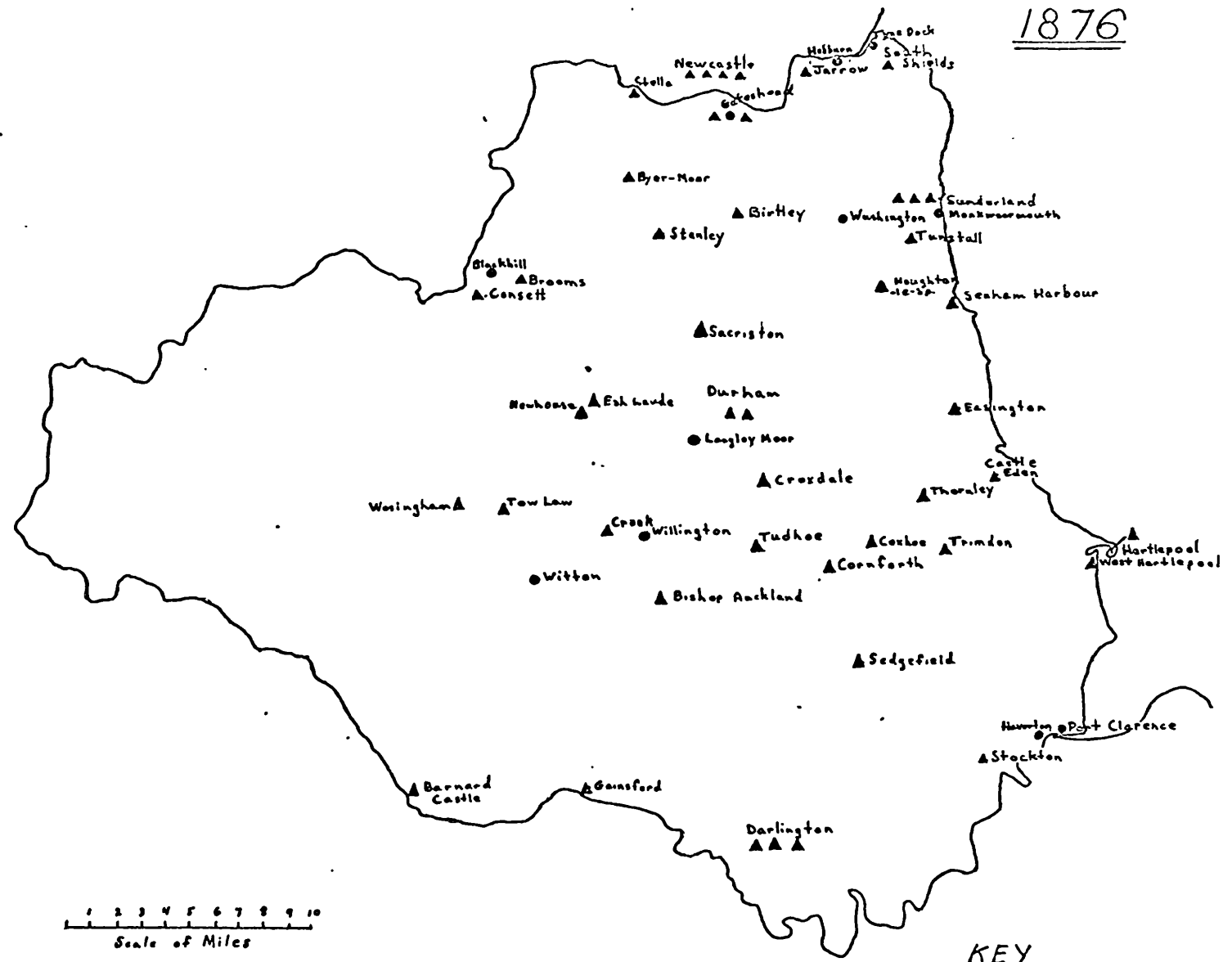


Scale of Miles

KEY  
▲ CHURCHES  
○ MISSIONS

CATHOLIC CHURCHES  
MISSIONS OF CO. DURHAM  
& NEWCASTLE

1876



result of Irish immigration is discernible by comparing the location of the churches built before 1846 with those built after (maps 5 and 6<sup>1</sup>). Of those in existence in 1846 only the missions at Felling, Hartlepool and Bishop Auckland were chiefly responsible to Irish congregations. The others were ancient chapels attached to Catholic estates, old regular missions (some re-developed) and churches built since 1820 to serve 'respectable' urban Catholics. The later map shows not only the Irish increase in the urban centres, especially the coast and Tyneside towns, but three circles of rural-industrial development. First, the iron-coal area served from Birtley, Byer-Moor, Blackhill and Sacriston; second, the iron-coal area to the south-west of Durham City centred on the River Wear and bounded by the missions at Langley Moor, Bishop Auckland, Wolsingham and Newhouse; and third, the chiefly coal district between the chapels at Thornley, Tudhoe and Sedgfield. Though the extreme south of Durham received a good number of Irish in the 1860s with the development of the Tees-side iron works, Middlesbrough, across the Tees in Yorkshire, received the greater proportion of these Irish.

(ii)

The marked increase in the number of churches, which delighted Catholic statisticians as much as did the population growth, was not accomplished without the greatest perseverance on the part of church and clergy. The earlier concern with building churches so that priests like McEvoy might have a "regular attendance of two hundred Catholics, Sunday after Sunday,"<sup>2</sup>

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1. Compiled from information contained in Appendix I.

2. McEvoy to Penswick, op.cit., p.244.

quickly gave way to the more pressing issue of how to accommodate an excessive Catholic population. Where in London the problem of accommodation for the Irish was "insoluble before any attempt had been made to solve it,"<sup>1</sup> in the north east the church, receiving the Irish later in the century and perhaps taking the lesson from the south, soon realised that if missions were not immediately established to the Irish, and churches and schools rapidly built, the great potential for the rebirth of Catholicism would be lost. The Irish were faithful Catholics when attended by priests or when they had access to a church, but when left unattended their spiritual as well as social and moral decline was rapid. On the north Tyne, the Tablet correspondent, commenting on the lack of churches in that area, described the "increasing number of Irish Catholics becoming located in this district...[as] living in a state little short of barbarism".<sup>2</sup> Outside the urban centres the situation was scarcely better. As a Franciscan Father had found the Irish isolated in the coalfields of Wales, retaining "very little of what they brought from their own country, save a love of whiskey, and a notoriety for being foremost in a row,"<sup>3</sup> so over the coalfields of Durham the Irish were similarly isolated from their church and rapidly becoming indifferent to their religion. "What multitudes of Catholics", the Vicar Apostolic exclaimed in 1848,

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1. S. W. Gilley, Evangelical and Roman Catholic Missions to the Irish in London 1830-1870, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (Cambridge, 1970), p.11.
  2. XIV (Aug.6, 1853), p.501.
  3. Father Elzear Torregiani, Franciscan Missions Among the Colliers and Ironworkers of Monmouthshire (London, 1876), p.44.

in various parts of our District, are deprived of the abundant means of Salvation which our Divine Redeemer has so plentifully imparted to his Church...multitudes too distant from a Church or Chapel where Mass is celebrated, and where they could enjoy the happiness of approaching the Holy Sacraments...they are chained irrevocably to the spot which denies them every spiritual consolation...alas! these instances of spiritual destitution are too numerous and too widely spread over our District....<sup>1</sup>

But while all agreed with the Tablet's solution to "take religion to their own doors",<sup>2</sup> the problems of providing accommodation for a flock were staggering. As Rev. Lenders has remarked of the Catholic incumbent of St. Cuthbert's, Durham, in 1850, Provost Platt, "if he saw with great joy that vast number of sturdy catholics coming to his parish, it must have been too with some sense of terror when he understood the duty of caring for the spiritual needs of an every-day increasing population...dispersed over a vast area."<sup>3</sup> Platt concentrated on building another church in Durham City but it would hardly suffice for those rural-ly situated from Stanley to Easington. After purchasing the Wheatsheaf Inn and converting the large dining hall into a temporary chapel, Platt was shortly forced to make various extensions into the garden to house only the neighbourhood Catholics.<sup>4</sup> In the Hartlepoons, Canon Knight and Father Harivel were facing an equally demanding situation. In 1856 Harivel was holding Sunday afternoon and evening services for 'adults only' in a

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1. Hogarth, Pastoral, Oct.4, 1848, Crowe Collection.
  2. XIII (June 5, 1852), p.358; see also, K.S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London, 1963), p.125.
  3. History of the Parish of Sacriston, pp.11-12.
  4. The Church of Our Lady of Mercy and St. Godric, centenary publication (Durham, 1964), p.4. Ushaw Pamphlets Collection.

rented room over a warehouse in West Hartlepool. Ten years later, still unable to house the congregation, Harivel was forced to take a lease on the Central Hall.<sup>1</sup> While the mission of St. Patrick's, Sunderland, was being established above the 'Magpie' public house,<sup>2</sup> in Crook 150 to 200 Catholics were temporarily receiving the sacraments in two houses between which the partition had been removed.<sup>3</sup> In those places fortunate enough to have a church or chapel, three masses on Sunday were common while additions to the churches were made wherever possible. Gateshead, in particular, was severely pressed for room in the 'fifties: a gallery was added to St. Patrick's, Felling, in 1853 which doubled the seating capacity but still it was necessary to hold concurrent masses in a large corn warehouse and in St. John's school.<sup>4</sup> The rest of Gateshead's Catholics went across the river to the churches in Newcastle but with three masses being held in each church in that town, there was scarcely any extra room.

In the numerous accounts of the tribulations of the pioneer missions to the Irish—the stuff of later-day eulogies—there lingers the intimation that forces hostile to Catholicism necessitated the use of such inauspicious and overcrowded places of worship. But however much anti-Catholicism deterred the progress of the church,<sup>5</sup> it was not bigotry but the lack of money that

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1. Sharratt, op.cit., p.27.

2. N.C.C., 1885, p.49.

3. Tablet, XV (Nov.4, 1854), p.695.

4. Hogarth, Pastoral, Jan.2, 1852, U.C. III; N.C.C., 1939, pp.100-1.

5. See, Chp.IV.

was the chief determinant. Even in the earlier period of building and redevelopment, finances were the restraining factor. Dr. Briggs, Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District, had appealed in 1836 for the "attention and sympathy" of the wealthy in his flock to alleviate the wants that were "daily presenting themselves".<sup>1</sup> And Rev. McEvoy had virtually written the epithet for the impoverished mission of the period when he prayed, "Oh that some benevolent mortal would just give us one thousand pounds what an oasis would spring up in this moral wilderness!"<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the "charitable friends [who] sent out appeals on behalf of Father McEvoy,"<sup>3</sup> were, up to the late 'forties, the only source of income for the Catholic Church. In the absence of a Catholic middle class, these appeals were directed at "those whom the Almighty has placed in easier circumstances",<sup>4</sup> of whom Durham and Northumberland had more than their fair share. The Salvins of Tudhoe, the Riddells of Felton, the Dunns, Hansons and Bewicks of Newcastle, the Silvertops of Minsteracres, the Erringtons of Highwardens, the Taylor-Smith family of Tow Law and the Charltons of Heleyside were all 'irrepressible Papist' of high social standing and income. But although their names were always to be found beside the £5 and £10 donations at the top of every list of subscribers to the myriad funds, these families did not generally go out of their way to be philanthropic.

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1. Pastoral, July 4, 1836, U.C. II.

2. McEvoy to Penswick, op.cit., p.243.

3. N.C.C., 1938, p.110.

4. Public Appeal of Rev. James Worswick, 1796. Quoted in Rev. W. Vincent Smith, Catholic Tyneside 1534-1860 (Newcastle, 1931), p.74.



Despite the fact that the Bishops implored "those whom Divine Providence had blessed with abundance of earthly riches, to share a portion of them with their fellow-Christians who are in need,"<sup>1</sup> most of the wealthy (excepting the converts) were not over-generous in aiding those missions burdened with Irish immigrants. Perhaps realising the possible consequences of establishing precedents in alms giving to the Irish, the gentry tightened their purse strings well before the major influx. When it was revealed in 1844 that the Northern District Fund had amounted in the past year to only £205 16s. 4d. a writer to the Tablet declared:

Really, one feels not so much indignant as humbled; not so much provoked to passion as sorely grieved at heart upon witnessing what at least would seem such a palpable proof and exhibition of our niggardly disposition, our apathy in religion, and our servitude to Mammon....Where, then lies the blame? I say it with all respect and a feeling of profound regret, it lies with the Catholic gentry....It may probably be that the Croxdale and Minsteracre subscriptions have been swelled by the donation of a few pounds from the respective lords of the manner, but that is all....<sup>2</sup>

When a 'Constant Reader' attempted to exonerate the north-eastern gentry by stating that there were 13 gentlemen in Durham and Northumberland supporting at their own expense Catholic Chapels and priests, the self-styled 'Ecclesiophilist' retorted that the Catholic gentry take no "lively or active interest in Catholic affairs" and stated, "If they cannot equal the generosity of the seven Catholic merchants of Liverpool, who have lately presented £50 each to their Diocesan Funds, let them at least bestow

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1. Bishop of Abydos (Francis Mostyn) and cum successione Bishop of Longo (Wm. Riddell), Pastoral, quoted in the Tablet, IV (Oct.19, 1844), p.661.

2. 'Ecclesiophilist' to the editor, IV (Oct.26, 1844), p.681.

their £10, or their £20, towards the same object here."<sup>1</sup> But the established Catholic families did not hold the Irish in too high a regard—at best the Irish were to be pitied. As the Catholic 'Northumbrian Lady' once expostulated after dinner: she was "an English Catholic, not an Irish one, which is all the difference in the world. English Catholics are responsible beings who are taught right from wrong, whereas Irish Catholics, belonging to a yet savage nation, know no better and are perhaps excusable on that account."<sup>2</sup> When under the direction of Cardinal Manning the Catholic Church in England orientated itself toward the Irish Catholics, the landed families, who felt that they alone had preserved the faith, were resentful and even less inclined to help the usurpers of their perogatives. Thus the wealthy, while willing to help liquidate debts on cathedrals like St. Mary's<sup>3</sup> or occasionally pay for a stained window in their honour at a new chapel,<sup>4</sup> *seldom made more than a token gesture toward* alleviating the destitution and overcrowding at many of the Irish missions.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid., (Nov.2, 1844), p.693.

2. L.E.O. Charlton, Recollections of a Northumbrian Lady [Barbara Charlton] 1815-66 (London, 1949), p.244; see also, the comments of Mrs. Beckwith to Lady Londonderry, Chp.IV,p164.

3. Tablet, V (July 19, 1845), p.455.

4. Below one window in St. Patrick's, Consett, for example, reads: "Pray for the Good Estate of Henry Silvertop" the benefactor.

5. The sympathies of the rich were 'justly excited' by the distress in Ireland in 1847 but since Pope Pius IX had directed the clergy to remind the wealthy "that the value of riches lies not in the money-bags of the rich, but in the food of the poor", etc. it was difficult for the wealthy to avoid giving a fairly large donation. "Encyclical Letter of our most Holy Lord Pius IX...to all Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, and Bishops, To Implore the Divine Help for The Kingdom of Ireland," 1847, Crowe Collection. Another exception

When the District Fund dropped to £169 14s. 8d. in 1846, Mostyn and Riddell were aghast and sought a scapegoat in "some of the Clergy [who] do not sufficiently exert themselves to promote it [the Fund] in their respective Missions".<sup>1</sup> It was an unfair attack, for many of the priests could barely support themselves; yet it was a clear indication to the clergy that appeals to the wealthy would no longer suffice and that the money for the needs of the poor must in the future come from the poor, themselves. The situation, though extreme in the north east, was not unique. As the Rambler pointed out in 1849, (partially to goad the rich):

The rich and noble can no longer be nursing fathers to the Church. With all that is done by some few among them, they are powerless to extricate us from our troubles; their day of distinction is past; they must take their place as units in the vast crowds of the entire Catholic people, and claim no more consideration from men than they receive from the hands of Almighty God himself; The poor are the only resource that remains to us untried.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, as Bishop Hogarth was gratified to notice in 1849, the sum collected from the much larger but much poorer congregation showed an increase over the previous years. But still, the amount was "small compared with our numerous and increasing demands".<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to rectify this situation, Hogarth

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to the general parsimony of the rich was shortly before the passage of the Educational Act of 1870 when, extremely provoked by the Government action, the Catholic gentry is recorded as having subscribed £40,000 towards schools, facilitating the rapid erection of some "30 or 40 schools" in the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. N.C.C., 1934, p.90.

1. "To the Clergy," Dec.14, 1846, U.C. II.

2. "Where Does Our Strength Lie?," XIV (May 1849), p.4.

3. "To the Clergy," Sept.24, 1849, U.C. III.

struck upon the idea of "One Halfpenny bestowed, Each Week in the year, by every Adult Catholic in this District, would abundantly suffice for all the growing wants of the District."<sup>1</sup> Since the 'Catholic Rent' system introduced into Ireland by the 'Liberator', Daniel O'Connell, operated on the same principle of collection from the Irish peasantry, Hogarth's idea, while not novel, had the most fitting of precedents. For those who doubted such a scheme, the Bishop could point to the "unexampled sacrifices of the poor Catholics of South Shields and Thornley," who had provided for themselves "every facility for the practice of their religion".<sup>2</sup> It was therefore established as a general rule that "One Halfpenny per week shall be collected from every Individual who has attained the age of fourteen."<sup>3</sup> Two months later the Tablet was commenting on the success of the scheme;<sup>4</sup> twelve months later, further praises.<sup>5</sup> After only a year of operation the Fund had risen to "three times the average of former years."<sup>6</sup> But the Bishop had no desire to shift the whole of the financial burdens of the church to the shoulders of the poor; the rich, along with the humbler English Catholics, continued to be implored to fulfil their obligations. In his pastoral of January 1852 Hogarth drew the attention of the affluent to the pressing

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1. Pastoral, Feb. 1850, U.C. III.

2. Pastoral, Nov. 14, 1850, U.C. III.

3. Ibid.

4. XII (Feb.1, 1851), p.68.

5. XII (Dec.13, 1851), p.790.

6. Pastoral, cited in the Gateshead Observer, Jan.24, 1852, p.5.

need for churches in Gateshead, Wolsingham and Crook.<sup>1</sup> One month later, perhaps moved by closer observation of his flock, he delivered one of his most pleading pastorals and there was no doubt either for whom or to whom he was pleading. "There never was, in the entire history of the Church, greater necessity of enlarging your Charity than at this period," he began,

In every part of the empire the poorest and most destitute, from the Sister Kingdom, are gathered round our dwellings, bringing distress and poverty, such as men never before witnessed amongst us...demanding from us Church accomodation, such as we have no means, unaided by our more wealthy laity, of procuring....

...when we cast our eyes over our extensive Diocese and witness the squalid poverty of the multitudes which are daily added to our flock; when we behold the wretchedness and destitution which accompanies them, wherever they take up their abode; but above all, when we are made acquainted with the full extent of spiritual misery, to which they have been reduced by poverty, famine and disease; our heart sickens at the contemplation of such scenes. We can no longer silently mourn over the wide spread dislocation of our flock, we feel impelled to raise our voices...we call upon all who have been blessed by his bounty with earthly wealth, to listen to our pleadings for the relief of the poor.<sup>2</sup>

But it had little effect on those it was designed to motivate. The Tablet, commenting on the worthwhileness of the halfpenny scheme after its second year, stated "there is no doubt that this principle is not only practicable, but that to it alone is owing the great improvement that has taken place".<sup>3</sup> Hogarth realised this as well and in the following years he made an all out effort to make the collecting system comprehensive. As his orientation became increasingly proletarian, his pastorals lavished hosannahs on the labouring poor. "To them," he stated in 1857, the nation

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1. Ibid., p.5.

2. Pastoral, Feb.13, 1853, U.C. III.

3. XIV (Jan.29, 1853), p.67.

"owes that temporal prosperity...they are our Brethren."<sup>1</sup> By the late 1850s little thought<sup>t</sup> was given to extracting monies from the wealthy as the halfpennies of the poor became almost the sole source of income for the diocese. Proud of his success, the Bishop declared the scheme to be "one of the wisest and most beneficial means ever devised or attempted to be carried out for the reformation and re-establishment in society of those who, either from misfortune or neglect, would otherwise become abandoned, and entirely lost to society."<sup>2</sup>

Besides the Bishop's efforts for the central allocating fund and the county-wide collections at every church on behalf of the Catholic Poor-School Committee<sup>3</sup> (also dependent on the Irish pence), there were numerous appeals at the local level. Partial to his own system, the Bishop scorned these "painful exhibitions of Clergy wasting their precious time, and often, while exercising this humiliating office, exposing themselves to the grossest insults, when a Church or a School is to erected for the benefit of the poor."<sup>4</sup> But the local approach was not without success. That the Bishop of Liverpool was forced to warn against "the unauthorized begging by strangers...under the pretence of erecting Chapels, as a sure way of obtaining money for their support,"<sup>5</sup> is indicative not only of the effectiveness of such begging but also of its general prevalence. Again, it was

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1. Pastoral, Feb.16, 1857, U.C. IV.

2. Pastoral, Feb.19, 1862, U.C. IV.

3. See, Hogarth et. al. on Poor Schools, Feb.15, 1848, Crowe Collection; Annual Reports of the Catholic Poor-School Committee, 1848 et passim.

4. Pastoral, Feb.10, 1853, U.C. III.

5. "To the Clergy of the Diocese of Liverpool," June 4, 1852, Crowe Collection.

the labouring Irish who subscribed their hard-earned pennies. At Jarrow, for example, the Irish, through 6d. donations managed to raise £900 over a five year period to provide a Catholic school for more than 800 children.<sup>1</sup> As Rev. Belaney stated to the congregation at Bishop Auckland in a visiting sermon for funds:

No priest ever found the Irish slow to give, where religion is concerned, or where charity is concerned. As this congregation consists chiefly of Irishmen, I know that it will not be found that there is any slowness of giving here. Your only regret will be that you cannot give all you have, instead of the little, as you will deem it, which your humble circumstances limit you to give.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly the former reliance on the wealthy or on the yeomenry for the maintenance of north-eastern Catholicism had been completely reversed when Belaney declared of the Irish

that, without state endowments or any kind, or the assistance of men in power of high places, you build churches and schools as if the wealth of the world... were yours. In this way, this miraculous way, it is, that...the Catholic Church...is now...through Irish settlers, revisting her ancient seats, restoring her desolate places, and rebuilding her broken-down alters. This would seem to be your mission, and what a glorious one it is!<sup>3</sup>

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1. Cited in J.F. Clarke, M.A. Thesis, p.28.
  2. The Reign of Sin, p.16. Cf. Archbishop Manning, Ireland: A Letter to Earl Grey (London, 1868), p.12: "There can hardly be found in Great Britain a population poorer than those who are driven by poverty from Ireland....Nevertheless, in all parts of England the same spirit of generosity and of piety, in everything which relates to the Church and the clergy, is to be found." Ushaw Pamphlets Collection. Similar opinions as these were also expressed by W.G. Todd, op.cit., p.11, and by the writer of the "Irish in England," Nation, Letter IV (July 27, 1872), p.470.
  3. The Reign of Sin, p.16. Belaney was wont to use rather long adjectival phrases, these have been omitted here without altering the meaning.

(iii)

Since the Catholic Church had operated primarily from the pennies of the poor with only a minimal amount of financial support from the indigenous population, their building record within such a short period was an impressive one by any standard. In view of the increased Catholic population throughout the period, however, it is clear that the pace of the building was consistently behind the needs of the congregations. Church to population ratios show that for every church in 1849 there were approximately 1,300 Catholics. By 1861 this ratio had become 1:2,025, by 1882, 1:2,040. But the actual average number of communicants per church was much less than this, for not all Catholics regularly attended.

A fairly reliable measure of the number of practicing Catholics are the list of Easter communicants. If a Catholic is to be considered a member of his church he must practice his faith at least once a year during one of the Sundays between Ash Wednesday and the Sunday following Easter Sunday.<sup>1</sup> This obligation, the dereliction of which by an able-bodied Catholic is a serious sin, is part of the 'Easter Duties' and a record of those performing the duty is kept by each priest. Table 7 list the available statistics for Easter Communicants in the period and shows the percentage they constituted of the adult and total Catholic population as abstracted from only those churches which gave returns for Easter Communicants. As the ratio of churches to Catholics remained fairly constant, the

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1. This normally applies to persons over the age of 12 or 13. The very aged or sick while excused from attendance, were normally visited by the priest and included in the list of Easter Communicants.



Table 7: Easter Communicants in Co. Durham and Newcastle

	Easter Communicants	% of Estimated Adult Catholic Population	% of Estimated Total Catholic Population
1847-49	4,463	34.1	22.2
1852	10,409	36.1	27.7
1855	19,824	60.0	43.3
1861	22,630	74.4	46.3
1875	28,031	n.g.	35.9
1882	38,203	n.g.	39.1

small percentages in the first three returns indicates that 'leakage' from the church was considerable.<sup>1</sup> Some of those who had lapsed from the practice of their religion in the period before 1855 would have been returned to the fold later. But a number of factors, not the least of which was the paucity of churches, were operating against the church's total retention of her flock.

For those Catholics situated in rural areas, the distance to be travelled to attend church was instrumental in hindering attendance. Though there are numerous accounts of Irishmen astounding the non-Catholic residents by tramping ten miles or more every Sunday to attend mass,<sup>2</sup> the majority of Irish lacked

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1. Most of this leakage occurred between 1849-52, for in the next 3 years the adult population increased by 15 percent while Easter Communicants rose by 15.6 percent. The omissions in the returns for 1861 prevents worthwhile comparisons and since adults are not listed in 1875 and 1882, it is difficult to estimate the extent of leakage. That the whole Catholic population increased by 15 percent between 1875 and 1882 and Easter Communicants rose by only 3.2 percent suggests some leakage but the difference between the two percentages is mainly due to the number of births in that period.
  2. According to Rev. Lenders, "at Bishop Auckland, non-Catholics were in astonishment, when they saw Sunday after Sunday a great number of Irish on their way to Tudhoe", The History of the Parish of Prudhoe on Tyne (n.d.), pp.7-8. Ushaw Pamphlets Collection.

the inclination unless prompted by a priest. In 1865 the church at Stella took in a flock of over 2,000 dispersed over an area of roughly 100 square miles. The Catholics at Dunston before 1882 had to walk over two miles to St. Joseph's in Gateshead if they wished to hear mass,<sup>1</sup> while the mission established at Easington in 1866 took in a vast area of eastern Durham containing a good proportion of those Irish Catholics who later in the century would be accommodated by four churches. As missions could not be established for every dozen or so Catholics tied to some obscure colliery, only the most ambitious priest could counter the leakage that the country miles encouraged.

Prevailing economic conditions also affected attendance: as labourers were the first to feel the effects of industrial cutbacks, the Irish were most often the ones forced to pack up their households and move to where new employment could be found. Just as the Protestant incumbent complained that "a congregation may be collected this winter but before the next [its] members are in great measure dispersed,"<sup>2</sup> so the priest who had at last assembled his straggling flock was often faced with a layoff or shut-down in the town's major industry. The result was a substantial reduction in his flock. The closure of the Rosedale and Ferry Hill Iron Works in the 1880s, for example, forced the newly independent mission of Trimdon to re-unite with the parent mission at Cornforth, for the congregation was forced to seek employment elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Despite the attraction of a local church

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1. N.C.C., 1935, pp.95-6.

2. Observations Respecting Pitmen, p.4; see also, Appendix VIII, p.28ln.

3. N.C.C., 1893, p.56.

to the Irish immigrant, he was forced to seek work when and where he could find it and more often than not, it was in an area removed from both priest and mission. The church was unable to prevent this undesirable mobility and met with little success when it tried to plan for future needs. St. William's, Darlington, was built in 1870 to accommodate an expected influx of Irish labourers at the proposed new iron works, but it turned out to be something of a white elephant when "unfortunately the development did not mature owing to the drop in the iron trade."<sup>1</sup> Chained to the soil of the immediate present while the flock remained less rooted, the church was never wholly effective in retaining those for whom it had made provision.

One could also point to the workhouse,<sup>2</sup> mixed marriages,<sup>3</sup>

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1. N.C.C., 1935, p.94.
  2. Spiritual provision for Catholics in the workhouses drew a great deal of attention from the Catholic Institute and from the bishops. As most Irish paupers in the north east were given 'outdoor' relief, the Returns on Religion of Workhouse Inhabitants, P.P., 1854, LV, pp.461-78, revealed an average of only 147 Catholics in the houses of Durham and Newcastle at the dates of the inquiry. It was ascertained in 1868 that for all the union workhouses in the four northern counties there were only 300 Catholic children. Circular of Catholic Poor-School Committee, April, 1868, U.C. IV. Of Catholics in the area's workhouses, provision was made for their attendance at church on Sundays and for visitations by priests. It is also worthy of note that Newcastle's workhouse was the second in England to allow special Catholic services on Sundays. Tablet XXVIII (Oct.7, 1882), p.591.
  3. Bishop Hogarth wrote in 1858: "We deeply regret the rapidly increasing numbers of mixed marriages in our Diocese, and ...earnestly exhort you, Dearly Beloved Brethren, to discourage them by every prudent means in your power." April 20. U.C. IV. In an effort to discourage mixed marriages but still retain those Catholics who might find them unavoidable, the following note appeared in the N.C.C. for the first time in 1875: "Though the Church most strongly condemns mixed marriages, knowing full well the miseries in time and eternity generally following such unions, and to show her abhorrence of such unions refuses to give the Bride the Nuptial Blessing, still for grave and weighty reasons the bishop can grant a dispensation on application of the priest." p.46.

working on Sundays and Protestant proselytising<sup>1</sup> as factors contributing to the loss of faith of many Irish Catholics. Drunkenness, particularly in the crowded urban slum, was a major source of religious neglect;<sup>2</sup> while as long as there continued to be a shortage of Catholic schools, the second generation would be vulnerable to 'pagan habits'. But of prime importance was the scarcity and very mentality of the priesthood in the immediate post-famine period when their presence was most required.

When in 1851 the Catholic population of Durham and Newcastle approximated 25,000, they were served by 24 priests. Newcastle, with a Catholic population between 10,000 and 15,000 in 1851, had but four resident priests. Not surprising, then, that only 3,389 persons in Newcastle attended morning mass on 'Census Sunday',<sup>3</sup> nor that many of the Irish Catholics dwelling in the parish of All Saints, Newcastle, fell into the abyss of irreligion to be numbered with the "thousands in England with Irish blood in their veins, and indeed baptized by Catholic priests, who are now [1892] profoundly indifferent to all religion and absolutely ignorant of the Catholic faith."<sup>4</sup> In their own country the Irish lived under the eye, if not the thumb, of the Irish priests. "If they were not at Mass," commented Rev. Morris, "they were sure to hear of it."<sup>5</sup> But in the heart of an English slum, just

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1. See, Chp.IV (iii), pp.125-141.

2. See, Chp.II, pp.39-46.

3. Religious Census, p.421.

4. Rev. J. Morris, Catholic England in Modern Times, p.95.

5. Ibid., p.81.

as in being isolated in the country, the Irishman could become anonymous and unknown by the priests who were far too busy to attend to the individual needs of all the flock, let alone to seek out those who might be falling by the wayside. Since the alien Irishman often harboured a dislike of English priests in general, he was not automatically attracted to the church.

Similarly, the English priesthood was not always over warm to the Irish, especially where their communicants had been mainly English. While not discouraging Irish attendance, the incumbents at the ancient chapels or at the 'respectable' urban churches (many of which maintained pew rents) did not exert themselves to the extent they might have done to prevent the Irish from lapsing from the practice of the faith. Previous to the Irish inundation the lives of many English priests had been modestly comfortable; if they lacked the stipends or the status of Anglican clergymen, they still enjoyed many of the same comforts while, within Catholic circles they commanded much respect. The prejudices of English priests were not greatly different from those of their most respected communicants: insular and class conscious. Though they could hardly express it in public, one suspects that many of the English clergy held opinions on the Irish that were not too different from those of the 'Northumbrian Lady'.<sup>1</sup> It was difficult for this priest, often eating from a well-laid table and provided with his own church, to conceive of his life in terms of Christly suffering, humility or deprivation. Even for a large flock of very poor Irish such as those in Gateshead in 1843, it was not expected that a priest should

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1. Above, p.79.

"attend solely to this poor Mission...[when] he could not calculate upon raising above £25 a year from the members of this congregation."<sup>1</sup> In the 1844 pastoral of Bishop Mostyn and Riddell in which they appealed on behalf of the poorer Catholics of Gateshead, Felling, Bishop Auckland and Easington, the funds were, quite properly, for "the erection of places of worship suitable to their circumstances."<sup>2</sup> As late as 1853 the implication was made by the Northern Catholic Calendar that there was no possibility of a priest "residing on the spot" of the new St. Patrick's, Wall Knoll, because the "Chapel [was] situated in the poorest part of Newcastle, amidst a dense population of poor Irish."<sup>3</sup> It would, of course, be wrong to imply that English priests did not carry out their ministrations with great devotion, that they failed to set high examples of Christian charity worthy of their vocations or that they all lived in easy circumstances. The examples of priests early in the century riding on horseback with their portable altars or distributing alms at the door of an impoverished mission are far too abundant. But of complete sacrifice or emulation of Christ, the instances are non-existent. Charity and kindness had their place, but, as the Tablet noted: while "the event of a few stray sheep being brought into the good fold" was the subject of much rejoicing by the English clergy on Tyneside

thousands—mainly of poor Irish—who were baptised in the Church, and who probably at home in their own 'Island of Saints' led edifying lives, now never visit

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1. Catholic Directory, 1843, p.43.
  2. Quoted in Tablet, IV (Oct.19, 1844), p.661.
  3. p.53.

a chapel; and on the Sunday may be seen in groups together, lounging away those sacred hours in idleness and sin which on the Sundays of their youth they spent in the temple of God.<sup>1</sup>

Not only then was there a scarcity of priests, but the values and priorities of some of these priests contributed to the loss of many Irish Catholics. To offset this loss and to provide for the spiritual needs of the Irish required a major re-education of the English clergy. With the Irish rapidly making Catholicism a religion of the very poor, it was soon impossible for the English priest to think in terms of "large sums of money from his flock for his own private use and benefit"<sup>2</sup> or to think of "lavishing large sums of money on some favoured structure".<sup>3</sup> But the Irish did not force the re-education of the clergy, for simultaneous with the influx from Ireland was the equally significant importation of new Ultramontane ideas from France. What had emerged on the continent was the "demand for the re-catholicization of Catholic social methods in a better personal witness to that ideal of 'poverty of the spirit' which was reborn in the flowering of monastic and neo-feudal and pseudo-medieval romance".<sup>4</sup> What better place for the practical operation of this 'holy poverty' than among the congregations of destitute Irish Catholics! Hence, the leading innovator and exponent of these ideas, the Brotherhood of St. Vincent de Paul, was introduced into every major Irish ghetto in England in the early 1840s.

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1. XIII (June 5, 1852), p.358.

2. "The Progress of Catholic Poverty," Rambler, V (Mar. 1850), p.204.

3. Hogarth, Pastoral, quoted in the Gateshead Observer, Jan. 24, 1852, p.5.

4. S.W. Gilley, Ph.D. Thesis, p.5.

Newcastle formed a 'conference' of St. Vincent de Paul in February 1846 to "manifest an example of the Catholic virtue ...amidst the decay of piety, and the prevalence of wickedness".<sup>1</sup> In the first report of the Newcastle Brotherhood in 1848, the city was described as having been divided into "Visiting Districts" where not only poor Catholics were attended, "but also sought out [were] whole families and individuals who, for years had neglected their spiritual duties".<sup>2</sup> The report also spoke of the great number of Famine and Fever victims to whom the Brethren had distributed furniture, clothing and bedding. But with only 20 active members each devoting but a small portion of their time to these works, the Brotherhood cannot be said to have flourished up to the time of the first report. However much the Brotherhood might proclaim the Catholic Church to be "peculiarly the Church of the Poor"<sup>3</sup> and despite the increasing stream of Catholic journalism extolling the "three things which pre-eminently mark the Christian life and advance it in the scale of holy perfection ...[as] POVERTY, HUMILITY and PATIENCE",<sup>4</sup> the actual endorsement of these ideas was by no means immediate or wide spread. As The Brotherhood alluded to in their financial report: "the influx of poor from Ireland since the first commencement of the famine

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1. Mostyn and Riddell to the clergy, "The Letter Intimating the Gracious Approval of the Bishops of the District on the formation of the Newcastle Conference," 1846. In possession of Rev. W.V. Smith.
  2. Report of the Conference of Newcastle-On-Tyne of the Brotherhood of St. Vincent De Paul, from its establishment, 15th February, 1846, up to Christmas, 1848 (Newcastle, 1849), p.7. Copy in possession of Rev. W. V. Smith.
  3. Ibid., p.8.
  4. Catholic Magazine, 3rd ser., III (Jan. 1844), p.1.



in that country has been very great, so as to render it impossible for the Catholic charities in this Town adequately to attend even to a tithe of their necessities...[but] there has been no corresponding increase in the resources of the Brotherhood".<sup>1</sup> Their total income for the two-year period amounted to less than £100 with only £2 being listed as the amount "Collected For Irish."<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the Brotherhood of St. Vincent de Paul were confined to a narrow urban area of mainly Irish poor explains much of the conceptual removal of holy poverty from the bulk of the clergy. Particularly to the pastor without any sizeable Irish flock, the new ideas must have seemed theologically abstract and somewhat out of context. Though it is difficult to set a date on the diffusion of a concept whose adoption by individuals must always be in question, the wider adherence to the idea that the poor were the embodiment of Christ while the priests were akin to St. Francis, seems to have emerged in Durham and Newcastle in the early 'fifties. The 'martyrdom' of Bishop Riddell and those other priests who lost their lives in administering to the fever victims in 1847 certainly drew public and clerical attention to the Christ-like sacrifice and this dedication to the flock was dramatically repeated in the cholera outbreak of 1853.<sup>3</sup> While these events set noble examples for other English

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1. Report of the Brotherhood, 1848, p.9.

2. Ibid., p.10.

3. See, Chp.II, p.55. Philip Hughes has remarked of the priests who administered to the 'famine fever' victims in Liverpool in 1845, that they "may be pardoned if they were less interested than the young Dr. Wiseman though becoming, about the niceties of ecclesiastical deportment", "The English Catholics in 1850," in George A. Beck ed. The English Catholics,

priests, the daily operation of the concept throughout the north east could be evidenced in the devoted ministrations of the Irish priests. Though the "Irish church could not openly approve the doctrine, which was tainted by Italian anti-clericalism,"<sup>1</sup> holy poverty had, by necessity, long been in operation in Ireland. Provost Consitt, in a visit to Donegal in the 'fifties was greatly influenced by the Irish poverty and piety and upon his return to Durham "he spoke most feelingly of the heavy trials of the poor people, and seemed to be quite won over by the noble qualities he had observed in the devoted parish-priests and their flocks."<sup>2</sup> Ministering to the poor and seeking neither fame nor riches was second nature to most of the Irish priests. When it was realised in England that the wealth of the Catholic Church was dependent on the Irish poor, the priests were heartily encouraged to let the Irish "feel and see that the Church is pre-eminently the Church of the poor. Let them see in us no signs of a spirit of worldliness and dependence on secular maxims".<sup>3</sup> The predominance of this type of polemic when set next to its personification in the Irish priests or in the Brotherhood of

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1850-1950 (London, 1950), p.56. While this may have been true for some of the urban priests, there were still many priests in the rural districts in 1845 very much concerned with such niceties. Manning, much later in the century, could still bitterly refer to the comfortable laity: "'What are our people doing? Oh, I forgot; they have no time. They are examining their consciences or praying for success in finding a really satisfying maid.'" M. Rickett, Faith and Society (1932), p.101, quoted in Inglis, op.cit., p.132.

1. S.W. Gilley, "Heretic London, Holy Poverty and the Irish Poor, 1830-1870," The Downside Review, LXXXIX (Jan. 1971), pp.76-7.
2. Obituary on Rt. Rev. Provost Consitt in Catholic Fireside, quoted in N.C.C., 1888, p.43.
3. "Where Does Our Strength Lie?" Rambler, XIV (May 1849), p.4.

St. Vincent de Paul was successful in shifting the clergy, if not to the "opposite extreme" of complete humility, as the Rambler claimed,<sup>1</sup> then at least closer to the romantic vision of sacred poverty.

By such means the Irish came to be regarded not only as the numerical salvation of the faith in England, but as the very precursors of a more enlightened Catholicism. While holy poverty was not the death knell of the aristocratic tradition for many of the laity in the north east; after c.1850 it is more difficult to point to instances of a prejudiced clergy. It is far easier to point to the sacrifices of the clergy on behalf of the poor. Non-Catholics, as well, noticed this change and often praised "the fidelity and devotion of the Roman Catholic Church, which never shrinks from ministering to the poor, the sinful, and miserable."<sup>2</sup> The Irish thus came to find their place in the bosom of the English Catholic Church. And in the juxtaposition of their plebian chapels, barren of all liturgical adornments save a statue of St. Patrick, to the older more splendid edifices, one could readily perceive the new orientation of church and clergy.

The Irish responded to the increased warmth of the English clergy. It could be seen, for example, in the building of St. Dominic's, Newcastle, where "Irish labourers...manifested their zeal and interest in the movement, by gratuitously giving their work in the digging of the foundations, which [was] done in the

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1. "Progress of Catholic Poverty," V (Mar. 1850), p.204.

2. Street, op.cit., p.4.

hours they had to spare after the conclusion of their ordinary vocations."<sup>1</sup> One could see it as well, in that increasing stream of pennies for the church funds. More significant, was the rise in Easter Communicants. That Easter attendance approximated 75 percent after 1861, indicates that the disruption and displacement occasioned by the Irish was, by that date, coming under control. As the diocesan calendar stated in 1876 after praising the many new churches: "there has been a corresponding increase of Religion, of Catholic feeling and devotion. The services of the Church have been improved and multiplied...Confessions and Communion are now much more frequent...Bishops and priests are better known and more influential."<sup>2</sup>

(iv)

While priests from Ireland played an important part in changing the orientation of Catholicism, in Durham and Newcastle, between 1840 and 1880 they never composed more than 23 percent of the total clergy, that is, there were never more than 7 Irish priests present at one time. In view of the shortage of priests and the heavy proportion of Irish Catholics after 1847 this reticence to draw upon Ireland is at first glance somewhat surprising. Cardinal Manning reflected in 1887 that I "have spent my life in working for the Irish occupation in England...that occupation is the Catholic Church in all the amplitude of faith, grace and authority,"<sup>3</sup> but at mid-century the Catholic Church

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1. Tablet, new series II (Sept.18, 1869), p.506.

2. N.C.C., 1876, p.44.

3. Quoted in Edmund S. Purcell, Life of Cardinal Manning (London, 1895), II, p.678.

still desired to remain as distinctly English as possible.

What was true for England, was more poignant in the north east where the Catholic establishment was extremely proud of its long heritage. Though his mother was Irish, Cardinal Wiseman had been raised in Durham and educated at Ushaw and Rome. That the major influx of Irish took place while he headed the church in England is seldom reflected in his writings. For Wiseman the English Catholic Church was responsible to Rome; as with many eminent Victorians, Ireland and her emigrants held no prominent place in his conscience. It was the spirit of Wiseman rather than that of Manning which dominated in the north east.

As "local and particular duties and works...[could] be discharged by no central body whatsoever",<sup>1</sup> the selection and procurement of priests rested with the diocesan authorities. In the north east the church naturally preferred to be supplied with her own priests from Ushaw College rather than with those from Ireland. Few priests, therefore, were brought over from Ireland to meet local demands. Some of those who did come to the area, like Rev. M. Bourke, had emigrated with their families to escape the starvation in Ireland.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Chadwick, the second bishop of the diocese was born in Drogheda but like many other

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1. Manning, Pastoral, June 8, 1866, quoted in McClelland, Cardinal Manning, p.33. The spirit of diocesan independence is well recorded in a letter from the bishop of Liverpool "To the Clergy Only" on May 23, 1853 when he complained about Wiseman's appeal for central funds, saying, "it is my duty to look to the salvation of my own flock, I have to be answerable for them, and not for those who are many hundreds of miles distant, and who have their own canonically appointed Pastors to watch over them". Crowe Collection.
  2. Obituary on Rev. Michael Thomas D. Bourke, N.C.C., 1906, p.103.

graduates of Ushaw he can only be called nominally Irish,<sup>1</sup> for since youth he had lived in England. The only obvious case of actual importation of a priest from Ireland was that of Rev. Robert Foran who was brought in to serve the Irish in Newcastle.<sup>2</sup> That Foran's brother James later came to work among the area's Irish indicates that personal letters sent 'home' or correspondence between colleagues in the two countries was at least one method by which some of the Irish priests came to the diocese—although this did not prevent the Irish church from occasionally recalling her priests.

Despite the preference for her own priests, however, the church had a high regard for those from Ireland and was not unaware of their value. At an important Conventu Ecclesiastico in 1852, for instance, 5 of the 16 select clergy invited to attend were Irish.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the Irish priests exerted a disproportionate influence on both clergy and congregation. It was certainly no secret that an Irishman "exhibit[ed] a preference for the priests of his own country over those of any other."<sup>4</sup> The Irish priest understood his countrymen's "habits of thought, and modes of expression in a way in which no foreigner [could] understand them".<sup>5</sup> To the Irish it was the difference between merely the 'praste' and the 'Fayther', the latter being not only the person

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1. One might even challenge calling Chadwick 'nominally Irish', for his father had apparently been only briefly stationed in Ireland when the future bishop was born.
  2. See, Chp.II, p.37n.
  3. Report on the Conventu Ecclesiastico held in St. Andrew's presbytery April 20, 1852, U.C. III. The 5 Irish-born priests were Philip and Francis Kearney, J. and E. Kelly and Robert Foran.
  4. Todd, op.cit., pp.7-8.
  5. Ibid., p.8.

to whom one confessed, but a respected friend outside the church. It was he who "stopped the street fight when the police were afraid to intervene";<sup>1</sup> he who was caretaker of morals, disciplinarian, adviser, helper and leader.

If the priest knew the Gaelic he was even better off, for there were many Irish in the diocese unfamiliar with English. As Father R. Foran "preached in Irish to crowds of his admiring countrymen",<sup>2</sup> his brother James, who also 'had the Gaelic', is reputed to have had his confessional "thronged from all along Tyneside".<sup>3</sup> The value of Gaelic could be seen during Rev. Platt's incumbency at Stella, 1847-57, where the influx of Gaelic-speaking was so great that Platt undertook to learn the language that he might "be able to hear confessions and have freer intercourse with that portion of his flock."<sup>4</sup> It was this sort of effort on the part of the English clergy, encouraged as they were by the example of the Irish priests and the religious polemic of the day, that gained the respect of the Irish and allowed the term 'Father' to enter common usage for English as well as Irish priests. Hence a priest like Rev. Consitt who was "'English to the backbone,' to use his own expression," could be admiringly referred to by an Irishman in Gateshead in 1858 as "'the great Father Consitt,'"<sup>5</sup>

The Irish priests were generally assigned to the new missions where the Irish had hitherto been unattended, for the presence

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1. Morgan V. Sweeney, "Diocesan Organization and Administration," in Beck, op.cit., p.136.
  2. Tablet, XIV (Aug.13, 1853), p.516.
  3. Obituary on Rev. James Foran, N.C.C., 1901, p.121.
  4. J.P. Baterden, "Stella," N.C.C., 1914, p.124.
  5. Obituary on Rev. Consitt, N.C.C., 1888, p.43.

of a 'foreign' priest would often engender little respect. An extreme example of this was found when Father Torregiani spent his first night in Pontypool, Wales: "there arrived a deputation of Irishmen...not for the purpose of welcoming their new pastor, but to say that, as they did not wish for a foreign priest, they should refuse to contribute anything to his support."<sup>1</sup> The role of the Irish priest, therefore, was to assemble an otherwise difficult flock, to live with them as much as possible and to encourage the regular practice of their religion. With so few Irish priests the job was rendered more arduous for it meant that the priest had to traverse a great deal of countryside, fulfilling his obligations by carrying out brief incumbencies. Father Patrick Matthews, for one, not only established St. Godric's, Durham, but between 1866 and 1879 he established missions at Easington, Callaly Castle, Sacriston, Stanley, Byer-Moor, Dunston and Chester-le-Street, all of whose congregations were Irish.<sup>2</sup> Once the spade work had been done by the Irish priest, it was easier to introduce an English priest. But the Irish often intimated by their attendance that they would prefer an Irish pastor. This was particularly so in the rural setting where greater motivation was necessary to induce the flock to regularly journey the considerable distances to the place of worship. Thus one could find the Gaelic-speaking Father Gilligan taking over the mission at Sacriston<sup>3</sup> while another Irish priest, Jeremiah Foran, carried out brief incumbencies at Blackhill, Darlington, Stella, Thornley, and Hebburn to re-

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1. Torregiani, op.cit., p.3.

2. Lenders, History of Sacriston, pp.15-26.

3. Ibid., p.29.





vitalise those Irish missions.<sup>1</sup> Only after the Irish priest had served in such a manner was he granted a more permanent position, invariably in a predominantly Irish parish.

This exclusive use of Irish priests for Irish congregations was a deliberate appeal to the ethnocentricity of the Irish. As Rev. Belaney spoke of the Catholic faith to the Irish at St. Wilfrid's, Bishop Auckland,

It is that which sheds the light of heaven upon your trials and sufferings of life. It is that which turns your earthly sorrows into spiritual joys; which makes you feel at home where you are treated as aliens; which enables you to compassionate the ignorance, the prejudice, or the unbelief which treats you with scorn because you are Irishmen, or because you are Catholics.<sup>2</sup>

Such pulpistry to the Irishman on the indivisibility of his faith and nationality ("hallowed by persecution...in the harsh realities of his exile"<sup>3</sup>) emphasised that if the faith was lost, so too was the nationality. This lesson was further reinforced and perpetuated through the many Irish instructors in the Catholic schools. The Christian Brothers were imported to Sunderland in the early 'forties and among the Sisters of Mercy could be found many Irish emigrés, the most notable of whom was Rev. Mother Xavier (formerly Ellen O'Connell), a close relative of the Liberator himself.<sup>4</sup> But whether through Irish-Catholic instruction in the schools or by means of the itinerant Irish priest, those Irish brought within the fold and who listened to the panegyrics

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1. Obituary on Rev. Jeremiah Foran (unrelated to Robert or James), N.C.C., 1905, pp.117-8.
  2. The Reign of Sin, pp.12-13.
  3. R. Samuel, op.cit., p.27; also, S.W. Gilley, "Roman Catholic Mission to the Irish in London, 1840-1860," Recusant History, X (Oct. 1969), p.141.
  4. Obituary on Rev. Mother Xavier O'Connell, N.C.C., 1903, pp.130-1.

on the homeland were likely to be much stronger Catholics. The church was thus ensured against Irish leakage. As well, the church's exploitation of Irish ethnocentricity further solidified the separate Irish communities while the mobility of the priests gave a certain cohesion to all the area's Irish.

(v)

We have shown here the difficulties of the Catholic Church in the north east in accomodating, controlling and providing for the influx of Irish and have observed the internal adjustments of the church and clergy to the immigrants. The end products—the swollen population, the churches, the schools and the altered conceptual framework of the priesthood—all operated to progressively enlarge the confidence as well as the enterprise of northern Catholicism. It is erroneous to presume, though, that the less submissive church was merely a continuation of that spirit of confidence which had been manifested in the mid-'forties. Far from hastening the gradual emergence from the traditional roots of Catholicism in the area, the initial response to the Irish was a diminution of the earlier hopes for the progress (or for some, the status quo) of the church. There undoubtedly was, as Manning declared of north-eastern Catholicism, "an unbroken tradition", but as Manning himself was only too aware, English Catholicism had been traumatically recast since mid-century. Indeed, between 1845-55 the church in Durham and Newcastle can be said to have undergone a metamorphosis from which it emerged greatly altered: more significant, more powerful, more confident. It was a transformation for which the Irish alone were accountable. It could hardly have been otherwise, for at the lowest unit of the Hier-

archy, that of priest and flock, Catholicism was forced to become open and egressive. As one writer reflected, "whatever may be said to the contrary, the presence of the more boisterous Celt had a very salutary effect in correcting the air and habit of timid reserve so long noticeable in the bulk of native English Catholics."<sup>1</sup>

The emergence of the new assertion of the church could be noticed in the building of the 'fifties and was unmistakably present by the 'sixties. One might catch a glimpse of this rebirth in the opening of St. Mary's, Sunderland, in 1851, at which Wiseman presided and for which "special trains ran from several towns, and...great numbers availed themselves of the facilities offered."<sup>2</sup> Yet one sees by the "solemn dedication" and perhaps by the fact that the church "was filled, but not crowded", that a good deal of moderation was still being exercised. Nine years later in the same town, however, the foundation stone for St. Patrick's was laid without the slightest sign of constraint. With that distinctly Irish blending of the sacred and the profane, a large procession laden with shamrocks ("especially provided from Ireland") flowed through the streets with their bishop until, arriving at a Protestant church, they entered the opposite field and began the holy ceremony.<sup>3</sup> For the Newcastle Courant, at least, Roman Catholicity reached its apogee in New-

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1. Bernard W. Kelly, Historical Notes on English Catholic Missions (London, 1907), p.41.

2. N.Chron., Aug.29, 1851, p.5.

3. Sunderland Times, Mar.20, 1860, reported in the Tablet, XXI (Mar.31, 1860), p.198. On how the new church came to throw the Protestant church "into the shade", see, Tablet XXI (Sept.29, 1860), p.613.

castle in 1872 when, the spire having been finally erected on St. Mary's cathedral, at the luncheon "the health of the Pope was proposed before that of the Queen".<sup>1</sup>

Symbolically, the resurgence of confidence was nowhere more evincéd than in Durham City. Tremendous efforts were made by Catholics throughout the district to raise enough money in order that the designs by A.W. Pugin, junior, might materialise to attract some glances away from that omnipresent citadel of Anglican usurpery, Durham Cathedral. A large but ragged collection of Irish hardly merited a 'grand design' of Gothic revival, but the Catholics were not to be outdone by the other denominations. In 1861 a site with a "commanding view" was purchased near the centre of the Irish community.<sup>2</sup> On Whit Monday 1863 brass bands paraded with banners through the streets of Durham followed by the bishop and a host of clergy. After erecting the cross on the site of the future high altar, the Very Rev. Cannon Consitt "spoke in moving terms of Durham's great Catholic past, emphasising that his hearers were brothers in the faith and rightful heirs of those who had worshipped God in the Mass in the cathedral and all the ancient Catholic churches of Durham".<sup>3</sup> In November of the following year St. Godric's was opened by Dr. Manning (Wiseman was ill) who rose to the occasion and spoke of their beloved Cardinal, who as a youth had been stoned by anti-Catholic

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1. Nov.15, 1872, p.5, p.8; the Courant saw enough significance in this event to include it in its résumé of the last year's remarkable events, Jan.3, 1873, p.5.
  2. D.Chron., Nov.18, 1864, p.8.
  3. Ibid., May 29, 1863, p.8.

mobs in the city.<sup>1</sup> With the Protestant Mayor as a guest of honour and an audience "not only [of] communicants to this branch of the Christian faith, but many citizens of Durham and the neighbourhood who profess the reformed religion,"<sup>2</sup> Manning and the bishop of the diocese eulogised the wonderful achievements of Catholicism in the area. Durham City continued to be something of a showplace for Catholic ostentation: in 1866 the first Catholic cemetery in the city since the reformation received the extraordinary double interment of a priest and a nun, the date marking the 28th anniversary of the funeral of two local priests who were forced to be buried in the Protestant churchyard.<sup>3</sup>

Such public displays of ritual with all their symbolic suggestions of power and social position, often appeared to have as little to do with the Irish as they had effect upon the individual lives of the Irish Catholics. To the casual observer it was the same drama of the liberated church that had been acted out in the cathedral building in Newcastle and Sunderland twenty and thirty years before. Except where the communicants were almost totally Irish, the Celts seemed to provide only a statistical backdrop: the *raison d'être* of the noticeable proliferation of churches and schools. Behind the scenes, however, in the actual corpus of the Catholic Church in Durham and Newcastle the Irish influence was much greater than the mere visual

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1. Henry Edward Manning, Truth Before Peace: A Sermon Preached at the Opening of S. Godric, in Durham, November 15th, 1864 (Dublin, London and Durham, 1865). Ushaw Pamphlets Collection.
  2. D.Chron., Nov.18, 1864, p.8.
  3. Church of St. Godric, op.cit., p.7.

performance suggested. The earlier confidence of the church had been shattered by the Irish; the former status quo had been destroyed. Through the rebuilding—the burdensome growth in that 'second spring'—it soon became apparent that the whole focus of Catholicism had been altered. In forcing the church to become extroverted to an unprecedented degree, the Irish laid the basis for a much stronger and more positive religion. The days of the 'mysterious faith' dominated by an exclusive aristocratic club were over; the flowering of a viable social religion for the masses had begun.

#### IV

#### The Irish and Anti-Catholicism

"He was an Irishman and a Catholic. On my expressing my hope, that, amidst his hardships in this world, he was supported in his spirit by the consolations of his religion, and prepared for a better lot hereafter, he seemed surprised to hear a few charitable and kindly words drop from the lips of one, whom he seemed instinctively to regard as a Protestant, and with much emotion, said 'Indeed, sir, you are the first of your sort of people that ever spoke to me in that way in my life.'" Inquiry into Newcastle Poor, 1850, pp.18-19.

"How much 'No Popery' continued to matter after the so-called 'Catholic Emancipation' in 1829, and in what parts of the country, on what occasions, at what periods in particular, are questions to which I can propose no firm answers...too little attention has so far been given to this wide and weighty phenomenon". G.F.A. Best, "Popular Protestantism in Victorian Britain," in Robert Robson ed., Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain (London, 1967), p.116.

(i)

Few other areas in Victorian history are so lucrative to the researcher yet so unexplored as that of the crusade against the Pope and Catholicism at mid-century. As on the positive side of Catholic progress in England, so on the negative side of militant Protestantism against the church, there has been a concentration on several well-defined issues. Catholic emancipation, the Oxford converts, the Maynooth issue, the establishment of the Hierarchy, Italian liberalism and the Pope, and the Vatican Decree controversy; these have all received their due attention from those concerned with the period's major political and ecclesiastical issues. In terms of the larger society, however, particularly at the provincial level, very little has been written. This is not surprising, for attempting to understand the social ramifications of no-papery is to enter a labyrinth of confused, uneven and inconsistent prejudices. After 1850, with the noticeable shifting of the social base of Catholicism toward the Irish immigrants, the maze becomes even more complex for it is increasingly difficult to differentiate between 'anti-sacerdotalism' and pure anti-Irish feeling—if the latter can be separated at all.

Certainly the Bishop of Durham's publication of Lord John Russell's letter in 1850<sup>1</sup> is made famous least of all by any anti-Irishness it implied. As with so much of the writing in the ecclesiastical battle, the attacks and counter attacks were directed well above the heads of the lowly Irish.<sup>2</sup> The Bishop

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1. "Lord John Russell's Letter to the Bishop of Durham," Times, Nov. 7, 1850. Reprinted in E.R. Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England (London, 1968), pp. 159-161.

2. Direct mention of the Irish was rarely made in the course of



specifically stated, "I hope...my censure has been seen to direct itself against the system, not against individuals."<sup>1</sup> But at the same time, Bishop Maltby felt the need to make a distinction "between English Roman Catholics and others of that persuasion." What is more, when the high-powered charges filtered down to street level—via the politician, the Protestant associations or, the ranting preacher<sup>2</sup>—the theological arguments were lost in a wave of pedestrian bigotry of which the exposed Irish Catholics were too often the victims. As any confrontation between the constitutional Church and the temporal sovereignty of the Pope had a popular chauvinistic appeal, the Irish were doubly vulnerable to hostility, for they were unpardonably 'foreign' and 'papist'. Just as the cry in the 1830s against "O'Connell and his Popish and infidel coadjutors" had brought the Protestant-Tory response of "I Will Die First" rather than submit to "Popish superstition and tyranny",<sup>3</sup> so in the 1850s the horrors of the Romish Church unleashed a national fervour that was hardly diminished in intensity by the very invasion into purist England of the "Catholic Priesthood and their Infatuated Dupes the Irish Peasantry".<sup>4</sup> Thus, between the Oxford Movement and the political

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the ecclesiastical arguments. Even for an anti-papist writing in 1877, there was only "a curious correspondence in date between the organization of the Catholic hierarchy ...and the influx of starving exiles from Ireland". M.C. Bishop, op.cit., p.611.

1. "Bishop Maltby of Durham to the Venerable the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne," Times, Jan.17, 1851, p.5.
2. The term ranter is used throughout this chapter as distinct from the itinerant Primitive Methodist Ranter.
3. D.Adver., April 17, 1835, p.3.
4. Ibid., editorial, Aug.30, 1833, p.3.

tail of Maynooth, in those years with the heaviest Irish immigration, no-popery in England attained proportions which had not been witnessed since the Gordon riots after the passage of the Catholic Relief Act of 1778. And as one contemporary regretted to note, the Irish in England as Catholics, "live in the midst of controversy."<sup>1</sup>

The north east, both as a stronghold of Catholicism and as a centre for Irish immigration, was not immune to these waves of anti-Catholicism. During the turbulent days of no-popery in the early 'fifties, even the liberal press was wont to <sup>call a</sup> convert to Catholicism a 'pervert'. The Newcastle Chronicle agreed "with much that is said of the insidious and aggressive character of the Papal system, and we of course think it would be infinitely better if the whole population of the United Kingdom were Protestant".<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, petitions against papal aggression were read in the House of Commons from Wesleyan and New Connexion Methodists in Newcastle, South Shields, Sunderland, Houghton-le-Spring and a host of smaller towns throughout Durham.<sup>3</sup> The Tory Newcastle Journal made no pretence of diminishing animosities and was out to make as much political hay from anti-Catholicism as it possibly could. Whilst supporting the brief Derby administration in 1852, the Journal provoked the Tablet to castigate the supporters of the "'Scorpion'" government, whose agents

could not have vomited forth more blasphemy against the most sacred objects if Belzebub himself had been behind the editor's desk. Catholics may endure personal

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1. Todd, op.cit., p.5.
  2. Mar.21, 1851, p.2.
  3. N.Cour., Mar.21-28, 1851.

abuse, but when the Mother of God becomes defiled by the irreverence of men, and the Saints of God are held up to profane ridicule, it is difficult to suppress feelings of indignation....<sup>1</sup>

During the preliminaries to the election of 1852, in which the Maynooth issue figured so prominently, feeling was strong against those candidates with any leanings towards an endowed Maynooth. Mr. Watson, who had expressed sympathy in the Commons with the Catholic cause, in standing as a Liberal candidate for Newcastle in 1852 found it expedient to admit that "He was never a 'thick and thin supporter of Popery'", that "He was not brought forward by the one hundred Romanist voters for Newcastle", and "As regarded the Roman Catholic religion, his religious opinions were as much opposed to it as any man's in the empire of Queen Victoria."<sup>2</sup> Regardless of this avowal of faith the Catholics publicly endorsed Watson, thus contributing to his defeat.

Sustained by the general tenor of the times, the ranters invaded the slums as much to provoke hostility that would further deprecate Catholic claims as to make converts of the Irish Catholics. "Since the Premier's attacks on the Faith and practices of the Catholic Church", commented the Tablet,

there is not to be found a ranter preacher in the north who has not become more zealous than ever to make perverts among poor Catholics, and for several Sundays back it has been usual for one or more of these fanatics to attend in the vicinity of Sandgate....<sup>3</sup>

Like the infamous incendiary William Murphy,<sup>4</sup> these "itinerant

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1. XIII (April 3, 1852), p.213.

2. Gateshead Observer, Mar.27, 1852, p.3.

3. XII (May 24, 1851), p.324.

4. See, T.M. Healy, Letters and Leaders of My Day (London, 1928), I, p.23; Norman, op.cit., pp.17-18; Best, op.cit., pp.133-4; plus Murphy's own works: The Photograph of the Great Anti-

bigots" with their "infuriated harangues"<sup>1</sup> were masters at incitement. Appealing to a largely illiterate audience, they exploited the sexual myths common to most religious and/or racial discrimination. While the press gave glowing accounts of the celebrated "Miss Talbot's Case", with titles like "Getting Young Females into Nunneries to Obtain Their Property",<sup>2</sup> the street preachers went a step further to proclaim that priests were deflowering these young females and that nunneries were simply exclusive brothels for the priesthood. If one needed evidence, it was easy enough to quote the 'honourable' Earl of Shaftesbury or a 'distinguished' M.P. like H. Drummond who had "asserted that nunneries were either prisons or brothels".<sup>3</sup> One preacher, at a meeting of the Protestant Alliance in Newcastle in 1852, "created a great sensation amongst his audience by pledging his word that at present the Pope had 30,000 prisoners confined in his awful dungeons in Rome."<sup>4</sup> From this the Tablet quite rightly remarked that "there seems at present a rivalry amongst the 'prim Parsons' as to who can coin the greatest lie".<sup>5</sup> Ever eager to help widen

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Christ, Awful Disclosures of New Hall Convent, and The Confessional Unmasked, the latter being defined as 'obscene' by the Queen's Bench in 1865. R. Samuel, op.cit., p.20, notes that Murphy made at least one visit to North Shields before his death in 1872. It is likely that he did the north-eastern circuit at some time though I have found no evidence in either the local press or the Tablet to substantiate this speculation.

1. Tablet, XII (Dec.13, 1851), p.790.
2. N.Cour., Mar.21, 1851, p.2.
3. During debate in the House of Commons, Mar.23, 1851, quoted in N.Cour., Mar.28, p.3.
4. Tablet, XIII (Nov.6, 1852), p.710.
5. Ibid., p.710.

the rift, the Newcastle Journal pointed out that "such splendid Romanish Ecclesiastical structures aris[ing] around us, as if by magic" were "cemented with the hearts' blood of defrauded families"<sup>1</sup>—defrauded, it meant, by extortionist priests at the death-bed. The ranters thus had an abundance of 'authentic and indisputable evidence' on the 'mummeries of the priestcraft' and the 'national Catholic conspiracy' with which to entice and provoke their audiences.

The Irishman, unlike the more martyr-conscious church, did not let pass these slights upon his faith. As an investigator of the Sandgate area noticed of even the quieter missionaries, they "can provoke no discussion among...the native inhabitants; but [they] may among the Irish, who are considerably more susceptible of religious feeling".<sup>2</sup> Unless restrained, the Irish reacted to the ranters with a spontaneous physical vindication of their faith. This was dramatically displayed in a riot which took place in Sandgate on a Sunday evening in May, 1851 when a street preacher (by legend, "Ranter Dick"<sup>3</sup>) touched off the pent-up animosities of the Irish:

unable to restrain their feeling, [they] commenced an attack on the preacher, who had speedily to fly to save himself from a severe chastisement; some of the people

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1. Mar.22, 1851, p.5.

2. Inquiry into Newcastle Poor, p.34.

3 "The Horrid War i' Sandgeyt," expressed in local dialect how  
 "Ranter Dick preeched frev a chair,  
 "While singin' oot wi' cuddy blair,  
 "An' gi'en the Pope a canny share  
 "O'hell-fire confort, aw declare;

Allan's Illustrated Tyneside Songs and Readings (Newcastle, 186?), revised ed. 1891, p.381.

present took part with the preacher; the Irish rallied on their side, and a general row commenced; for an hour or two, in spite of the police, the Irish were in possession of that part of town...upwards of sixty Irishmen were taken into custody....<sup>1</sup>

Another correspondent wrote more succinctly:

A row took place amongst the Connaughtmen [sic] and the Northumbrians in Sandgate (Newcastle), last week, in consequence of a No-Popery sermon preached by a dilettante, who may be specified by the adage: 'Respice finem, respice funem.' The rope-maker took to his heels....<sup>2</sup>

In the Newcastle Chronicle's coverage of the riot, it was denied that a street preacher had been the provocateur and the whole incident was described in terms of the "national character" of Irish-English antipathy. The paper commented that "As often happens in such cases, poor Pat came off second-best" for there "came the turn for English vengeance" and "Lynch law was invoked".<sup>3</sup> While not xenophobic, the sentiments of the Chronicle toward the Irish noticeably paralleled their degree of anti-Catholicism. In a surprisingly moderate tone, the Newcastle Journal, following the Chronicle's lead, did not vouch for the presence of the ranter but realised "that for some time past they [the Irish] have been cultivating feelings of hostility towards the English portion of their neighbours, in consequence of the recent agitation on the Papal question."<sup>4</sup> Both papers, however, were anxious to show that the Irish Catholics were the perpetrators of the riot and both quoted the rather dubious statement reputed to have been heard in the course of the battle: "Och, by Jasus, we'll take

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1. Tablet, XII (May 24, 1851), p.324.

2. Ibid., p.324.

3. May 16, 1851, p.6.

4. May 17, 1851, p.5.

Sandgate to-night, and be revenged on every English ----- in it."

While in Durham there was no single incident of this genre to equal the Sandgate riot (which, incidently, had no sequel), similar prejudices against Irish Catholics could be found. In Gateshead it was noted in 1851 that "the Catholic religion is daily insulted by the most insane cries", but except for "two cases of partial rows, confined to public houses," no disturbances took place.<sup>1</sup> In and around Durham City it is recorded that surrounding the Irish

was a strong feeling of contempt, which manifested itself in every way; their religion was attacked, vilified; they had for safety-sake when going to church at Durham to wait at the top of Findon Hill until they form[ed] a group; they dare[d] not go into a public-house where they might meet a company of men who were not of their own nation; they were considered as belonging to a race altogether inferior.<sup>2</sup>

And from Anglican pulpits throughout the area, the exposure of the 'error and superstitions of the Romish Church' did little to improve the public's estimation of the Irish Catholics.<sup>3</sup>

(ii)

It is a gross misreading, however, to look at the hostilities of the early 'fifties and from them to pass judgement on the general state of prejudices in the north east. Extreme situations may bring to the surface deep-seated biases hitherto dormant, but they also create panic conditions which, if engineered and exploited (as they undoubtedly were in the 'fifties) can lead to postures being taken that only time will prove to

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1. Tablet, XII (May 24, 1851), p.325.

2. Lenders, History of Sacriston, pp.17-18.

3. See, for example, the references to Rev. Howel Harries' sermon at Trinity Church, Darlington, Tablet, XIII (Oct.2, 1852), p.631.

be either firmly grounded or merely ephemeral. It should be noted though, that even at the height of the no-popery, during the debates on the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, the petition from Newcastle with the most signatures was from 1,067 residents who were not concerned with the aggrandisement of popery but, rather, with a "modification of the tax upon carriages" in the proposed income tax bill.<sup>1</sup> And while Maynooth was a 'household word' during the election of 1852, an anti-Maynooth meeting sponsored by the Protestant Alliance in Newcastle drew an attendance "so meagre that the proceedings were adjourned sine die."<sup>2</sup> According to the Gateshead Observer, "This result was mainly attributable...to the little interest which the public generally take in the narrow Maynooth question." This same lack of interest was displayed by the attendance at the Alliance's anti-Maynooth meeting in Durham City.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Tablet, whose claims against the bigots tended to be overstated, viewed the "paltry efforts that were made by placards to mar...the object and success" of a fund-raising bazaar for St. Patrick's, Wall Knoll, in October 1852, as part of the generally "inoffensive movement of sectarians who supposed that a new church would be most objectionable to Protestant feelings."<sup>4</sup> Again, during the St. Patrick's Day celebrations of the same year, the Irish paraded through the streets of Newcastle unhindered by attacks. The press could find

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1. N.Cour., Mar.28, 1851, p.3.

2. Gateshead Observer, Mar.27, 1852, p.3; Tablet, XIII (April 3, 1852), p.213.

3. D.Chron., Mar.26, 1852, p.6; D.Adver., Mar.26, 1852, p.4.

4. XIII (Oct.30, 1852), p.693.



little at fault with the procession and opinion was basically in agreement with the Tablet's comment that

there is no doubt but during the last few years in the north of England Irishmen as a body have considerably improved their condition in society, and it is self-evident they are every day becoming a more influential portion of English society.<sup>1</sup>

A search in the earlier period, from emancipation to 1850, reveals but few instances of overt hostility to the local Catholics. As indicated by the election of Dunn to the mayoralty of Newcastle, local residents had a high regard for the Catholic gentry. This was clearly displayed when W.T. Salvin contemplated running as a county candidate in 1837. Henry Morton, chief agent to Lord Durham, wrote to his employer that "informed estimates suggested that his catholicism would cost the liberal party only two hundred out of over two thousand votes".<sup>2</sup> Attitudes toward the Catholic gentry, of course, were not always synonymous with those expressed towards the Irish Catholics. But from the religious point of view at least, the keen interest of the Irish in their churches and pastors more often excited curiosity than hostility from the majority of the population, many of whom had never seen the spectacle of the 'mysterious faith'. Rev. Lenders has cited a rather incredible case of the residents of Bishop Auckland peeping into the Catholic mission "to see if the Irish

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1. XIII (Mar.27, 1852), p.197. Two years later the N.Chron. commented on the St. Patrick's Day proceedings in an almost identical manner, stating that their appearance "speaks favourably for the improved condition of the Irish labouring class, and affords an instance of their perfect ability to improve their social state, when they are favoured by happy auspices." Mar.24, 1854, p.4.
  2. Mar.24, 1837, Lambton MSS., cited in T.J. Nossiter, D.Phil. Thesis, p.99.

people had really claws!!", and insists that "This is a fact."<sup>1</sup> Though hardly, if true, a wide spread occurrence, it underscores the extent to which the fabrications about Irish and Papists had encroached upon the public imagination—evidence of which could be seen in the attendance of non-Catholics at Catholic ceremonies or in the drawing power of the so-called confession of an ex-priest. That enmity to the Catholic poor was not pervasive in Bishop Auckland was demonstrated in 1842 when, through "the kindness and liberality of a Protestant gentleman", a large room was donated as a temporary chapel.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the spirit of toleration shown by Protestant landowners and municipal corporations was more often the rule than the exception. Even "in the teeth of seeming difficulties," in 1850, Rev. Betham in Gateshead managed to obtain "half an acre of Freehold ground in the very centre of town".<sup>3</sup> The land for St. Mary's and St. Andrew's was virtually given by the Newcastle corporation,<sup>4</sup> while in Hartlepool when an Anglican incumbent protested against the clamorous pealing from the belfry of the new Catholic Church, "the authorities, it is reported, gave no countenance to the application."<sup>5</sup> Certainly the death of Bishop Riddell in 1847 brought profound lamentations from most quarters. Crowds "thronged the public thoroughfares...anxiously waiting to witness the mournful procession...; every available

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1. History of Sacriston, p.18.
  2. Catholic Directory, 1842, p.39. Unfortunately, we are not informed of the reason(s) for this munificence. Quite possibly it was to bring some priestly control to the Irish.
  3. "New Church and Mission at Gateshead," Rambler, VI (Dec. 1850), pp.558-9.
  4. See, "Address of Bishop Bewick," Tablet, XXVIII (Nov.4, 1882), p.753.
  5. Tablet, XII (Dec.20, 1851), p.806.

spot from which a view could be obtained was crowded."<sup>1</sup> Though the Newcastle Journal could not refrain from commenting that

the chapel was crowded with spectators during the performance of mass, many of whom appeared impressed with superstitious awe, but, by far the greater portion were anxious only to gratify their curiosity, by seeing High Mass performed by Romanish Priests,<sup>2</sup>

it admitted that the deceased "was descended from an ancient and honourable family in the county of Northumberland."<sup>3</sup>

Subsequent to 1852 one can see the rapid decline of the passing phenomenon of anti-Catholicism in the north east and the gradual return to the more halcyon days as prior to 1850. When it was realised that the establishment of the Hierarchy had not enslaved Protestant England—indeed had not made the slightest difference to anyone except a handful of Catholic administrators—the anti-papist fervour became largely irrelevant to the majority of north easterners. What had been propounded as the great Romish horror wrapped as it was in religious polemic (and pornography) lost something of its potency when set next to the reality. In the north east this awareness of the fallacy of papal domination seems to have been realised fairly early. An Anglican in Darlington "ashamed of the violence and hypocrisy of those pure members of the diocese of Durham" wrote to the local press in January 1853:

It is a good job the two Hierarchies are fairly before the country; it is of little consequence what our Clergy may advance as to the doings of the Pope at Rome so long as his servants here behave themselves.<sup>4</sup>

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1. N.Chron., Nov.12, 1847, p.8.

2. Nov.13, 1847, p.3.

3. Nov.6, 1847, p.3.

4. Quoted in Tablet, XIV (Jan.8, 1853), p.19.

While not wishing to countenance the spread of Catholicism, the writer continued,

A Hogarth, whether a Bishop or anything else, will be appreciated and respected, independent of his creed, and people will judge of a tree by its fruits....The Romanists will gain influence in proportion to their usefulness in society; busy meddling, vainglorious, and consequential Protestants only advance the cause they profess to battle with.

The Tablet, in publishing the letter, fully agreed with the sentiments expressed, remarking, "John Bull is once more returning to his senses."

Particularly through the efforts of individual priests, Catholicism came to be regarded as much less offensive than popularly assumed. Evidence of priests controlling the wildness of the Irish where the police often failed; priests confronting 'dangerous' secret societies, advocating temperance reforms or, later, as members of school boards and guardians of the poor law, served to draw attention to the Catholic Church as a valuable social as well as religious force in the community. The result was praise rather than chastisement. There was even some envy by the other denominations when they saw the Irish poor responding to their priests and attending to their chapels while their own poor remained lost in the slums. The general definition of the English priest in 1856 as a favourite object of attack on whom "every eye is directed...with an unfriendly glance...and every tongue is filled with his reproach",<sup>1</sup> did not hold true in Durham and Newcastle. The death of the Rev. Gillow ten stirring years after the death of Bishop Riddell brought equally praiseworthy

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1. W.G. Todd, op.cit., p.6.

comments about "a gentleman of great suavity and sweetness of manners, and of a generous, open disposition" from the non-Catholic press.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, as the Northern Catholic Calendar remarked of Rev. Bamber in Sunderland, "if his foes did not love him, at least they respected him."<sup>2</sup> Obviously this held true for Bishop Hogarth as well, for upon his death in Darlington in 1866, Francis Mewburn (Hogarth's Wesleyan neighbour) wrote in his diary:

The shops in the town were shut, excepting that of a baker, whose obstinacy, I regret to say, gives me a dislike to the man. The concourse of people in the streets was beyond all comprehension.<sup>3</sup>

The church and her priests were not unaware of the more tolerant conditions in the north east and the good fellowship of their neighbours was continually toasted. No finer example of this exists than when Rev. John Kelly of Felling was released from Durham Gaol after his 40 hours of incarceration for not revealing the secrets of the confessional. Where one might have expected some blazing invectives against Protestant bigotry or at least a poignant martyrdom, Kelly wished only to take the

opportunity of expressing my deep sense of gratitude to the Press, as also to the honourable gentleman who had the great kindness to introduce my name and defend my character in the House of Commons; and to all others, particularly those of the Protestant communion, who have done me the favour of expressing both publicly and privately, their kind sympathy toward me. Of these the 'Protestant juryman' (the gentleman, the Christian, and the scholar,) claims the first place.<sup>4</sup>

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1. N.Chron., Mar.20, 1857, p.6.

2. 1903, p.129.

3. Larchfield Diary: Entry for Feb. 1866, p.206. In the selection of Bishop Chadwick as Hogarth's successor, the D.Chron. noted that "the appointment gives universal satisfaction." Nov.2, 1866.

4. Quoted in Tablet, XXI (April 28, 1860), p.263.

It is difficult, therefore, to refer to any locally significant no-popery movement. What agitation there was seems mainly to have been confined to a small group that relied for sustenance on the passions raised by outside agitators, either at the national level or on local tours. The election in Newcastle in 1857, for instance, would have been void of religious hostilities had not an outsider, the anti-Maynooth Liberal, Mr. Carstairs, decided to sit for Newcastle. When at the Protestant dissenters' meeting Dr. Bruce stated "he had made up his mind never to give his vote in favour of a candidate who would allow the tax-gatherer to take money out of their pockets for the support of 'idolatry'",<sup>1</sup> the rest of the dissenters were coerced into endorsing Carstairs. Religious frictions were thus revived by an outsider's appeal to, as the Chronicle put it, "the section of the electors which thinks ecclesiastical of more importance than political questions."<sup>2</sup> Proposing the question "Who, then are Mr. Carstairs' friends?" the Chronicle answered, "A small knot of religious bigots, who pride themselves on their attachment to extreme Protestant principles, in whose eyes Roman Catholicism is an invention of the evil one, the Pope Antichrist, and the college of Maynooth an utter abomination." The paper had obviously progressed from its former anti-Catholicism. It must also have carried a good proportion of its working-class readership (the majority of whom were dissenters) for Carstairs was the only Liberal in Newcastle to be defeated in this election. Despite therefore the trumpeting

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1. N.Chron., Mar.27, 1857, p.3.

2. Ibid., editorial, Mar.27, p.4.

of a minority, by the late 'fifties they could no longer claim the amount of support that contributed to the defeat of Watson in 1852.

Though the sensation of an ex-priest or a farcical ranter could still draw a crowd, by the 1860s the public was less inclined to believe the no-popery exponents. When, in 1862,

a gentleman in black, white neck-clothed, spectacled, and got up in the true orthodox style, and calling himself John Tadini, LL.D., of the University of Pavia, an Italian exile, and formerly a Romish priest, was announced to deliver a lecture in the East Street United Presbyterian Church, South Shields, on 'Auricular Confession, Jesuits and Nuns, Popery as it was and as it is...'<sup>1</sup>

he was bound to get the church at least half full. However, when the mistress of a commercial hotel in Newcastle arrived "greatly excited" and

accused Tadini, who had been staying at her house for about seven weeks, of having decoyed away her daughter, a young woman of about 22 years of age, and left without paying his bill,

the congregation showed no hesitation in stoning 'Dr. Tadini' out of town. Such incidents drove home the growing impression that no-popery fanatics were in the realm of quackery and, alternatively, that Catholicism was not quite the evil that some made it out to be. It is against this background of an ephemeral anti-Catholicism that we may explain the lack of success of the evangelical missions to the Irish Catholics in the north east.

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1. N.D.Chron., Mar.22, 1862, p.5. Tadini was no doubt drawing his material from a host of no-popery novels and literature dealing with Auricular Confessions, Jesuits and nunneries, the most incredible of which, was the American, W. Hogan's Auricular Confession and Popish Nunneries, referred to in Best, op.cit., p.131.

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"It seems to us abundantly plain", wrote the British Protestant on the first page of the first number of the first volume, in January 1845,

that the impending and paramount controversy of the age will be between Romanism and Protestantism. The supremacy of Tradition—the Priest—and the Church is the essence of the one; and the supremacy of Scripture, as the only rule of faith, lies at the root of the other. These two points are the poles of the increasing movement, and towards the one or the other every party and church and ceremony seems rushing to its place.<sup>1</sup>

So the great mid-century battle for the souls of the nation had begun, and as nowhere else in Victorian society was there such an abundance of the boisterous and the bizarre. Though satirised or dismissed as hypocritical by almost every major contemporary writer,<sup>2</sup> the evangelical zealots with their trenchant morals, their well-worn bibles and their stock of puissant tracts, were an unrelenting force of considerable significance. One could trace their progress in the anti-papal Record which served as a general clearing house and promoter for all and sundry Protestant missionary societies. Every spring the Record gave a full review of the annual or inaugural meetings (there were close to 100 by 1861) of societies ranging from the Church of England Scriptural-Reader's Association and the Colonial Church and School Society, to the Moravian Missions, Prayer-Book and Homily Society and the Operative Jewish Converts' Society.<sup>3</sup> Chairing these meetings

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1. or Journal of the Religious Principles of the Reformation, published by the British Society for Promoting the Principles of the Reformation (London). Brit. Mus.
  2. For example: Mrs. Pardiggle in Dicken's Bleak House or Miss Clack in Wilkie Collins' The Moonstone.
  3. Record, April 17, 1861, p.3.



were the leading Protestant spokesmen of the period: the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Bishops of Durham and Ripon, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, plus members of parliament and outspoken members of the clergy. United in their faith and spurred on by the dreadful fear of encroachment by other religions, the evangelical organisations worked at home and abroad to make the world secure in the true faith. Jew, Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist or Catholic, none were disregarded and none would have cared to dispute at least the spirit of commitment and vigour of these missionary societies.

Though the faith of the Irish Catholics in England was tampered with by missionaries on several fronts, including the Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society, there were at least four agencies more directly concerned with converting Catholics. The Home Missionary and Irish Evangelical Society attempted to correct the "ignorance, ungodliness, and crime"<sup>1</sup> of society, and found that converting Irish Catholics was a means to this end. The Church Pastoral-Aid Society, working against "those sinks of infamy and pollution"<sup>2</sup> in the major centres of England, had similar designs towards the Irish. The British Society for Promoting the Principles of the Reformation aimed at reversing the "alarming progress of the Romish leprosy over the body of the visible Protestant Church"<sup>3</sup> in England, working in a manner analogous to that of the Irish Church Missions in Ireland.<sup>4</sup> Fourth

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1. "Annual Meeting of the Home Missionary and the Irish Evangelical Society," Record, May 15, 1857.
  2. "17th Annual Meeting of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society," Record, May 14, 1852.
  3. 5th Annual Report of the B.R.S., 1852.
  4. "To treat the Roman Catholics as those who are without a

was the English Church Mission, "<sup>a</sup>Church of England Society, established for the conversion of Roman Catholics in England"<sup>1</sup> claiming "prescriptive rights to Irish converting".<sup>2</sup> As well, there was the North of England Protestant Alliance which was less concerned with actually converting Catholics than with combining

all classes of Protestants, whose object is not merely to oppose the recent aggression of the Pope as a violation of national independence; but to maintain and defend, against all the encroachments of Popery, the Scriptural doctrines of the Reformation, and the principles of religious liberty, as the best security under God for the temporal and spiritual welfare and prosperity of this Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

All of these societies saw their hey-day between the 1840s and the 1860s, after which there was a gradual decline in both funds and fervour.

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saving knowledge of the true Christ,—to address them as such with kindness and forbearance, but with uncompromising faithfulness,—to give them and their children the knowledge of the Scriptures, in opposition to the system of Rome". "Anniversary Meeting of the Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics," Record, May 5, 1852. The B.R.S. was originally set up to operate "particularly in the Sister Kingdom". 1st Annual Report of the B.R.S., 1828, p.13. It was not until 1851 that "'a Church Mission to Roman Catholics in Great Britain'" was established with 'trained' missionaries: "it is their duty, by Visitation, Lectures (where desirable), and Classes, to enlighten both Protestants and Roman Catholics." Ecclesiastical Developments in the Churches of Rome and England and Missionary Efforts by the Protestant Reformation Society (London, 1872), pp.11-12

1. "Annual Meeting of the English Church Mission," Record, May 8, 1857.
2. S.W. Gilley, "Protestant London, No-Popery and the Irish Poor: Pt.II, 1830-1860," Recusant History, XI (Jan. 1971), p.27. Dr. Gilley's exploratory work on the evangelical missions to the London Irish stands alone in this untapped field. This section of the paper acknowledges a great debt to Dr. Gilley's written work (see Bibliography), particularly to his thorough documentation.
3. 2nd Annual Report of the Protestant Alliance (London, May 1853), p.1. Brit. Mus.

Increasingly obsessed with the conviction that the Catholic Church was "concentrating her efforts upon England, knowing that if she could accomplish the conquest of this land, Europe would lie prostrate at her feet",<sup>1</sup> the evangelicals set up missions throughout the country. The north east was early noted as "inviting material", for a committee of the B.R.S. had cited North-umberland as one of the areas in which the Roman Catholic "increase [was] particularly observable".<sup>2</sup> Efforts were thus made to rectify this "lamentable ignorance upon the subject of religion" by establishing auxiliaries in Durham City and Newcastle in 1831. But they went largely unsupported and in contrast to the other auxiliaries, no funds were remitted to London.<sup>3</sup> The committee reported in 1831 that the two meetings held at Newcastle were "very interesting" and promised a further deputation to the city in the following year.<sup>4</sup> This second delegation met with some success and remained in Newcastle for three weeks holding seven meetings and six sermons and allowing the "Society's Agents...to distribute tracts to a very considerable amount."<sup>5</sup> There were also meetings and sermons at Durham and Sunderland. But little

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1. "Romish Efforts in England: The Annual Sermon of the Protestant Reformation Society," May 8, 1864, in British Protestant, XX, p.17.
  2. 3rd Annual Report of the B.R.S., 1830, pp.16-17. By a publication of the Newcastle Catholic Tract Society (July 182?), it appears that the B.R.S. had come to Newcastle shortly after their founding, for Rev. Wm. Riddell "then alluded, amidst cheers and laughter, to the proceedings of the itinerant fanatics of the Reformation Society...and expressed his obligation to the Rev. Mr. Curr...for the drubbing he had given to the 'unprincipled vagrants' (laughter)." Ushaw Pamphlets Collection.
  3. The remittances to London were printed in the back of every annual report.
  4. 4th Annual Report of the B.R.S., 1831, p.20.
  5. 5th Annual Report of the B.R.S., 1832, pp.23-24.

zeal was shown by the locals: while the contributions from other auxiliaries steadily rose after 1834,<sup>1</sup> Durham and Newcastle showed funds amounting to only £6 in 1832 and nothing in the following year. To alleviate this situation, the B.R.S. sent another delegation to the north east in 1834 but it was received, in their own words, "amid great coldness".<sup>2</sup> As the B.R.S. was only too aware, "In all these localities [around Newcastle] the success of Romanists is so palpable".<sup>3</sup> It was not until 1839 that the Society, having carried out visits to the area's major cities, announced their first success: "Two careless Protestants who were married to Romanists and had been nearly brought over to Popery by them".<sup>4</sup>

When a petition appeared in the Gateshead Observer in 1840 signed by 20 Protestants desiring the Catholic priest of Hartlepool to continue his annual winter lectures on the doctrines and principles of the Catholic religion because the Protestants were frequently "disgusted by the evidently exaggerated statements, which they heard", the B.R.S. lost no time in dispatching the 'Reverend' Brabazon Ellis to deliver a fiery harangue on "No Peace With Rome".<sup>5</sup> To one Protestant minister in Hartlepool the Society must have instilled something more than xenophobia, for he suddenly became loudly convinced that the Pope was the devil, that nuns were nymphomaniacs, that priests were lechers and that

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1. Gilley, Ph.D. Thesis, Appendix II, p.381.
  2. 8th Annual Report, 1835, p.23.
  3. Ibid., p.23.
  4. 13th Annual Report, 1840, p.12.
  5. H.F. Etherington, Full Report of the Proceedings...to Establish an Auxiliary (Sunderland, 1840), p.4.

"Socialism was a branch of Popery...got up to divert our attention ...it is a senseless, brainless, dirty swine, rolling itself in a puddle-hole".<sup>1</sup> Direct mention of the Irish was also made at this Hartlepool meeting by a Protestant incumbent from Stockton who, believing that "some of the Irish Roman Catholic peasantry" were present, stated:

I believe you were sent to this country, not to convert us to Popery, but for us to convert you to Protestantism ...you are brought here under the providence of God, that we may convert you to the knowledge of Christ, for when I meet a Roman Catholic peasant I have these feelings to try and do him good.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Hartlepool meeting fired enough enthusiasm to launch an auxiliary in that town, interest soon lagged in spite of the noticeable advancement of north-eastern Catholicism in the mid-'forties.

To an agent unfamiliar with the history of the B.R.S. in the north east, the area in the 1840s appeared to be propitious for evangelical inroads. With all the zeal of a neophyte, a missionary wrote to London in 1843: "Newcastle might be one of the Society's best stations, if an Annual Meeting be held. The Romanists are very numerous here, and are now building a new church on a most extensive and magnificent scale."<sup>3</sup> So yet another deputation was sent to Newcastle in 1844, headed by no less a figure than Rev. John Cummings, one of the nation's leading exponents of no-popery. The Tablet was on hand to record "the

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1. Ibid., p.10.

2. Ibid., p.18. See also, Rev. W. Knight, Reply to the Rev. Brabazon Ellis and A Sermon on True Christian Charity (Hartlepool, Mar.9, 1840). Ushaw Pamphlets Collection.

3. 16th Annual Report of the B.R.S., 1843, p.14.

altered state of the Reformation Society", but that it was a

downward progress in public estimation, amongst even Protestant communities, was strongly indicated by the absence of every man in Newcastle of standing or importance from their meeting at the Music Hall....<sup>1</sup>

Despite the fact that the meeting had also imported Rev. Dr. Townsend, Canon of Durham, to show that not everyone in the north east was apathetic to their cause, it was obviously difficult to provoke anti-Catholicism where the Catholic Church was firmly entrenched and where the mayor of the town was Catholic. Even Townsend (who was to make his mark in 1850 by attempting to convert Pope Pius IX<sup>2</sup>) had no large following: he alone seems to have made up the Durham auxiliary of the B.R.S. with his annual submission of £5 to the central fund.

It was perhaps the general failure of the evangelical missions to secure any foothold in the north east that prompted the North of England Protestant Alliance—the "rump of the Reformation Society"<sup>3</sup>—to set up operations in Newcastle in 1852 to muster the local forces of no-popery. But, as witnessed in their endeavour to make Maynooth an issue of local significance, they met with as little support as the B.R.S. The Alliance seems only to have created mild disturbances in the towns they visited,

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1. IV (June 27, 1844), p.417.

2. In 1850 Townsend, dressed in full canonical robes, secured an interview with the Pope and endeavoured to "induce his Holiness to do away with the bickerings, animosities, and polemical discords which keep the various denominations of Christians separate and at enmity....The Pope was upon the whole very tolerant, as may be imagined from his having... listened with calmness to Dr. Townsend's arguments in favour of releasing the Roman Catholic Clergy from their vow of celibacy...." N.Journal, May 18, 1850, p.5.

3. Tablet, XIII (April 10, 1852), p.230.

succeeding mainly in ruffling Catholic feathers particularly when they arrived at the seat of Bishop Hogarth in Darlington. As for the English Church Missions,<sup>1</sup> the Pastoral-Aid Society and the Home Missionary Society, their efforts in the north east hardly merited even Catholic attention.

Between 1860-63, however, the efforts of the Durham City missionary for the Protestant Reformation Society (the new name of the B.R.S.) began to receive an inordinate amount of attention in the quarterly reports of the Society. In October 1859 the British Protestant wrote of

a most urgent application for a missionary...made by some sound Protestant Christians of this city [Durham]. There are few places where such instrumentality is more needed. We are truly thankful that we have been enabled to establish a Mission in that important stronghold of Popery.<sup>2</sup>

The P.R.S. was even more fortunate than it had at first imagined, for the missionary who went to Durham was fired with evangelical fervour and was admirably suited to converting Irish Catholics: he had come from Dublin, had a smooth and quiet manner, was ardently pious and firmly believed in the integrity of his work. His many letters to the Society's offices were thus profusely quoted in their reports in an effort to model the ideal evangelical. Part of his résumé of accomplishments for January 1860, for example, will suffice to illustrate the prototypical missionary at the grass roots level:

The first [example] is that of a young woman (Mrs. M.) whom I visited after I came here, but who at first

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1. By 1856 the English Church Missions' income had been reduced by such an extent that all but two of its missionaries were disbanded by 1858. Gilley, "Protestant London...Pt.II," p.28.
  2. No.134, XVI (Oct. 1859), pp.3-4

refused to receive me. However, on asking her what part of Ireland she was from, and learning it was from Dublin, and then telling her I also had come from that city, she invited me to come in and sit down. We conversed for some little time about Dublin, etc. I then took the Douay Bible, and read to her what the Scriptures say about our state by nature, the necessity of being born again, etc., and how the change is to be wrought, and then read for her some texts, which speak of the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sins, and contrasted them with the teaching of the Romish Church. She said she liked very well what I had read for her, and also received a tract, and said she would be glad to see me often, and made me promise to call frequently....This I continued to do up to a fortnight ago when she told me her mind was much shaken in the belief of several Romish dogmas, and at the same time said she would follow my advice, and take her children from the Romish school and send them to the Protestant school; which she did on the following Monday, where they continue to go regularly.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious from this extract that such a method of converting was a slow and laborious one which most often ran headlong into violent Catholic opposition. For this reason the Durham missionary, though he continued to visit as many 208 families in one month,<sup>2</sup> opened "a controversial inquiry class" which the Catholics attended "in great numbers".<sup>3</sup> That the missionary made many converts among the Irish seems rather doubtful, though they continued to attend the meetings if only for an amusing pastime. By his zeal, however, he succeeded in having the auxiliary in Durham run by a local committee, which was a marked advancement over the single representation of Rev. Townsend ten years before. He continued to list the two or three converts he had made in each quarter of the year, describing how they all arrived at enlightened conclusions such as "'I now see clearly that the

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1. British Protestant, No.135, XVI (Jan. 1860), p.10.

2. Ibid., No.136, XVI (April 1860), pp.7-8.

3. Ibid., p.8.



Catholic Church teaches false doctrines, and is an apostate church, and I shall never join it."<sup>1</sup> But his greatest accomplishments were, firstly, in warding off potential converts to Catholicism by means of exposing "the legends and 'lying wonders' of Father Furniss [sic], through means of handbills, public meetings, and newspapers...[which] had the effect of opening the eyes of great numbers of Protestants of all ranks".<sup>2</sup> And secondly, he kept a vigilant eye on the Catholic school and prevented any Protestant children from attending. "I am not aware", he reported in July 1861, "of a single Protestant child being in attendance at a Romish school."<sup>3</sup>

Beyond these gains and the rescuing of some children of mixed marriages from the clutches of the Sisters of Mercy, the missionary's success was curbed by the greater power of the Catholic Church. The priests in Durham warned the congregation against attending the discussion classes on pain of excommunication and, according to the missionary, the Catholics were instructed "to keep a strict watch" upon their neighbours and report anyone who attended the meetings.<sup>4</sup> The result of these tactics was that Catholic attendance came to a halt and the missionary was exposed to some rather rough treatment including a sound beating from "a violent Roman Catholic".<sup>5</sup> In having Protestants occupy the seats vacated by the Catholics, the missionary had, by P.R.S.

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1. British Protestant, No 142, XVIII (Sept 1861), pp.8-9.

2. Ibid., No.154, XVIII (April 1862), pp.15-16.

3. 34th Annual Report of the P R.S., 1861, p.22.

4. 35th Annual Report of the P.R.S., 1862, pp.22-23.

5. 36th Annual Report of the P.R.S., 1863, p.19.

standards, achieved as noble a victory as if he had chalked up any number of converts.<sup>1</sup> The opening of St. Godric's in 1864, however, reveals not only the ineffectiveness of Protestant efforts to deter Catholic progress, but points to the paradox of no-popery in its hastening of Catholic development and in its forcing the church to tighten the net against leakage.

Indeed, one of the major effects of the evangelical outcry in the north east was to make it impossible for Catholics to be indifferent about their religion. As the editor of the Newcastle Chronicle commented in July 1851:

Ever since the first appearance of the famous Bill for dividing England into Roman Catholic sees, we have had a strong impression that one of the main objects of the measure was to provoke in a certain degree the Protestant feeling of the country and thereby to attract attention to the claims of Romanism.<sup>2</sup>

Or, as a local priest confirmed at a social gathering of Catholics in Newcastle a year later,

there was no denying the fact that [the government's] penal measure had given the Catholics a position of attention which they had for some years been desirous to obtain....Thanks to the bigots, thousands were now discussing the subject of religion in this country who hitherto never had permanently turned their minds to such a subject.<sup>3</sup>

For the church's concern with leakage, the exposure wrought by anti-Catholicism was something of a temporary palliative. The Tablet correspondent noticed on Easter Sunday 1852 that attendance at the principal Catholic Churches in the diocese was "very considerably increased—immeasurably increased."<sup>4</sup>

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1. The very first object of the Society was "to revive Protestant zeal". 1st Annual Report of the B.R.S., 1828, p.1.
  2. July 4, 1851, p.4.
  3. Rev Richard Gillow. Tablet, XIII (April 24, 1852), p.260.
  4. Ibid., p.260.

The Catholic Church, of course, did everything in its power to obstruct the path of the evangelicals or, when such was impossible, to minimise and negate their influence. While Viscount Seaham presented local petitions against papal aggression, the Liberal, M. Headlam, was selected to put forward petitions from the Roman Catholic laymen of Durham and Minsteracres.<sup>1</sup> When the Bishop of Durham made his position clear in his "Letter to the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne", a local priest quickly retaliated with a pamphlet on Protestant Aggression in which he charged the Bishop "as allied with this band of religious incendiaries: nay more, I point to you as a leader—bearer of the torch of persecution."<sup>2</sup> The priest went on to warn:

Beware, how you make approach to this volcanic question, for the indications of convulsion around you, are awful to contemplate. The Catholic millions of Ireland may sit down and weep in silence over their political thralldom, but depend upon it, they will arise to a man, should the usurper advance to set foot within the precincts of the sanctuary.<sup>3</sup>

And when a local dispute in Gateshead caused the unofficial precedent of allowing Catholic children to be escorted from the workhouse to mass to be removed, an incensed priest raised the cry:

And now Irishmen, these children are all Irish! Englishmen, are we to permit this state of things in our own country? Members of the Defence Association, are we to go to sleep? Irish Brigade, up, guards! and at 'em in the next session of parliament.<sup>4</sup>

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1. N.Cour., Mar.21, 1851, p.3.

2. Protestant Aggression: Remarks on the Bishop of Durham's Letter to the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne by a Catholic Clergyman Resident Within the Diocese of Durham (Newcastle, Jan. 20, 1851), p.5. N.C.L. Lts.

3. Ibid., p.10.

4. Tablet, XIII (Mar,27, 1852), p.197. This is a good illustration of Catholic technique in exploiting the persecution syndrome and in utilizing the same jingoistic appeals as their competitors.

Nor did this same priest go unsupported by the rest of the clergy when, in 1853, he dispatched a petition with 804 signatures (raised within 48 hours) to the House of Lords to oppose the proposed Nunneries Inspection Bill.<sup>1</sup>

Though in the field of proselytising, organisations like the P.R.S. had greater financial reserves for a singular purpose, Catholics were not without counter-organisations such as the local Defence Associations and the Association for the Propagation of the Faith.<sup>2</sup> If the tracts dispensed by these associations or those distributed by the Brotherhood of St. Vincent de Paul<sup>3</sup> "made no wide or deep impression on the mass of English unbelievers, as a body",<sup>4</sup> they were no less effective (or ineffective) than those distributed by the Protestants. Catholic lecture tours such as those by the eloquent Jesuit, Charles Larkin, on the "Spiritual Jurisdiction of the Pope"<sup>5</sup> etc., were also used to attract attention

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1. Tablet, XIV (June 25, 1853), p.405.
  2. Who was actually countering whom, depended on your sympathies. The B.R.S. claimed in 1842 that their tracts were "to neutralize the poisonous tracts of the Roman Catholic Institute, which are stereotyped and circulated throughout the kingdom with a perseverance and energy worthy of a better cause." 13th Annual Report, 1840, p.13.
  3. "The Clifton Tracts," began to be issued from London in 1851 "with a view of supplying a want, long and generally felt... [for] a plain and simple statement of Catholic doctrines, principles, and practices, together with an exposure of Protestant errors". Advertisement on cover of first issue. Ushaw Pamphlets Collection. For the scope of the 'paper war' from the Catholic point of view, see, "Catholic and Protestant Missionary, Book and Education Societies," Rambler, new ser., X (Oct. 1858), pp.268-79.
  4. "How to Convert Protestants," Rambler, new ser., I (Jan. 1854), p.1.
  5. Tablet, XII (Feb.8, 1851), p.83.

and to disseminate information to non-Catholics. But, like the tracts, the lecture tours served to bolster the faith of co-religionists against militant Protestantism. As priests like Father Kelly in South Shields were delivering lecture courses "in defence of the doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church" on Sunday evenings,<sup>1</sup> other priests were using the same propaganda on local tours as a convenient means of raising funds. Rev. Betham of Gateshead, for example, commenced his crusade for St. Joseph's in 1851 "which he said he would make subserve a double purpose—that of setting the new church afloat, and of vindicating the Church and the Holy See against the calumnies by which they had been assailed."<sup>2</sup> And while the P.R.S. missionary in Durham City struggled for one or two souls, 7,000 Catholics gathered at Ushaw in 1860 to hear "very inflammatory speeches made by the priests who were present" on behalf of the collection for St. Godric's.<sup>3</sup>

Though the Dublin Review was correct in stating that the anti-Catholicism raised at mid-century tended to arrest the "tide of conversions", in the north east there was little truth to their claim "that the growth of all the works of the Church had been indefinitely retarded."<sup>4</sup> No-popery in general and the local evangelicals in particular played into the hands of the Catholic Church for they forced her to become acutely aware of the weak spots in

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1. Ibid., XIII (April 17, 1852), p.246.

2. Ibid., XII (May 24, 1851), p.325.

3. 33rd Annual Report of the B.R.S., (July 1860), pp.18-19.

4. "The Works and Wants of the Catholic Church in England," new ser., I (July 1863), p.147.

her structure. By 1852 the Bishop's Pastorals are deeply concerned with the efforts of "those who persecute and caluminate us" and who offer relief to the Irish poor "on condition that they will abandon the faith of their Fathers and allow their their Children to be trained up in schools, where the doctrines of the Reformation are taught!"<sup>1</sup> The clergy were therefore exhorted

to represent to their respective flocks the dreadful consequences, which must result from the system which is now so universally adopted by the enemies of our Faith, and that they would urge in season and out of season the necessity of using every means in their power to procure funds to enable the Catholic School Committee fully to carry out their projects for the religious education of the poor, as the most effectual barrier against the evil which threatens the Children of their flocks.<sup>2</sup>

The response to the appeal was immediate and thorough and it was not long before comments lauding Catholic education began to appear. The Newcastle Chronicle, commenting on the town of Consett, remarked that

the particular faith to which they [the Irish] belong claims especially the superintendence of their children's education. It is not the least pleasant and remarkable feature of the Roman Catholics of the present day, that they are most careful in training up their children....<sup>3</sup>

And while the souls of the children were being more zealously protected, priests exerted a greater vigilance in the slum areas to ward off the Irish from the luring infidels. There thus came to be some truth in the earlier cry that the Romish Church was being

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1. Hogarth, June 7, 1852, U.C. III.

2. Ibid.

3. "History and Progress of the Consett Iron Works," July 9, 1858, p.6.

aggressive,<sup>1</sup> but what the no-popery evangelicals could never acknowledge was that it was largely their own efforts which forced the Catholic Church to greatly accelerate her endeavours for the amelioration of the myriad sources of potential leakage.

Beyond giving encouragement to the very force they intended to defeat, the evangelical missions to the Irish Catholics failed for a number of other reasons. Dr. Gilley has fully outlined the reasons for their shortcomings as witnessed in London<sup>2</sup> and these same factors applied to the north east. In part, these were problems with the narrowness of the evangelical pursuit in contrast to the scope of the church, the lack of financial and moral support when the national fervour declined,<sup>3</sup> the problem of amateur zealots and/or mountebanks attempting to encroach upon the better trained and equipped clergy,<sup>4</sup> the inability of the various missions to unite into one central, more effectual agency,<sup>5</sup> the timing of the

1. For example, "The real strength of Rome consists in our weakness. The public temper, though it has shown itself able to resent, is utterly unfit to deal with aggression." R.H. Cheney, "Papal Pretensions," Quarterly Review, LXXXIX (Sept. 1851), p.484.
2. "Protestant London...Pt.II," pp.31-2. The following notes indicate other areas where additional specific evidence may be found.
3. By 1857 Rev. Beamish at the Annual Meeting of the English Church Missions was complaining that "that Society, the Irish Church Mission Society, and the Protestant Reformation Society, met with less support than almost any other religious institution, whether as regarded their income or the number of persons who attended their anniversaries." Record, May 8, 1857.
4. Ecclesiastical Developments in the Churches of Rome and England...by the P.R.S., p.9.
5. "6th Annual Meeting of the Protestant Alliance," Record, May 18, 1857.

evangelicals in establishing missions to the Irish Catholics at least four years after the major Irish influx, their failure to justify their cause by obtaining any significant number of converts<sup>1</sup> and finally, the evangelicals' general inability to fathom the meaning of Catholicism to the Irish,<sup>2</sup> which generated a certain antipathy toward those whom they endeavoured to convert.<sup>3</sup> The contest was thus one of unfair advantage for the Catholics. In the north east the evangelicals were at an even greater disadvantage, for the geographical isolation of the area meant that the Exeter Hall and London based agencies were largely out of touch with local affairs. Moreover, Catholicism in the area was more firmly entrenched and respected than elsewhere in England and it was therefore easier for the church to protect her flock when necessary. Thirdly, being urban-oriented, the evangelicals neglected the extensive Irish Catholic population in the rural areas of Durham for which they also had insufficient manpower. Finally, we must take into account the lack of local enthusiasm for the cause of the evangelicals. This was a problem which also faced the Protestant zealots in London (and presumably elsewhere) but which in the north east had a much greater prevalence.

## (iv)

Just as the lack of concern with the social presence of the Irish was partially dependent on the social makeup of the north east, so the ephemerality of no-popery and the inefficacy of the

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1. All too often the final result was, to paraphrase Dr. Johnson, that a Roman Catholic, in changing his religion, would pass, not from one form of Christianity to another, but from Catholicism to infidelity.
  2. W. Todd, op.cit., P.8; R. Samuel, op.cit., pp.45-6.
  3. Record, July 20, 1854; May 8, 1857



attempts at proselytising the Irish were dependent in part upon the religious composition of the area. To fully appreciate the position of the Roman Catholics it is necessary to give a brief synopsis of the relative position of the other denominations. Table 8, extracted from the Religious Census of 1851, indicates the area's major denominations and their seating capacity.<sup>1</sup>

Table 8: Places of Worship and Seating Accomodation in Durham and Newcastle

	No. of Places		Seating Accomodation	
	Durham	Newcastle	Durham	Newcastle
C. of England	189	12	70,648	10,488
Wesleyan Meth.	204	6	45,633.	3,652
Other Methodist <sup>2</sup>	169	11	35,142	3,838
Presbyterian	14	5	6,550	2,770
Independents	27	2	9,575	1,036
Roman Catholic	24	2	5,250	1,744
Baptists	22	7	4,678	2,148
Others	26	9	4,927	3,738
	675	54	182,403	29,414

While after a century of heated debate it is now generally conceded that the barrister responsible for the Religious Census, Horace Mann, was close to the truth when he stated that "the general facts and totals of the census are substantially correct".<sup>3</sup> In Durham and Newcastle the validity of this concession to Mann must be serious<sup>ly</sup>/questioned, for as observed in Chapter I, there was an unprecedented population increase in the area at mid-century.

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1. pp.418-421. I acknowledge some margin of error in these figures due to the very poor microcard equipment at Palace Green Library, Durham.
  2. Includes: Primitives, New Connexion, Wesleyan Reformers and Wesleyan Methodist Association.
  3. "On the Statistical Position of Religious Bodies in England and Wales," J.S.S.L., XVIII (June 1855), p.147.

Unlike other areas, therefore, there was an unparalleled shortage of churches—a fact that is revealed by Durham and Northumberland having the second lowest percentage of seating accommodation to population for all of England and Wales.<sup>1</sup>

The Roman Catholics, as a body for which we have more detailed statistics, were not untypical in having accommodation for only 5,000 communicants in Durham while their estimated population in 1851 was in the neighbourhood of 25,000. Even if each seat was occupied three times on 'Census Sunday', the figures do not tally. Because this discrepancy with the Catholic figures also applied to other areas of Irish-Catholic immigration, maps 7 and 8 can give a positional bearing on the places of established Catholicism in England<sup>2</sup> but they hardly reflect the true strength of that denomination. This is made clear in map 9 where the heavily shaded portions reflect the traditional roots of Catholicism while areas like South Shields and Sunderland, which had extensive Irish populations by 1851, are shown to have an index of attendance of less than 2. As indicated by the comparative maps on the Catholic Chapels and Churches in the area,<sup>3</sup> most of the building took place after 1846, the bulk after 1851. At least in Durham and Newcastle, then, some credence must be given to the Rambler's interrogatory: "What argument as to population

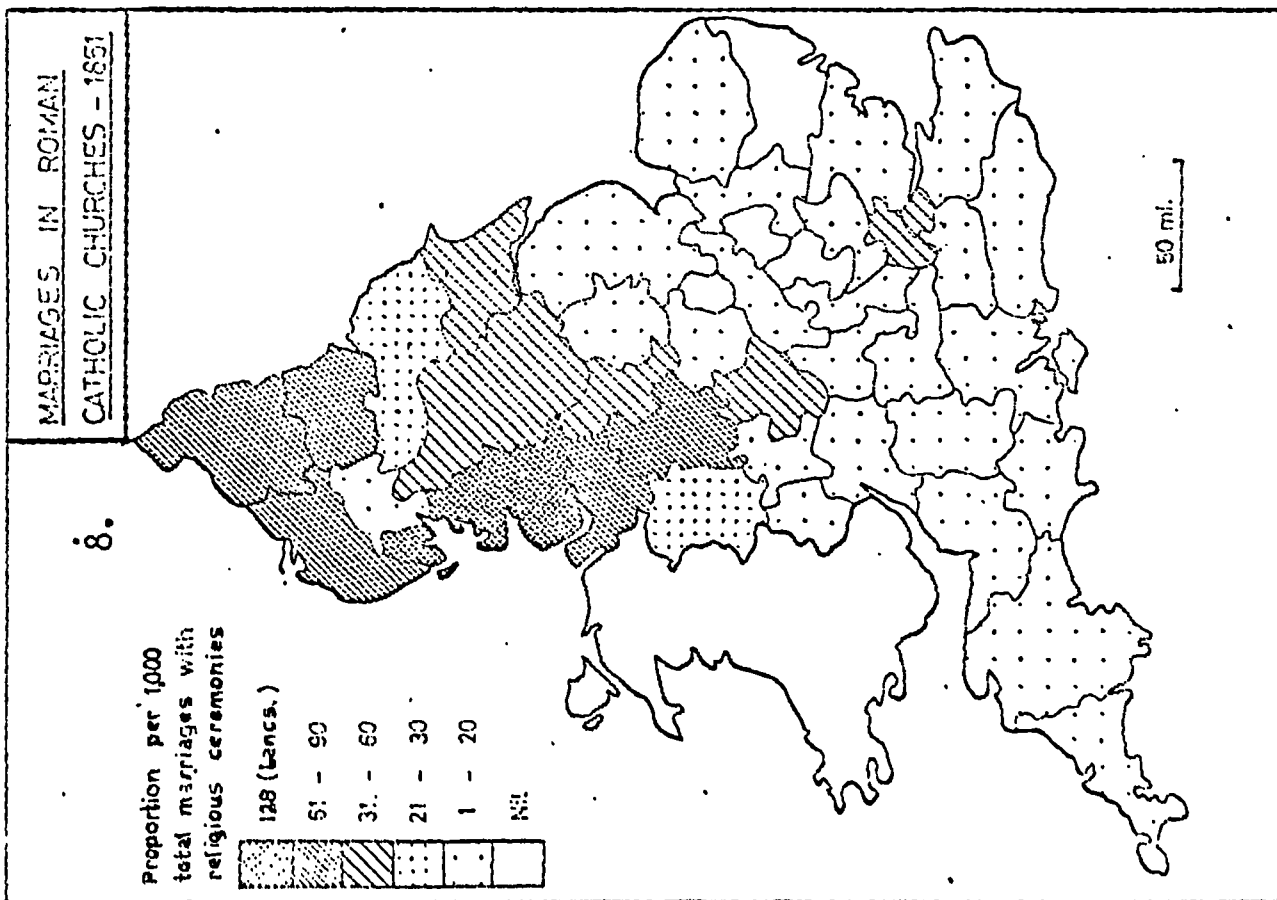
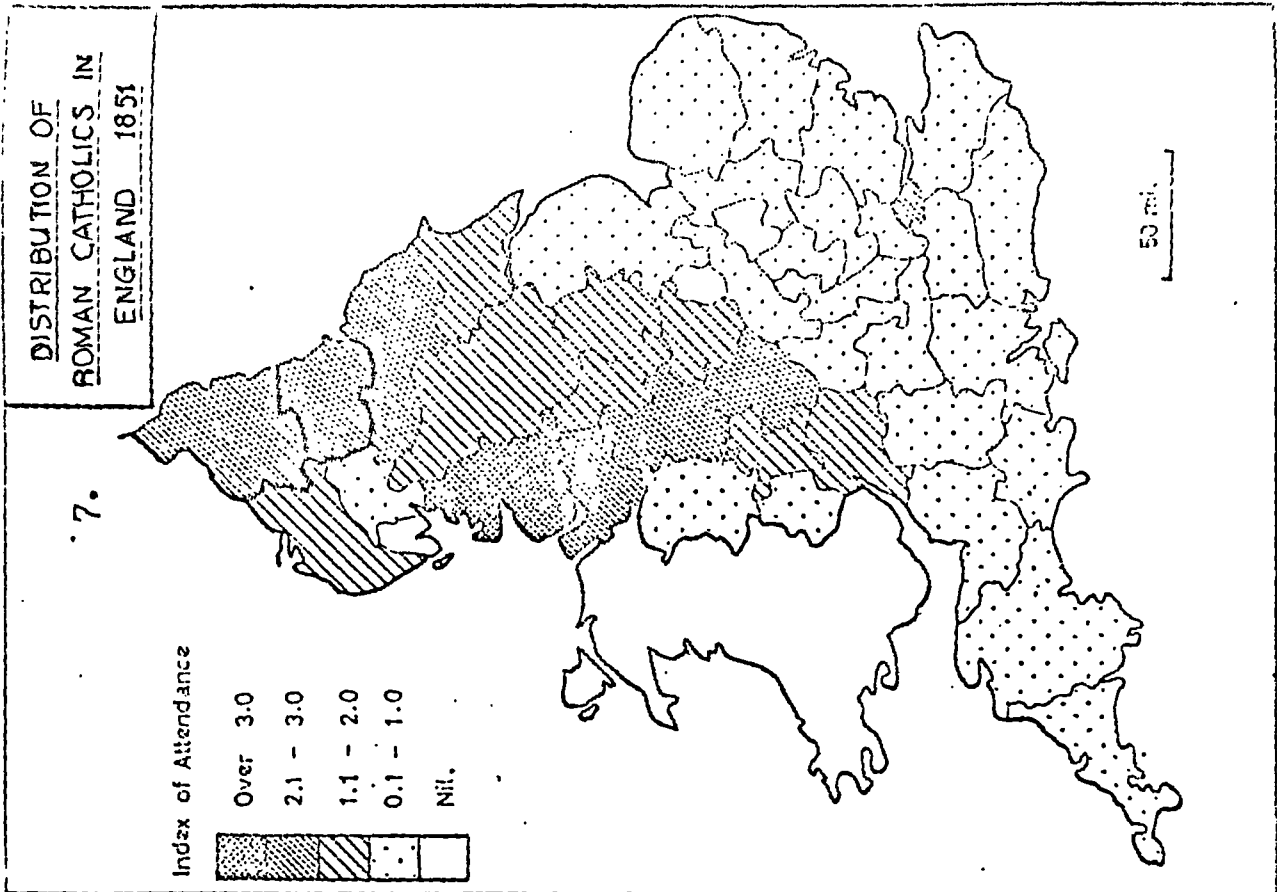
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1. Durham, 46.5 percent; Northumberland, 48.8 percent; while Lancashire was lowest with 40.0 percent.

2. The index of attendance for maps 7 and 9 is the percentage attending on Census Sunday as it varied over each county. Churches failing to submit attendance returns have been considered and a method devised for minimising this error. J. Gay, Geography of Religion, pp.51-4.

3. Chp.III, maps 5 and 6, pp.71-2.

DISTRIBUTION OF ROMAN CATHOLICS IN  
ENGLAND, 1851: BY CENSUS, BY MARRIAGES\*

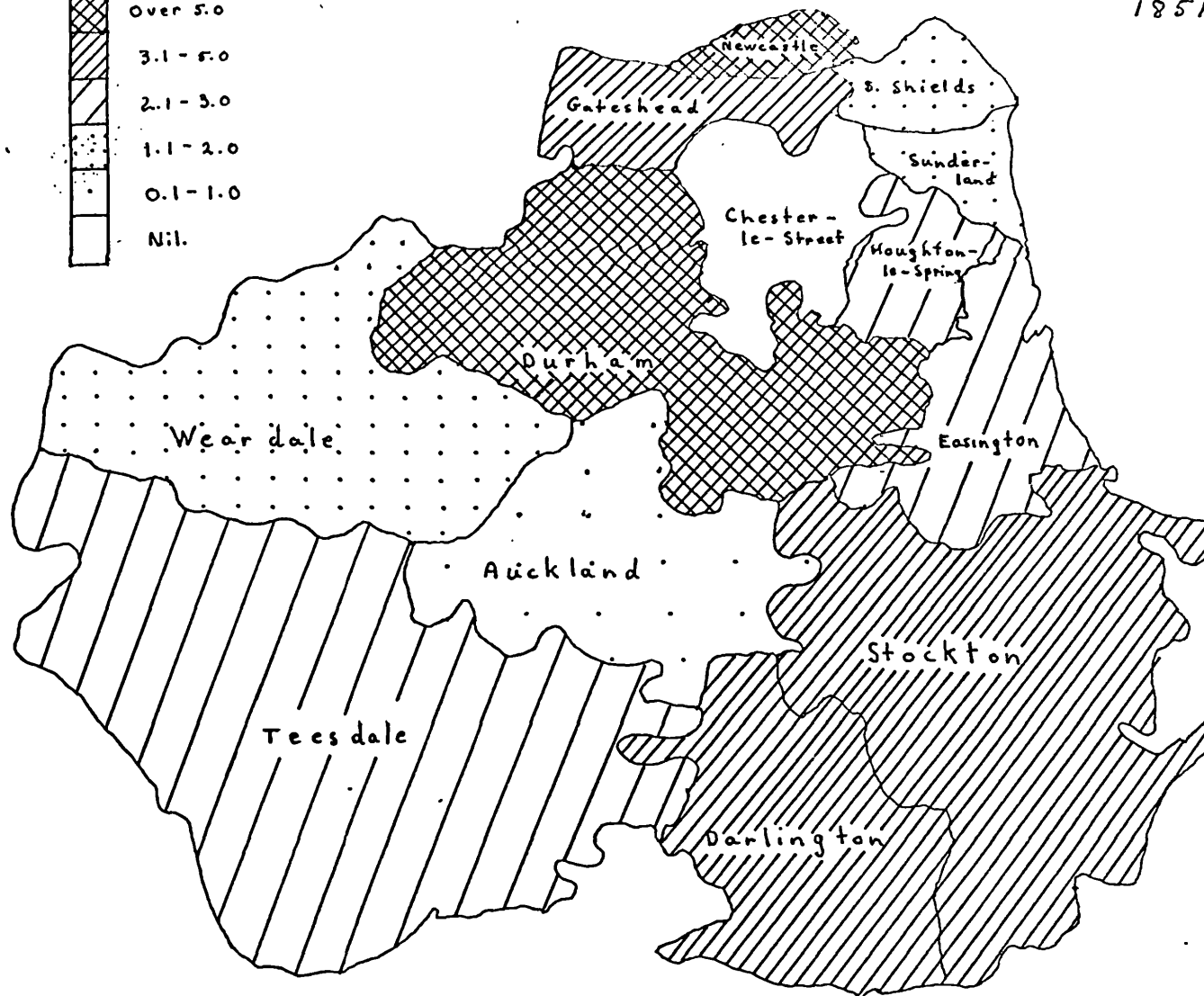
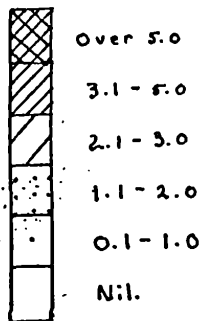


\* John D. Gay, The Geography of Religion in England (London, 1971), pp. 282-3.



ROMAN CATHOLICS IN CO. DURHAM & NEWCASTLE  
1851\*

INDEX OF ATTENDANCE



20 mi.

\* Gay, op.cit., p.280 (enlarged).

can be drawn from the number of church-sittings, when the supply of these must depend on the wealth as well as on the wants of different sects".<sup>1</sup>

What is equally germane to our inquiry here, is the similar situation of the other denominations in Durham and Newcastle in their struggle to provide accomodation for both the vast influx of labourers and the consistently high rate of birth among the working classes—a situation that was not national in scope. It was observed by the Anglican incumbent of Gateshead in 1843 that in

all these places—Gateshead, Newcastle, North and South Shields, and Sunderland, with its contiguous parishes, numbering a population of nearly two hundred thousand, contained within the area of a circle of five or six miles radius, have scarcely, on an average, a church for every 7,000, and less than one clergyman for every 5,000 people.<sup>2</sup>

Eight years later, though great exertions had been made in the meantime, the situation was even more demanding. Of the 36 towns which Professor Inglis has shown to have had an index of attendance less than the average for large towns (49.7), included are the major centres of the north east: Gateshead (32.9), Newcastle (40.0), South Shields (46.3) and Sunderland (48.5).<sup>3</sup> While Inglis has shown that abstinence from religious worship "was most common where the largest number of working class people lived",<sup>4</sup> the implication that the working classes were more indifferent to re-

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1. "Religious Census of England," new ser., I (Feb. 1854), p.186.
  2. Rev. J. Davies, Sermon on Behalf of the Church Building Society, March 12th, 1843 (Gateshead), p.44. N.C.L. Lts.
  3. K.S. Inglis, "Patterns of Religious Worship in 1851," J. of Ecclesiastical History, XI (1960), pp.81-2.
  4. Ibid., p.82.

ligion cannot be wholly affirmed in the north east due to the shortage of places of worship.

Though the Anglicans were aware of the severe lack of churches, the onus of the demand and responsibility lay not with the Church of England but with the nonconformist denominations.<sup>1</sup> Since the advent of Wesley, the Church of England had had a diminishing role among the Protestant congregations of the area. By 1851 Durham and Northumberland were the two counties where the State Church was least important. Table 9 shows this relative position of the Church of England to the other denominations in

Table 9: Relative Position of Church of England<sup>2</sup>

	% of Seating to Tot. Pop.		% of Available Seating	
	C. of E.	Other	C. of E.	Other
Eng. & Wales	29.6	27.4	51.9	48.1
Durham Co.	17.6	28.9	37.8	62.2
Northumberl.	18.1	30.7	37.1	62.9
Newcastle	11.7	22.8	33.9	66.1
Gateshead	15.2	20.2	42.9	57.1
Sunderland	13.7	35.2	28.0	72.0

1851. Even without taking into account the scarcity of nonconformist places of worship, it is clear that the position of the Church of England was extremely weak. This situation was in marked contrast to London, for example, where in every borough except the Tower Hamlets, Church of England attendance was much higher than that of the nonconformists.<sup>3</sup> While in Lancashire the proportional seating of the Church was also very low (19.1 percent),

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1. Nonconformist used here will include Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Methodists.
  2. Religious Census, p.cclxxiv, p.ccxcii; quoted in J. Clarke, M.A. Thesis, p.27.
  3. Inglis, "Patterns of Religious Worship," p.85.

the difference between that county (and all other areas of Irish immigration) and the north east, was the position of the Methodists in the latter. While the ratio of Anglican to Methodist percentage accomodation in Lancashire was 1:0.46, in West Yorkshire 1:0.96, and for all England and Wales 1:0.41, in Durham this ratio was 1:1.24.<sup>1</sup>

In the decades after 1851 this gulf between the Anglicans and the nonconformists was further widened. Though the Church made a determined effort to enhance its position, its appeal to the new working classes met with little success.<sup>2</sup> The Newcastle Chronicle pointed out in 1872 that

the upholders of State Churchism have worthily betaken themselves to gigantic efforts in multiplying their seats and their adherents...[by] revival prayer meetings to floral fetes; from whitewashed cottage Bethels to gorgeous and gorgeously-appointed temples; from popular Penny Readings to ornate musical ritual; by polite adaptation of article and rubric to all sorts of conditions of men; by saintly enthusiasm and monkish rigours; by unctuous Evangelism; by natural-tinted Broad Churchism; by daring avowals of rationalism; and by sailing as near the wind as possible without splitting on the rock of St. Peter...the Episcopal Church have endeavoured to make for their sect an ascendancy in the councils of Authority and their practical monopoly of such disbursements from the public funds as the law places at the disposal of Government.<sup>3</sup>

But, as the article went on to state, the Church being so absorbed, had failed to notice the even greater progress of the dissenters. Quoting the findings of a religious census carried out by the Nonconformist, it was stated that "Newcastle shows seventy-six

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1. Calculated from Table C, Mann, op.cit., p.157.

2. Anglican sittings to population for the Diocese of Durham went from 1:6,268 to 1:6,251 to 1:7,571 to 1:8,656 for each decade from 1841 to 1881, respectively. Archdeacon Watson, "Our Churches And Our Schools," Durham Diocesan Magazine (Oct. 1884), pp.113-5.

3. "An Ecclesiastical Census," editorial, Oct.26, 1872, p.2.



per cent of Dissenting increase; alongside of forty-six Church increase" in the number of churches built since 1851. While the places of the Church increased from 11 to 19, the seating capacity of the Catholic Churches more than doubled in Newcastle and Congregationalist places increased threefold.<sup>1</sup> Joseph Cowen, in opposing the Bishopric Bill in 1878, was therefore quite

justified in saying that in the two counties of Durham and Northumberland, the Dissenters and the Catholics have, during the last quarter of a century, not only expended as large a sum in building chapels and schools as the Church has done, but that they have absolutely expended one half-as-much again. The consequence is that the position of the different bodies to-day is not altered for the better, so far as the Church is concerned. On the contrary, Dissent and Catholicism have increased, not only as fast and as much as the Church, but they have progressed fully one-half more.<sup>2</sup>

For the Irish Catholics, the state of religion in the north east meant a greater level of religious, if not racial, toleration. In the first place, the building efforts of all the denominations reduced the amount of attention drawn to the increase in Catholic Churches and communicants. With every denomination rapidly enlarging its accommodation the Catholics were seen as much less of a threat. In articles like "'Hartlepool—Chapel Building Extraordinary'" Catholics received as much praise as the other denominations for doing their part in bringing religion to the people.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the sheer numbers of all communicants to be accommodated made local proselytising attempts for one or two Irish Catholics seem fatuous. Local missionaries like the Scottish evangelical

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1. Cited in Clarke, M.A. Thesis, p.29.

2. Contained in Evan R. Jones, The Life and Speeches of Joseph Cowen, M.P. (London, 1885), p.331.

3. Sunderland Herald, Oct.4, 1850, cited in Clarke, M.A. Thesis, p.28.

Dr. Rutherford paid little heed to the Irish Catholics who were the best provided group in the slums, and concentrated instead on instilling some sort of religious feeling in those slum dwellers who had no faith at all.<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, in light of the limited stature of the Church of England among the indigenous population, the social and religious life of the area and the attitudes of the inhabitants were influenced most by the leadership of the nonconformists. Despite the presumption of the commissioners appointed by the Anglican Bishop of Newcastle in 1883, who "thought it right to take the entire population as the basis of our calculations" for the spiritual wants of the district;<sup>2</sup> as Cowen had stated in 1878, "that body never had, and has not now, any strong hold on the affections and convictions of the people of the North."<sup>3</sup> This could be witnessed by most of the social affairs, political meetings and entertainments of the population. At the opening of a Wesleyan Chapel near Newcastle in 1869, for example, shipping magnate, Charles Palmer, used the occasion to discourse that "the Church of England is not keeping pace with the intelligence and increase of the population of the district, and he regards the Methodists as doing the work which the Church has left undone, and which it was her duty to have accomplished".<sup>4</sup> Palmer, no doubt expressing the sympathies

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1. See, Joseph Cowen, Speech Delivered at the Unveiling Ceremony of the Memorial Fountain [Newcastle] to Dr. Rutherford, Sept. 12, 1894, p.8. N.C.L. Lts; Dr. Rutherford, Meeting for the Proclamation of the Gospel (April 2, n d.). N.C.L. Lts.
  2. Report of the Commissioners...to Examine into the Spiritual Wants...of Certain Parishes in the Diocese of Newcastle (Newcastle, 1883), p.7. N.C.L. Lts.
  3. Jones, op.cit., p.329.
  4. "Methodism and the Church," D.Chron., Aug.13, 1869, pp 4-5.

of his audience, went so far as to call some of the Anglican clergy "drunkards, bankrupts and men of impure life." While the Wesleyans were not over-warm to either the Catholics or the Irish, the problems facing that denomination at mid-century tended to diminish anti-Catholic feeling. The "spiritual earthquake" in the twilight of Jabez Bunting's very Tory 'Premiership of Methodism' (1808-48) forced the Wesleyans to become more closely allied with the popular liberalism of the north east.<sup>1</sup> In Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland, Wesleyan membership was cut almost in half by the disaffection of less conservative members.<sup>2</sup> For the Methodist body as a whole the internal difficulties at mid-century mollified much of the earlier rigidity and stiffness. Among the Primitives, who were strongest in the mining districts, religious views largely determined the social and political behaviour that leaned towards the 'radicalism' of labour spokesmen like Thomas Burt, John Wilson, William Crawford and Joseph Cowen. As to how far this liberalism reduced antipathy to Catholics or to Irish in the day-to-day course of affairs, it is difficult to surmise. The point to be made, however, is that the nonconformists generally went out of their way to underscore their disapproval of the unfairly endowed, State-supported Church, and in so doing were unwilling to follow the Church's anti-Catholic lead.<sup>3</sup> As the interests of the Irish Cath-

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1. See, R.F. Wearmouth, Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes, 1850-1900 (Leicester, 1954), pp.210-42.

2 Wesleyan Methodist Conference Minutes, Methodist Archives, 1850-1851.

3. The exception was the anti-Catholic expressions by the Methodists in 1851 over the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill (above, p.111) As E.R. Norman has pointed out, however, the dissenters generally enjoyed the spectacle of no-popery without contributing much to it themselves. For their outcry in 1851, they were severely chastised by their leaders, who reminded them of their

olics were also liberally-oriented and as their religion was literally dissenting, they could not serve as a focus for hostility for the majority of the population.

Two other factors further operated to reduce any antagonism towards the Irish Catholics. Firstly, the lack of Orange Lodges in the area gave little moral or practical support to that particular union of Tory politics and State Churchism of which the Irish Catholics were the favoured victims. While there is evidence of registered Orange Lodges in existence in Newcastle in 1814 and 1830,<sup>1</sup> there appear to have been few members in the lodges later in the century. Excepting one murder which took place outside "'Ellison Arms,' commonly called 'The Hole' it being an Orange Club" in 1858 in which the victim was "a Roman Catholic, but not a Ribbonman or a member of the proscribed Hibernian Society",<sup>2</sup> there are very few references to Orangemen in Newcastle. There are no local reports of Battle of Boyne Day celebrations nor any references to Orangemen raising havoc on St. Patrick's Day. For Durham, as well, there is a general lack of references to Orangemen. One of the few reports of disturbances on July 12th came from the strong Irish-Catholic centre of Consett in 1882. The town had established an Orange Lodge in 1868<sup>3</sup> but its strength might well be

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own struggle against the Church of England and the Queen's supremacy in matters of faith and worship. Methodists were thereby warned to avoid the embarrassing inconsistency of no-popery. Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England, pp.65-7.

1. Rules of the First Select Friendly Society of Orangemen, instituted Nov.4th, 1814 (Newcastle, July 16, 1821), revised altered and amended, 1830. Brit. Mus.
2. N.Chron., June 4, 1858, p.6; T. Fordyce, Local Register, 1833-1866, III (Newcastle, 1867), p.342.
3. Rules of the Rose of Consett Lodge of the Grand Protestant Association of Loyal Orangemen, District Sick and Burial Society (Consett, 1868). D/X274/1 Durham County Record Office.

measured by the fact that the melee of 1882 required the importation of Orangemen from other places, for "upon the arrival of the last train from Durham at Benfieldside, a batch of Orangemen were met at the station by a number of police who escorted them to Consett."<sup>1</sup> Crook also had an Orangemen's association in 1881 but its membership was less than 80.<sup>2</sup> The other factor working in the favour of the Irish Catholics was the liberalism of several of the most influential Anglican families. The Protestant lords who were also the principal colliery owners, like the Ravensworths, the Greys and the Lambeths, generously gave land and building materials in order that their Catholic workmen could be spiritually provided.<sup>3</sup> And many Protestant landowners such as Sir Hedworth Williamson were renowned for their "generosity of heart and liberality of sentiment"<sup>4</sup> and were willing benefactors to every Catholic fund for a church and school.

With, then, a sizeable Catholic gentry quite highly regarded and easing the reaction to the Irish Catholics; a strong dissenting population of break-away Methodists who could not easily join with the establishment in the cry against the Pope and who were also preoccupied with their own internal schism and church building; few Orangemen; and a traditional liberalism ingrained in many of the leading Anglican families; anti-Catholicism was confined to a very small minority of devoted upholders of the establishment. But though the latter were few in number, they were neither insignificant nor without considerable power. "Some there are,"

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1. D.Chron., July 14, 1882, p.5.

2. Ibid., July 15, 1881.

3. N.C.C., 1885, p.47.

4. Tablet, XXI (Sept.29, 1860), p.613.

wrote the Newcastle Chronicle,

who will never, if they can help it, tolerate any opinion contrary to their own. The present Bishop of Durham appears to be one of these. His lordship failed to put in an appearance at the opening ceremony connected with a most excellent charity...because the Roman Catholic Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle had been invited. He would not stand on the same platform with Bishop Chadwick.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the five bishops of Durham from Maltby to Lightfoot were all men of "strongly Protestant inclination" with no pretensions to High Churchism.<sup>2</sup> For them, Protestant England was dependent upon the stalwart principles of those political factions violently opposing the papacy—that "gigantic lie which attempts to stand between the soul and Christ."<sup>3</sup> Dissenters were naturally frowned upon but an orthodox Presbyterian could be a welcome ally. Thus one finds Bishop Maltby in 1851 acting with impunity in presenting "a liberal contribution towards the erection of a Presbyterian Chapel in his diocese"<sup>4</sup> while Bishop Lightfoot, 30 years later, led a charge on the Salvation Army so riddled with "discriminative criticism" that it shocked even the Episcopal Bench.<sup>5</sup> Local support for the bishops beyond the Church itself, came from those who had similarly vested interests and to whom the 'Church in

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1. Dec.30, 1867, p.2.

2. Sir Timothy Eden, Durham, II (London, 1952), p.604. The five were Maltby (1836-56), a right-wing Whig; Charles Thomas Longley (1856-60), a supported of Russell after 1851; Henry Villiers (1860-61), Tory; Charles Baring (1861-79), Conservative; and Joseph Lightfoot (1879-89), Conservative.

3. M.C. Bickersteth's description of what the Papacy was to his father's (the Bishop of Ripon) mind. A Sketch of the Life and Episcopate of the Rt. Rev. Robert Bickersteth D.D. (London, 1887), p.48.

4. Tablet, XII (May 17, 1851), p.324.

5. D.Chron., Dec 22, 1882, p.5.

danger' acted as a powerful charm. Among this group could be found the almost stereotypic judges and magistrates who brought anti-Catholicism to the courts and hence into the immediate vicinity of the arrested Irishman. Rev. Major, though the parish incumbent of Thornley as well as the magistrate, was not unrepresentative of this class: much to the chagrin of the Irish, he levied fines on them that were twice those handed to the non-Irish.<sup>1</sup>

An order of bastardy brought against a Catholic priest in Stockton by the daughter of an Anglican incumbent further revealed these sentiments of the bench. The combination of Catholicism and sexuality brought forth all those Protestant bigots who delighted in erotic fantasies about the priesthood. The magistrates were obviously opinionated as well, for the railway attorney, Francis Mewburn, having "read the evidence carefully" came "to the conclusion that the priest is perfectly innocent and he is the victim of a clever and abandoned woman",<sup>2</sup> but the magistrates found the priest guilty, though they could not convict him for lack of corroborative proof. "I fear", said Mewburn, "the magistrates allowed their prejudices to get the better of their judgement." This was made all the more clear when it became the priest's turn to charge the woman with the felony and extortion that had already been cited in court. "The magistrates, however, did not commit her for reasons they did not express" and the case was dismissed.<sup>3</sup>

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1. J.C. Kirk, "History of Thornley," op.cit., Mar.24, p.12.

2. Larchfield Diary: Entry for Oct. 1854, p.133.

3. Tablet, XV (Oct 7, 1854), p.630.

But the finest example of anti-Catholicism and anti-Irishness, inextricably linked to Tory-Establishment views, was that displayed by the Marchioness of Londonderry in her treatment of the Irish Catholics at Seaham Harbour. Though in light of the toleration shown to the Irish Catholics the incident is unique in the history of the Irish in the north east—for this reason perhaps undeserving of great attention—the number of social, economic and religious subtleties revealed in the case deem it worthy of more detailed examination.

(v)

Towards the end of the summer of 1860 the Marchioness of Londonderry received a letter requesting a small grant of land on which the Catholics of Seaham Harbour could build a chapel, school and priest's house. The writer was Rev. Robert Belaney, a convert of considerable learning and background.<sup>1</sup> His mettle, like that of many clerical converts, was being tested by his superiors in the not uncommon reality of a struggling, impoverished mission. His fate, however, was that of being pitted against one of the most formidable and entrenched Anglican-Tory families in the north east. The Londonderrys behaved in a manner that, if

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1. Belaney was born in Scotland of wealthy parents in 1804; educated at Edinburgh and Cambridge where he received his M.A. in 1846. After holding various curacies in Northumberland he became the Vicar of Arlington, Sussex, 1843-52. Being denounced as a Jesuit he brought a lawsuit against one of his own church wardens in 1852, the year in which he converted to Catholicism. He became one of the most indefatigable workers for Catholicism in England, introducing the Jesuits to Glasgow and the Servite Fathers to London. He spent his entire income on the church and died on August 24th, 1899 a complete pauper. At death, he was the oldest priest in England. Tablet, LXII (Sept. 9, 1899), p.363; J.A. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses, Pt.II, 1752-1900 (Cambridge, 1940).



nothing else, was consistently pompous. The Marchioness, so equally matched to the late 3rd Marquis, carried on the tradition of odium, though it was thinly disguised under a reputation as a "noble and noble-hearted lady" of benevolence.<sup>1</sup> It was not unnatural therefore that Lady Londonderry should dismiss out of hand Rev. Belaney's request and instruct her agent Mr. Ravenshaw to drop a brief note to that effect. Belaney thus continued to administer the sacraments in the crowded hayloft and to pray that the misguided lady might, by God's blessing, have a change of heart. When providence failed to intervene, however, a second letter was dispatched. Though couched in priestly humility and over-adorned with the proper terms of respect, Belaney's second letter minced no words. He wrote:

I can hardly imagine your Ladyship to be aware of the misery and inconvenience which these persons—a large proportion of whom have been your Ladyship's faithful though poor workmen for many years—are at this time enduring from want of a proper place for Divine Worship and a school for their children. Their present spiritual destitution is only transforming men who might be a benefit to the community in which they live by their virtues, into a curse by their vices. There is an amount of vice, especially of drunkenness, in this town which I should hope has nothing to equal it in

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1. "Seaham Harbour," N.D.Chron., Aug.2, 1862, p.4. This conception of Lady Londonderry was based upon her heavy expenditure on churches, infirmaries and reading rooms in Seaham Harbour, her annual dinner and speeches to her tenantry, etc. Wm. Fordyce, for example, wrote of her and her husband: they "employ thousands of workpeople, and both take a lively interest in their social and moral improvement, and in the establishment of schools for the education of the children", History of Coal, Coke, Coal Fields [and] Iron (London, 1860), p.92. To those who worked under her or knew her more intimately, however, she was, as Robert Blake has described her, "Famed for her opulence and her arrogance, she was a great Tory hostess." Disraeli (London, 1966), p.126. There is thus unobserved irony in Sir A. Alison's contemporary depiction of her as "a tall and elegant figure and uncommon personal beauty, she was endowed at that same time with a fascination of manner few could withstand". Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Lord Stewart (London, 1861), III, p.213.

any other town in England; by day one cannot move without seeing it, and throughout the night its horrid sounds are heard in every street....My business here, and my aim here, is to rescue that portion of the people of the town who profess the Catholic religion from the danger and guilt of contributing to the stream of depravity which is flooding the very floor of peoples' houses.

But without a Church, and without a School, my aim, be it ever so good, can avail nothing....<sup>1</sup>

Not content to stop here, Belaney went on at length:

I need not assure your Ladyship that I, a stranger, can have no motive for taking up the cause of the poor Irish, brought over and settled, some of them for many years, by your Ladyship....

...In employing them, or in bringing them over from their native land, your Ladyship, I feel sure, never expected that they would leave their religion behind them. Your knowledge of the Irish would not allow you to believe that they would be better workmen if they became worse Catholics, when they settled down in Seaham Harbour: it is they that do this who become Ribbonmen and drunkards, the curse and scourge of the place in which they reside.

Lady Londonderry did not reply. Instead, she addressed a letter to the Anglican incumbent enclosing Belaney's epistle and stating, "I hope you will be able to contradict a statement respecting the town of Seaham Harbour, which I should be very sorry to think was true."<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that the incumbent's house and church had been paid for and furnished by the Londonderrys in 1841,<sup>3</sup> and despite the proven temper of Francis Anne, the incumbent had no difficulty in honestly replying that "by whatever standard

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1. Belaney to Francis Anne Vane Londonderry, Seaham Harbour, Nov.2, 1860. Reprinted in Tablet, XXI (Nov.24, 1860), p.740.
  2. Francis Anne to Rev. G. Wilkinson, Seaham Hall, Nov.9, 1860, Tablet, XXI (Nov.24, 1860), p.740.
  3. See, Benefice Files of the Church Commissioners (Seaham) 40453, Dec.23, 1842. Lord Londonderry had corresponded with the Archbishop of Canterbury in order that he might secure a perpetual curacy in his name. My thanks are due to Mr. B. Maynard for this reference and for the statistics from the Methodist Archives (above, p.151n).

its morality be measured, Seaham Harbour will not stand unfavourably, when compared with other towns",<sup>1</sup> for he and his church were comfortably situated in the respectable part of town. While he admitted that some drunkenness did exist in the town and that he had even gone so far as to urge "upon all classes the duty of uniting to arrest its progress," the minister thought it "most unjust that a whole population should be branded with infamy on account of the degradation of a comparatively small portion of its members."<sup>2</sup> Having been told what she desired to hear, Lady Londonderry proceeded to publish her recent correspondences in the Seaham Weekly News, prefaced by her own reply to Rev. Belaney. In this latter letter she announced her happiness in receiving the incumbent's contradiction and, though no further proof was needed, she had "an assurance from my son, Lord [Adolphous] Vane,<sup>3</sup> 'that from his little experience, as a magistrate, he thinks there is far less crime in Seaham than in many places of similar size.'"<sup>4</sup> She concluded the note,

Having thus disposed of your sweeping abuse of the place and inhabitants, I have only further to add, that when the Roman Catholic population shall have reached such a figure as will render it necessary, I shall be ready to grant a site for a Church for 99 years on the same terms I grant leases to other denominations.

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1. Wilkinson to Lady Londonderry, Seaham Harbour, Nov.12, 1860, Tablet, XXI (Nov.24, 1860), p.740.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Third son of the 3rd Marquis (1825-64). The first son of the 3rd Marquis, by a former marriage, was Fredrick William (1802-72) who became the 4th Marquis in 1854 but had few connections with the Durham estates. The first son of Francis Anne was Henry, Viscount Seaham (1821-84), later Earl Vane who became the 5th Marquis in 1872. The Londonderry Papers: Catalogue (Durham County Council, 1969), p.150.
  4. Francis Anne to Rev. Belaney, Seaham Hall, Nov.15, 1860, Tablet, XXI (Nov.24, 1860), p.740.

The Record was naturally gleeful at having the "Romish Priest" put in his place and at seeing evidence of at least some pure Reformation blood in the north east.<sup>1</sup> Belaney, on the other hand, was more than annoyed at reading his correspondence in the local press, especially since it contained the reply he had never received. With a Scottish vengeance he lashed out:

the visits of a lady (whose visits to a town are paid in a carriage and four) are not likely to give her much knowledge of the moral condition of the poor. Their state is not to be discerned, like objects at a distance, by the telescope. You only see it from the windows of a palace or of a stately carriage....If I were myself to go by such evidence as Mr. Wilkinson puts forth... I should conclude that the couple of hundred people who are grouped and huddled together before me in a hayloft on Sundays...were all saints. Their readiness would also do honour to people who had twice their means.<sup>2</sup>

Alas, Belaney had effectively sealed the fate of his poor Irish congregation.

For more than a year nothing was heard of the Catholics at Seaham Harbour. Belaney was dispatched to Ireland and was later kept occupied with local collections for St. Godric's in Durham City.<sup>3</sup> Lady Londonderry sat stoically triumphant. With Disraeli's unveiling of the equestrian statue to the 3rd Marquis on December 2nd, 1861, however, the issue was reopened. The Hull Advertiser asked if Disraeli, while the guest of the Marchioness at Seaham, was aware that his hostess "who makes such beautiful maternal speeches at the annual public dinners which she gives to portions

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1. Record, Nov.30, 1860, p.4.

2. Belaney to Lady Londonderry, London, Nov.19, 1860, Tablet XXI (Nov.24, 1860), pp.740-1.

3. He sent £300 to Bishop Hogarth from Ireland in Jan. 1860. Tablet, XXII (Jan.7, 1860), p.4.

of her tenantry—has for years refused to give, sell, lease, or allow to be occupied upon her property at Seaham, a spot of ground upon which to erect a chapel and a school for the use of some hundreds of poor Catholics".<sup>1</sup> In the execration that religious issues alone could provoke, the Advertiser went on to state,

the lady's No-Popery zeal is equal to her ability as a lecturer upon agricultural, social, and domestic economy; and failing to persuade her Catholic colliers to show their respect for their employer by adopting that employer's religion in preference to their own, she dooms them, as far as in her power, to a life of irreligion, and their children to be reared in worse than heathen ignorance.

Supposedly quoting an informed source in Seaham Harbour, the article exclaimed:

'But, thank God, she is mortal, like the rest of us, and in a few years she will possess less land than we want for a chapel and school. Her earthly possessions will be limited to the space occupied by her coffin, and the poorest of us will obtain as much without even doing her the courtesy of consulting her about it. When she is gone there will be changes in the management of the property.'

Where for another noble-woman such a libel would have led to a quick prosecution, the Marchioness' response was to instantly commission her chief agent, Robert Anderson and, independently, Rev. W.A. Scott,<sup>2</sup> to carry out a census of the Irish Catholics in the Seaham area. Anderson found no Catholics at Seaham Colliery, 44 Catholics at Seaton Colliery and 475 Catholics in the town of Seaham Harbour.<sup>3</sup> Scott gave no account of Seaham Harbour and also found no Catholics at Seaham Colliery but listed the names

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1. The article is quoted verbatim in a press cutting (undated, untitled) marked Dec.7, 1861, contained in D/LO/C-216.
  2. Vicar of Christ's Church, New Seaham (1860-189?); his church was also paid for and endowed by the Marchioness. See, D/LO/C-201.
  3. Robert Anderson to Lady Londonderry, Jan.6, 1862, D/LO/C-216.

(all Irish) of 58 Catholics in Seaton Colliery.<sup>1</sup> With this information the Marchioness felt able to exonerate herself on the grounds of having undertaken an objective inquiry. Adolphous was therefore instructed to write the libelous journal and refute his mother's bigotry and reclaim her 'good' character. "Acting on the principle she has ever laid down for guidance...on her estates in Ireland, of giving full liberty of conscience in religious questions," he wrote, Lady Londonderry, upon receiving the application for a site, investigated "as to satisfy herself with the numbers of the R[oman] C[atholic]s at Seaham Harbour".<sup>2</sup> He concluded that her Ladyship did not think that 500 or so Catholics was a sufficient number to warrant the building of a church when they already had a place of worship (presumably the hayloft).

But if the noble lady was convinced of her principles, the Catholics were no less determined that they should have their church. In March 1862 a local landowner, Mr. R.L. Pemberton, was approached by the priest for the purchase of a plot of land ostensibly for Catholic burials. Pemberton was not adverse to such a sale but like the rest of the inhabitants of Seaham, he had no desire to cross swords with the all-powerful mistress of the land. He therefore saw fit to contact Lady Londonderry and tell her that the priest had stated that "there are 1,000 souls of that [Catholic] persuasion in the place who have to take their dead great distances or pay double fees which seems a hardship."<sup>3</sup> Anderson

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1. Rev. Scott to Lady Londonderry, Jan.6, 1862, D/LO/C-216, the figures included women and children. The Census taken by the Catholic Church in 1861 showed Seaham to have a population of 799 Catholics, 473 of whom were adults. Appendix V.
  2. Lord Adolphous to [Hull Advertiser?], copy, Jan.18, 1862, D/LO/C-216(7).
  3. Pemberton to Lady Londonderry, Mar.7, 1862, D/LO/C-216.

was again solicited to investigate and he dutifully reported that there were "no double Fees" on Catholic burials. In an attempt to compromise her ladyship's principles, Anderson wrote, "If the priest obtains a piece of ground for a burial ground from Mr. Pemberton, he will build a Chapel on it, close adjoining your Ladyship's Estate—and say he was obliged to go there, because you refused to grant him a site on lease."<sup>1</sup> Once again the grand old Dowager Londonderry was caught between her good reputation and her 'principles'. As Adolphous wrote to his mother:

The application from the RC.s to Pemberton is very awkward for either he would come forward and do what you have refused or you would have to ask him to refuse or you would have to do it yourself on compulsion. This latter would be only apparent for I know had you been left at peace instead of this endeavour to thrust you into this concession you could have done it of your own accord.

You know that I have always expected that you should have got the credit for a religious intolerance in this matter which I know is the very opposite of your character and I feel very anxious that you should get out of the present position with justice to your own convictions at the same time with dignity to your own position....

...I am very anxious you should get out, proving your own dignity for this very unpopular act of [bigotry?] and intolerance which I know is not the sentiments that always influence yr. actions towards those connected with you.<sup>2</sup>

But the Marchioness did not get out; she seems simply to have procrastinated for certain it is that the Catholics got neither Pemberton's land nor a leasehold from Londonderry.

In December 1862 Mrs. Priscilla Beckwith, wife of General Beckwith and a Catholic convert,<sup>3</sup> sometimes resident in Seaham,

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1. Robert Anderson to Lady Londonderry, Mar.10, 1862, D/LO/C-216(3).
  2. Adolphous to Lady Londonderry, undated, D/LO/C-216(4).
  3. W. Gordon Gorman, Converts to Rome, 1850-1910 (London, 1910), p.18.

interceded on behalf of the Irish Catholics and made yet another approach to the Marchioness. Mrs. Beckwith appealed to her Ladyship's connections with Ireland, "by Parentage, by Alliance, and by Property, that I feel certain you must feel a deep sympathy with these poor people. They are ignorant and probably uncivilized but all the more reason is there that they should be instructed and brought under the influence of Religion."<sup>1</sup> Beckwith emphasised the social advantages of a church and resident priest and hinted that the bishop would take special care in the appointment. She spoke of new financial arrangements made possible by the Church Fund, she enclosed the bishop's address that her Ladyship might not have to deal with lessers and, finally, she attempted a variation on the burial ground idea. It was all in vain; the feminine touch was no more effective than all the appeals that had gone before. The Marchioness was sceptical of an "unsupported application" made by a woman who did not want 'the General' to know of her action.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the Dowager Marchioness was annoyed as well, by simply being addressed by a convert, for there must have been painful associations since the defection of the present Marchioness of Londonderry to Catholicism in 1855.<sup>3</sup> At any rate, the reply to Mrs. Beckwith contained but vague references to Lord Vane, other advisors and previous letters, and there the matter rested for two years until the death of the Marchioness in January 1865.

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1. Priscilla M.A. Beckwith to Lady Londonderry, Dec.9, 1862, D/LO/C-216(8). Cf. Charlton, Recollections of a Northumbrian Lady, p.244.
  2. Beckwith to Lady Londonderry, date illegible, D/LO/C-216(2). Lady Londonderry's notes or letters on this issue have not, as yet, been uncovered.
  3. Lady Elizabeth Francis Charlotte Jocelyn; wife of the 4th Marquis and daughter of the 3rd Earl of Roden. Gorman, op.cit., p.175.



The statement in the Hull Advertiser thus came to be prophetic, for with the passing of the estate to Earl Vane, the future 5th Marquis, the land was at last granted to the Catholics "on ordinary terms of groundrent under a lease of seventy-five years."<sup>1</sup> Fifteen years after Bishop Hogarth had made his appeal for the 300 to 500 totally unprovided Catholics at Seaham Harbour,<sup>2</sup> his successor, Bishop Chadwick, was allowed to lay the foundation stone for the plain little structure that would be dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen, symbolic of those who had been rescued from the devil.

While, within the larger context of the Stockport or the Glasgow riots, the Seaham incident is something of a microcosm of the internecine warfare between the establishment and the Irish, in the setting of the north east such a predicament for the Irish Catholics was wildly exceptional. The nonconformist faith of the majority allied with their political liberalism made behaviour like the Marchioness' not only as exceptional as her wealth and power, but behaviour that was generally despised. No-popery directed against the Irish Catholics in Durham and Newcastle, therefore, was not only momentary in its passage but, whilst relevant, was endorsed and given practical expression by a severely restricted faction of the local population. Bishop Bewick, surveying the past 30 years in 1882, could only conclude that "We are at perfect peace with all the population of the district. We have received many substantial proofs of their good-

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1. Tablet, new ser., II (Aug.7, 1869), p.314.

2. Pastoral, Jan.25, 1854, U.C. III.

will in the past, and we shall not fail to see them in the future."<sup>1</sup> There was no other bishop in England with as large a flock of Irish Catholics who had any desire to record his "deep sense of gratitude to the press", let alone be able to state without hyperbole that

the great employers of labour...co-operate with us in promoting the social, moral, and religious improvement of our labouring classes, and the education of our poor children in our own schools. Exceptions there may be, but they are rare....They look to us and our clergy to do our utmost, and to exercise all the influence we possess.<sup>2</sup>

Such was the logical evolution from that set of peculiar north-eastern conditions which made incidents like the Sandgate riot or Seaham Harbour stand out as wholly untypical of the general state of prejudices among the majority.

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1. "Address of Bishop Bewick," Tablet, XXVIII (Nov.11, 1882), p.753.

2 Pastoral, Tablet, XXVIII (Oct.28, 1880), p 713.

Occupations, Industrial Place  
and Labour Relations

"Little did they bring with them  
but sturdy limbs for toil".  
6th Annual Report of the Catholic  
Poor-School Committee, 1853, p.29.

"They undergo a very rough and  
laborious kind of work, do they  
not?—They are excellent labourers.  
"Do you think from your knowledge of  
that locality and of the North of  
England generally, that they could  
do well without those Irish labourers?  
—I think we could not do without them."  
Assistant Overseer of the Newcastle Poor  
Law to the Select Committee on Poor Removals,  
1855, q.599-600, p.40.

(i)

Where the occupational place of the Irish has been studied at all, the material has been mainly drawn from that morass of evidence contained in the reports of the select committees of inquiry, dating in particular from the Commissioners' 'Appendix G' of 1836. The findings of these commissions of inquiry clearly substantiated what had been observed from at least the turn of the century: that the Irish formed a considerable substratum of the labouring population of England and that the works they performed were the most fatiguing, the most degrading and lowest paid.<sup>1</sup> Overwhelming testimony was given to show that the primary industrial place of the Irish was within the large manufacturing centres: in the woolen and linen industries, in the building trades, in chemical and soap works, as helpers to smiths and mechanics and in a host of related sundry trades. They were mainly unskilled occupations for which the labour demand was high and to which only the most desperate English labourers were attracted. The government inquiries also pointed out that the Irish had assumed a definite place in fields of employment outside the cities, as migratory agricultural labourers and as part of the railway construction crews. While the seasonal agricultural workers from Ireland were considered to have been a past phenomenon by 1850—most having become redundant by the famine emigration—the Irish were increasingly identified with the railway construction and dock excavations between 1830-1860.

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1. That skilled Irish workers also came to England is beyond dispute. In this chapter, as elsewhere in this study, the object is to account for the majority of Irish immigrants, in this case the unskilled labourers.

Though the government Blue Books offer little information on the north east, there is no doubt that the Irish occupied a similar position at the base of the labour hierarchy. Many of the jobs to be performed were also similar but the industrial emphasis of the area which determined the majority of Irish occupations was significantly different from other Irish centres in England. "From a combination of causes," noted the Nation correspondent on the Newcastle area in 1872, "there are classes and varieties of labour to be obtained which are met with in few other places....In this respect they [the Irish] fairly contrast with their kindred in most other towns".<sup>1</sup> The weaving industry, with which the Irish were so closely identified in Lancashire and the Midlands, was non-existent in the north east. The textile industry was small and specialised and few Irish gained entry. While agricultural pursuits and chemical and glass manufacturing were important employers, the major industries in Durham and Newcastle were coal, iron, engineering and shipbuilding.<sup>2</sup> The majority of occupations, therefore, were foreign to Irish experience.

Particularly in coal mining, the Irishman's unfamiliarity with the work severely delayed his entry and before the 1860s Irish membership in the trade was not very extensive. The point is worth making, for those who have acknowledged the Irish presence in the north east have invariably looked to the coal industry and drawn the all-too-easy conclusion. Besides the lack of proper skills, the Irish were thwarted by the pride and jealousy of the

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1. "Irish in England," Letter XV (Oct.19, 1872), p.662.

2. Census: Abstracts on Occupation, 1841 to 1881; House, North Eastern Population, Tables 5 and 6, pp.59-60.

· natives workers who were anxious to preserve the ancient trade  
· for their sons. More important was the disasterous strike of  
1844<sup>1</sup> which left in its wake an abundance of skilled workmen in  
cut-throat competition<sup>2</sup> at the very time when the Irish were  
coming to the area in increasing numbers. Nearly ten years after  
the strike the excess of skilled miners was still a subject of  
concern.<sup>3</sup> It was not until the late 'fifties that the trade began  
to revive, ultimately to flourish with the development of iron  
production. By 1866 the general manager for one of the chief  
coal entrepreneurs, Lord Londonderry, was reporting that he had  
"inserted advertisements in all the local newspapers, and hope[d]  
· to be able to secure some [workers] in this way."<sup>4</sup> While some  
· Irish entered the industry in this period of expansion, it was  
· always the Cornish miners who were most sought after,<sup>5</sup> while the  
· miners brought in from South Wales, Derbyshire, Staffordshire and  
· the local lead mines chiefly met the industry's needs. Where the  
· Irish were employed at all—primarily in the new pits around  
· Durham, Easington, Thornley and Sedgefield—their labour was con-

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1. For the Irish part in the strike see below, pp.195-207.

2. Raymond Challinor and Brian Ripley, The Miners' Association: A Trade Union in the Age of Chartists (London, 1968), p.146.

4. John Daglish to Lord Londonderry, Sept.19, 1866, D/LO/C-292.

3. Our Coal and Our Coalpits: the People in Them and the Scenes Around Them by a Traveller Underground (London, 1853), p.208.

5. Daglish was undoubtedly pleased to send Londonderry on September 22nd, 1866, a news clipping on "The Distress in Cornwall". The article pointed out that the Cornish miners were physically, socially, and morally the best of their class, and are also the more skilful in their employment ....The Cornish miner in his distress neither howls like a frantic Irishman, nor curses with the bitter oaths of the drunken collier of the black country." By Dec.10, 1866, Daglish had secured 90 Cornish miners.

· fined to the low-paid surface jobs, at the coke ovens or in the  
 · 'patching' or unloading of coals: jobs peripheral to the actual  
 · hewing of coal. With the further expansion of the trade during  
 the Franco-Prussian War more Irish made their debut in the pits.  
 And when wages fell in the depression which followed that war,  
 causing many of the natives to emigrate, the Irish increased  
 · their strength by filling the vacancies. At least until the mid-  
 · 'seventies, however, it is clear that of the area's major indust-  
 · ries, coal was the one with the least penetration of Irish.

Though in terms of the modern history of Durham, "the forces  
 of capitalism...consisted in one word, in coal",<sup>1</sup> after 1850, the  
 other major industries became nearly as important from the basis  
 of production and employment. For Irish employment they far  
 surpassed that of the coal industry. As in Wales, it was the  
 iron works which chiefly attracted the Irish.<sup>2</sup> The rapid expansion  
 in north Durham in the 1840s provided countless jobs for anyone  
 · who had strong arms and was willing to work. The Irish admirably  
 · met the requirments and as labourers beside the raging blast-  
 · furnaces or in the rolling mills, their foreignness to the industry  
 · or their lack of skills provided no obstacle to employment. Unlike  
 · the coal industry, the iron works were too recent to have any  
 · claims on the indigenous population. Hence neither local pride  
 nor competition barred the Irish entry. Almost from their in-  
 ception, the iron works at Consett, Birtley, Witton Park, Tow Law,  
 Weardale, Gateshead and Sunderland were heavily dependent on the

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1. H.R. Trevor-Roper, "The Bishopric of Durham and the Capitalist Reformation," Durham University J., VII (1945-6), p.46.
  2. J.H. Morris and L.J. Williams, The South Wales Coal Industry 1841-1875 (Cardiff, 1958), pp.236-7.

cheap, accessible Irish labour. With the recognition of the value of Irish labour in iron manufacturing, their employment opportunities were greatly enlarged by the expansion on Tees-side from 3 blast-furnaces in 1851, to 50 in 1861 and 122 in 1871.<sup>1</sup> By 1886 it was reported that 14,000 men were employed in the north of England iron works and that "not more than half of this number were employed 20 years ago."<sup>2</sup> The concentration of Catholic Churches in areas like Consett<sup>3</sup> shows that a large proportion of this work force was Irish, while the Census Enumerators' Manuscripts give convincing proof that the industry was the chief employer of Irish in Co. Durham.

Shipbuilding, like the coal trade, took on relatively few Irish previous to 1860. Until that date the industry was a small-scale employer. In 1851 only 5,000 persons were in the trade in the north east;<sup>4</sup> "only eight firms employed more than 100 men and none more than 250."<sup>5</sup> On the Wear, the trade was typified by small family firms with a mean size of 33 workers each.<sup>6</sup> But

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1. J.T. Gleave, "The Tees-side Iron and Steel Industry," Geographical J., XCI (May 1938), p.454.
  2. Questionnaire returned by the North of England Iron Manufacturers Association to the 1st Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Depression of Trade and Industry, 1886, P.P. 1886, XXI, Appendix B, p.117.
  3. Bishop Hogarth reported that there were about 2,000 Catholics employed in the iron works around Consett in 1854. Pastoral, Jan.25, 1854, U.C. III.
  4. House, op.cit., p.45.
  5. N.Cour., Jan.12, 1866, cited in Dougan, North East Shipbuilding, p.37.
  6. J.F. Clarke, "Labour In Shipuiling on the North-East Coast, 1850-1900," North East Group for the Study of Labour History, Bulletin no.2 (Oct. 1968), p.3.



between 1850 and 1880 the growth of the industry was as dramatic as that of the iron and steel production upon which it depended. The growth on the Tyne and the Wear was as much as five-fold by the end of the century, by which time each shipyard was employing a thousand or more men.<sup>1</sup> Charles Palmer, himself employing 3,500 men, estimated that there were about 8,000 persons employed in iron shipbuilding in the area in 1862.<sup>2</sup> Half of these, he judged, were on the Tyne, 2,500 on the Wear and 1,500 on the Tees. Later in the century the general manager of Palmer's works at Jarrow is reputed to have stated that "the principle part of our labour is performed by the Irish."<sup>3</sup>

As in the steel mills, the Irish needed few skills. Although some entered the ranks of the 'unskilled' and worked as helpers to the platers or as riveters, the majority were delegated to hard labour such as lifting the hundredweight sheets of iron onto the decks. Many were continuously employed in the dock excavations and on the expanding dry-dock facilities. Though few of the first generation had much hope of advancing beyond the rank of general labourer, some of the second generation did penetrate into the skilled trades. Denvir, commenting on the Irish progeny in Sunderland, wrote that they "are generally put to trades, chiefly, as along Tyneside, in connection with iron shipbuilding, so that you now find a considerable number of Irishmen and boys in the fitting and engine shops, besides those employed as platers and riveters."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., p.3.

2. Charles Palmer, Industrial Resources of the Tyne, Wear and Tees (1863), cited in Dougan, p.57.

3. Quoted in Dougan, p.36.

4. Irish in Britain, p.443.

Here as well, the inroads of the Irish were reflected in the building of the Catholic Churches. St. Joseph, "patron of the artizan and the horny-handed labourer" was built in Sunderland in 1873 in "a new and thriving part of town, where the ship-wrights, riveters, and others engaged in the shipbuilding yards of Deptford, Milfield, and Pallion, mostly reside".<sup>1</sup> The mission at Tyne Dock as well as the churches at Jarrow and Hebburn were almost exclusively for the shipyard Irish. By 1880, perhaps as many as one-quarter of the Irish in Durham and Newcastle were involved in the industry.

But while the major industries took on an increasing number of Irish, there was, throughout the period under study, a vast number of Irish (an estimate of 40 percent would not be unreasonable) in those industries and occupations which rarely received any comment. The extensive glass works of Messrs. Hartley in Sunderland and John Candlish near Seaham both made use of Irish labour. As in Lancashire, the chemical works at Gateshead, Jarrow, Sunderland and Port Clarence also required cheap labour. So too did Darlington to become one of the country's leading centres of railway engineering. Moreover, as Dr. Treble has pointed out, the Irishman played a fundamental part "in speeding up the pace of environmental change through his association with the building and constructional trades of Northern England."<sup>2</sup> The tremendous suburban expansion of Newcastle in the period<sup>3</sup> accounts for the

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1. N.C.C., 1885, p.50.

2 Ph.D. Thesis, pp.52-3.

3. The rebuilding of Newcastle within the old city walls under the direction of Richard Grainger and the architect John Dobson came to a rapid halt shortly after the passage of the Municipal Reform Act of 1835. See, Norman McCord, "Some Aspects of Mid-Nineteenth Century Newcastle," unpublished paper presented to the Urban History Conference April 1972.

many Irish listed by the Census Enumerators as bricklayers or masons' helpers. The building trades in turn created a demand for Irish labour in the brick factories and in the many limestone quarries in the area. Southwick on Wear is a good example of a town whose population was doubled by the Irish who came to work in the expanding quarries and limekilns.<sup>1</sup>

Another Irish occupation which was almost never remarked upon was the use of young men for the coastal shipping. According to an article which appeared in the Tablet in 1852,

boys under the age of eighteen years, who come over here almost daily from Ireland in search of work, and are induced by lodging-house keepers (who are allowed a commission by the shipowners) to ship as sea apprentices in the Tyne...it is a fact that nearly one-fourth of the boys who now apprentice to sea in this district are, or were, poor destitute Irish boys—tramps seeking employment.<sup>2</sup>

The increase of Irish youths for this occupation, stated the writer, could be verified by examining the Register of Seamen. As with most other employments, the initial hesitancy in hiring Irish soon gave way to eager acceptance. "Formerly", it was stated,

there was on the part of shipowners and captains much unwillingness to receive Irish boys, but that feeling has considerably abated—they are found on board ships as useful, as obedient, and as skilful as Scotch or English youths; hence shipowners now, generally, speaking, have no reluctance to Irish boys as such.

In the urban slums of the north east, as in the rest of England, a large body of Irish were living at a bare subsistence level on their self-employment. Particularly in the 1851 Census the Mayhew-like depictions of Irish employment are prevalent. In one part of South Shields, for instance, the following spectrum

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1. Whellan, Directory of Durham, 1856, p.650.

2. XIII (June 5, 1852), p.358.

of self-employed occupations could be found: shoemaker, rag-picker, tinker, weaver, hatter, musician, tailor, barber, knitter, cartman, pipemaker and dressmaker.<sup>1</sup> To these trades should be added the Irish fish and produce vendors and the better-off publicans and lodging house keepers. But while many Irish fell into these categories upon arriving in the area, the observations made by the Tablet in 1852 and the Newcastle Chronicle in 1854 on the improved condition of the Irish<sup>2</sup> suggests that assimilation into the workforce proper rapidly followed the initial period of a 'hand to mouth' existence.

Railway construction not only employed many Irish but deposited throughout the area colonies of Irish from other parts of England. Over 15 separate branch lines were opened in Durham County between 1840-1868.<sup>3</sup> Many of these lines, such as that from Seaham to Sunderland or from Hartlepool to Ferry Hill, were scarcely 20 miles long but their terminals were often fruitful sources of employment. Witton-le-Wear, for example, found itself with a sizeable Irish population attributable, said the Census, "to the influx of labourers and their families employed on railway works, and to the establishment of iron works."<sup>4</sup> And at Durham City the Irish population was greatly increased by the labourers who assisted in the massive railway cutting and viaduct at Redhills in 1857. It was these Irish who forced the decision for the new church of St. Godric.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Census 1851: Enumerator's Manuscripts for South Shields between Market Place and Westoe Lane.

2. Chp.IV, p.118.

3. J.R. Boyle, The County of Durham (London, 1892), p.82.

4. Census 1851: Abstracts, p.274n.

5. Church of St. Godric, op.cit., p.4.

The question as to the number of Irish employed on railway construction is one that is no more answerable today than it was in the great railway age. The Select Committee on Emigration in 1841, the Census report for the same year and the evidence brought before the Select Committee on Railway Labourers in 1846 gave the proportion of Irish to other workmen at anywhere between 10 and 50 percent.<sup>1</sup> Terry Coleman in his study of the railway navvies is probably not far off the mark with his estimate that, on the whole, about one-third were Irish.<sup>2</sup> If this proportion has any validity in the north east, there would have been approximately 700 Irish in railway construction in Durham and Northumberland in 1851, 1,100 in 1861, and slightly less than this in 1871 and 1881.<sup>3</sup> But however many Irish were employed on certain lines at specific dates, it seems reasonably clear that within the railway gangs, the Irish retained their position at the bottom of the labour hierarchy. Few Irish attained the prestigious rank of 'navvy' to receive the highest pay and perform the more skilled jobs such as tunnelling. Among the general labourers the Irish were commonly found but the example of Redhills or that of the Knares-borough viaduct (where 26 percent of the labourers were Irish<sup>4</sup>) suggests employment mainly as helpers to the bricklayers or in setting the huge blocks for the masons.

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1. See also, Redford, op.cit., pp.150-1; R. Lawton, op.cit., p.41; and Rawlinson's evidence quoted in Chp.I, p.12.
  2. The Railway Navvies (London, 1965), p.83.
  3. Calculated from Census: Abstracts on Occupation. This census information is reproduced in R.M. Gard, "Labour History of Railways in Durham and Northumberland to 1900: an introduction to sources and bibliography," North East Group for the Study of Labour History, Bulletin no.3 (Oct. 1969), p.17.
  4. J.A. Patmore, "A Navvy Gang of 1851," J. of Transport History, V (May 1962), pp.183-9, cited in Treble, Ph.D. Thesis, p.62.

Finally, we must take note of the Irish agricultural workers in the north east. Traditionally the Irish harvesters had migrated to Yorkshire and the counties southward. Very few appear to have made the pilgrimage to the north east. In south Durham, at least, we can date their entry from 1830 when Francis Mewburn wrote in his diary:

This summer an immense number of Irishmen came into the county and superseded the ordinary harvest labourers, few of the lower classes either in the towns or villages being hired for the harvest.<sup>1</sup>

Paradoxically, when in the 'sixties the Irish element was "nearly extinguished"<sup>2</sup> at harvest in the more southerly counties, the Irish reapers continued to come to the north east. In 1861 the population of Sandgate, Newcastle, was reported as "doubled...in the height of summer" in consequence of "the immigratory Irish, who flock here in prodigious numbers in the harvesting time."<sup>3</sup> Not all of these Irish came directly from Ireland; many migrated from the south of England specifically for the harvest. Mr. Grainger, in Newcastle to deal with the cholera outbreak in the autumn of 1853, received reports that 100 to 150 "Irish labourers coming from the south for harvest work...land[ed] from a Hull Steamer, [and] immediately walked up in a troop to the already densely packed houses in Sandgate."<sup>4</sup> But whether from Ireland or

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1. Larchfield Diary: Entry for 1830, pp.22-3.
  2. Pamela L.R. Horn, "The National Agricultural Labourers' Union in Ireland, 1873-9," Irish Historical Studies, XVII (Mar. 1971), pp.340-1. Miss Horn cites the most recent work in this subject area with reference to the immigrant in England.
  3. "Condition of our Chief Towns—Newcastle-upon-Tyne," The Builder, XIX (April 13, 1861), p.242.
  4. Contained in Grainger's 'Report' in the Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Causes...of Cholera in the towns of Newcastle..., 1854, p.55.

from the south of England, increasing numbers of these harvesters remained behind to swell the ranks of the 'half-mendicants' or to be assimilated into the area's major industries.

(ii)

A significant feature of 19th-century Irish employment in Durham and Newcastle was the singular lack of opportunities for women and children. Without any woolen or linen industry, the north east was in stark contrast to the total family employment that these industries provided in other areas. There were few factories to which school children could be transferred "for the sake of gaining a shilling or eightpence per week"<sup>1</sup> to add to the family income. The new factory schools for "Catholic—chiefly Irish—children employed in the factories"<sup>2</sup> were never proposed for the north east. Children had been used as 'trappers' in the coal pits, but before the Irish made any entry into that trade, religious, governmental (Lord Ashley's Act of 1842) and educational pressures had eliminated this employment for boys under 13 years of age. When Catholic authorities in the area complained of the fluctuating attendance in the schools, it was seldom because children were at work; rather, it was due to the mobility of their parents. This was quite unlike Liverpool, for instance, where contemporaries estimated that only a quarter of the children attended school in 1861 and that "even these are removed at an

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1. Census of Great Britain: Education, England and Wales, Reports and Tables, P.P., 1852-3, XC, p.xxiii, quoted in Treble, Ph.D. Thesis, p.386.
  2. "Memorial Presented to Sir James Graham by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Wiseman," 1843, respecting the formation of the new factory schools. U.C. IV.

early age, to add to the family's earnings."<sup>1</sup> In the north east it was rare for the Enumerators to find children between the ages of 6 and 13 as anything other than 'scholars'.

For women employment was also extremely scarce. It was noted by Newcastle's superintendent of police in 1838 that "the female population of the town have very few sources of employment, either in trade or manufactures"<sup>2</sup> and this situation remained largely unaltered throughout the century.<sup>3</sup> Even the lighter harvest work was rarely shared by the females. The Assistant Overseer of the Poor Law in Newcastle complained that when the Irish go to harvest, "their wives and families, in the meantime, become chargeable".<sup>4</sup> Though some women were "to be found in the lower and dirtier departments of the factories on the Tyne—in nursery-gardens and at field work—some even in brick yards...the average earnings...at from 4s. to 12s. per week";<sup>5</sup> employment for Irish women was confined principally to domestic services from

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1. George F. Shaw, "The Irish Labourers in Liverpool," T.N.A. P.S.S., 1861, (London, 1862), p.684.
  2. John Stephens, "Abstract of a Return of Prisoners coming under the Cognizance of the Police of Newcastle," J.S.S.L., I (Oct. 1838), p.362.
  3. It was noted in 1913 that "the extreme north is not an area in which the woman worker is in great request, differing in that respect from the Lancashire districts where she is so important a factor." "Social Problems in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and District," in Charles E.B. Russell, Social Problems in the North (London, 1913), p.149.
  4. Select Committee on Poor Removals, 1855, q.411, p.30.
  5. "Employment of Women," N.Cour., Dec.13, 1861, p.2. The information came from questionnaires sent to several local factories. The returns also showed that "a large number of women" were employed in manual kinds of labour in shops, at wages ranging from 6s. to 14s. per week. The article concluded, however, that the scarcity of positions for women could only be relieved "if women could be induced to emigrate in considerable numbers".



scullery maids to laundresses. In lieu of other alternatives and in response to the market, many Irish girls turned to prostitution. There are numerous references and allusions to brothels and harlots in the Irish quarter of Newcastle,<sup>1</sup> though it was Sunderland's boast that "notwithstanding that we are a seaport ...we are below Tynemouth, Newcastle, and Hartlepool, or any of those surrounding places, both as to thieves and abandoned women".<sup>2</sup> The occasional references in the Enumerators' Manuscripts to Irish 'sisters' occupying single houses in colliery villages also points to the scope of this particular trade outside the urban centres. In general, however, employment opportunities for women, as for children, were not very plentiful, forcing the Irish family's income to be dependent on the male wage earner. Thus an estimated Irish population in Newcastle and Durham in 1861 of 46,000<sup>3</sup> was almost wholly reliant upon the income that might be obtained by the 17,000 Irish men.<sup>4</sup>

Had this reliance on the male wage earner existed in other areas of Irish settlement, the most destitute conditions would have been greatly worsened. But the very attraction of the north east to the Irish—the higher wages as a result of the demand for labour—allowed the Irishman's wage to be often in excess of that of a whole family elsewhere. The area's fortuitous combination

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1. In Sandgate "the proportion of prostitutes to the whole female population is little more than one to seven, and the male population rather more than one to six....Prostitution is emphatically the traffic of the district." Inquiry into Newcastle Poor, p.33.
  2. Evidence of Mr. Hedley, Select Committee on Irremovable Poor, 1860, q.2791, p.146.
  3. Chp.I, Table 5, p.17.
  4. "Irishmen in the North," N.D.Chron., Oct.12, 1867, p.3.

of the coal-iron-shipbuilding industries, put the income of a common labourer sometimes as high as 24s. per week. If one believed the assistant secretary of the North of England Iron Trade at Middlesbrough, during the iron lockout of 1865, the lowest paid iron workers, the puddlers, had been earning an average of £2 11s. 6d. per week.<sup>1</sup> This was an income, noted the Durham Chronicle, "which is not reached by many clergymen of the Established Church." Or if one chose to believe Charles Palmer in 1866, while warning his men against striking: "Labourers on the Clyde are earning from 12s. to 14s. a-week, while here they are paid from 16s. to 18s.; platers on the Clyde earn 30s. a-week, while here they receive 33s; riveters there earn 25s., while here they earn 30s."<sup>2</sup> Despite the obvious bias in these statements, the epithet for Durham and Newcastle in the second half of the 19th century, "a poor man's Eldorado",<sup>3</sup> is not without some substance. The Crimean, the American and the Franco-Prussian wars all served to bolster the particular economy of the area and a margin of these considerable profits went to the workers. To the Irish labourer whose wages at home were estimated in 1861 to average 6s. per week,<sup>4</sup> the north east was at times a haven, for it was

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1. D.Chron., Oct.12, 1865, p.5.

2. The Nine Hours Movement Conference between C.M. Palmer, and the Workmen of Jarrow, Feb.22, 1866, p.3. N.C.L. Lts.

3. Nossiter, Ph.D. Thesis, pp.70-1.

4. Rev. Wm. Hickey, "On the Social Condition of the Labouring Population in Ireland," T.N.A.P.S.S., 1861, p.609. The following average rates per 10 hour day could be found in Dublin and Neighbourhood in 1860: Boys, 7d. to 8d.; Young Men, 1s. to 1/4; Labourers, 1/8; Skilled Men, 2s. to 3/4; Mechanics, 5s. Labour Statistics: Return of Wages Published between 1830 and 1886, P.P., 1887, LXXXIX, p.336.

rare even in other areas of northern England for labourer's wages to exceed an average 15s., as they often did in the north east.

Yet, while the average wage was higher in the area, the economic conditions of the Irish labourers were never as salubrious as the above would suggest. A great many Irish in the north east did "find constant employment at good wages" and did enjoy a "condition of comparative prosperity",<sup>1</sup> but still, there were many who were only seasonally employed and others who worked in less prosperous enterprises. The Irish at Jarrow and Consett who liberally donated funds to the Catholic schools<sup>2</sup> must be regarded in the light of the Irish Catholics at Seaham who were "out of work a considerable portion of their time,"<sup>3</sup> and who, according to their pastor, would have found it extremely difficult to raise £20 a year for church ground-rent. The priest at St. Godric's, Durham, told the *Guardians* in 1879 that many in his flock were "unable month after month to pay to the school fees on account of unemployment".<sup>4</sup> And the vicar of St. John's, Newcastle, believed that there were thousands in his parish earning less than 12s. in consequence of the layoffs in the shipyards in the early 'eighties.<sup>5</sup> While there were times of unexcelled prosperity, there were also many periods of near destitution.

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1. "Irish in England," *Nation*, Letter XV (Oct.19, 1872), p.662.
  2. Chp.III, p.84; G. Neasham, *West Durham*, p.30.
  3. Rev. Belaney to the Marchioness of Londonderry, Nov.2, 1860, *Tablet*, XXI (Nov.24, 1860), p.740.
  4. *Church of St. Godric*, *op.cit.*, p.8.
  5. *1st Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Housing of the Working Classes*, P.P., 1884-5, XXX, q.7401,p.331.

Though the recession in trade directly or indirectly affected the whole population, the Irish were usually hit first and hit hardest. If the work gangs had to be trimmed to meet the restricted markets, the Irish were first to be laid off. Moreover, in the iron trade where labourers were paid on a 'piece work' basis in accordance with the value of the product, those who were not laid off saw reductions in their pay. Unlike the craftsmen, the Irish (along with other common labourers) seldom had any savings to fall back upon or any union agreements for a minimum wage. In the coal trade, even when it was unionised, there were tremendous fluctuations in wages in accordance with the 'sliding scale' of market prices. In 1873 the highest paid men in the pits, the hewers, were earning 7s. 9d. per day, but only a year later this had become 4s. 6d.<sup>1</sup> In at least one industry, that of the glass and bottle works, foreign competition eliminated hundreds of jobs. Sunderland had 36 bottle houses in 1876, ten years later, 14 remained.<sup>2</sup> Newcastle's Board of Commerce noted in 1886 that "whereas this locality was one of the chief seats of the crown glass and glass bottles, these industries have left the district."<sup>3</sup> Thus, as one health officer noted of Newcastle earlier in the century,

As in other seaports and manufacturing towns, there is a constant gravitation of unskilled labour towards this

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1. John Bell Simpson, Capital and Labour in Coal Mining During the Past 200 Years (Newcastle, 1900), p.34. Wage rates in all the industries varied also upon location. By the Return of Wages, 1887, op.cit., p.656, it appears that labourers to Masons in Darlington were receiving twice as much as those in South Shields. Wages in Newcastle were generally slightly lower than those in the industrial centres of Durham.
  2. Return of the Sunderland Chamber of Commerce to the 1st Report on the Depression of Trade, 1886, Appendix A, p.88.
  3. 2nd Report on the Depression of Trade, P.P., 1886, XXI, Pt.I, Appendix B, p.629.

centre of commercial industry...to make that valuable and important portion of the community feel the first effects of any stagnation of trade, or economic convulsion.<sup>1</sup>

Strikes among the skilled trades and industrial lockouts were a further threat to the Irish livelihood. Few Irishmen listening to Rev. Belaney would have cared to contradict his opinion of "those ruinous and most suicidal things—called strikes."<sup>2</sup> For, as un-unionised labour, the Irish were most often the unwitting victims: unable to draw union benefits while they lasted, they went unbenefited if successful. The 1871 engineer's strike on Tyneside was sustained by the tradesmen procuring outside employment while the Irish labourers could do little but suffer the consequences. The iron lockout of 1865 and the strike of 1866 forced many labourers who "received no support",<sup>3</sup> to sell their belongings to buy food. Again in 1877, the Bishop of the Diocese "pleaded...the cause of the distressed poor (chiefly labourers in the iron works) of the [Darlington] district."<sup>4</sup>

If the generally higher wages in the north east, then, served to compensate (sometimes generously) for the chiefly male employment, not all the Irish can be seen to have benefited, while the precarious place of the Irish in the workforce meant that few could feel economically secure. Since one of the by-products of the population increase was a chronic housing shortage, rents remained consistently high—often higher than they were in

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1. Borough of Newcastle, Report of the Public Health During the Year 1866, p.9. N.C.L. Lts.
  2. The Reign of Sin, p.12.
  3. Larchfield Diary: Entry for 1866, p.210.
  4. Tablet, XVIII (Dec.15, 1877), p.755.

London.<sup>1</sup> "Very few rooms [could] be got in the worst part [of Newcastle] for less than 3s., and if they wanted a small back one as well they would have to pay 5s."<sup>2</sup> In times of economic setback, therefore, many Irish were left with little more than the average town labourer in Ireland under normal condition.

(iii)

The willingness of the Irish to work for lower wages has often been interpreted as a major factor behind much of the racial antipathy with the English. At the root of this not-unqualified thesis lies the premise that the surfeit of Irish in some industries lowered the demand for and hence the remuneration of labour. Native workers, it is claimed, sensed a threat to their standard of living and therefore lashed out at the Irish competitors. As expressed before the Committee on Emigration in 1827, the effects of Irish immigration would be

most fatal to the happiness of the labouring classes in England, because there will be a constant and increasing immigration from Ireland to England, which will tend to lower the wages of labour in England, and to prevent the good effects arising from the superior prudence of the labouring classes in this country.<sup>3</sup>

Though some, like Sir Robert Peel, did not wish to "condemn too precipitately the incursion of Irish labourers into England",<sup>4</sup> the opinion that the Irish could have only a deleterious effect

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1. "Do you mean to say that rents in Newcastle are higher than they are in London?—Yes, I should think they are very often. I should call 3s. a usual price for one of these kitchens." 1st Report into the Housing of the Working Classes, q.7481, p.332.
  2. Ibid., p.332.
  3. Quoted in 'Appendix G', 1836, p.459.
  4. C.S. Parker, Sir Robert Peel 2nd ed. (1899), II, p.117, quoted in Strauss, op.cit., pp.122-3.

upon the country continued to be echoed by a vast body of contemporaries. It was blatantly obvious to many during the famine period, that the crowds of Irish paupers "seeking Employment in England, and willing to work for the lowest Wages; [were] thus reducing the Remuneration of Labour, and lowering the Standard of Comfort and of Subsistence in this Part of the United Kingdom".<sup>1</sup>

There can be no doubt that many entrepreneurs ruthlessly exploited the available Irish workers and in so doing undercut the price of English labour. In times of bad trade when the labour market was glutted, such as after the Napoleonic Wars, Irish labour could often be cheaply procured when the English workers refused to take a cut in wages. Or in industries where employment for common labourers was restricted, the Irish, if available, were eagerly sought after. The Irish reaper, for example, who "always bargain[ed] for money, milk, and some beer"<sup>2</sup> frustrated co-operative attempts by the English for higher wages and were, therefore, welcomed by the farmers. In Morpeth in 1850 the natives were demanding 3s. per day for the harvest and it was "much to the disappointment of the masters [that] the grey-coated Irish are wanting."<sup>3</sup> Conversely, other employers in the area were pleased with the "great number of Irish reapers...fully employed in cutting the corn".<sup>4</sup> Native labourers were, of course, indignant at these encroachments. Mewburn had noted that the consequence of the Irish reapers coming to south Durham in 1830 "was

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1. Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization From Ireland, 1847, P.P., 1847, VI, p.xiii.

2. Select Committee on Poor Removals, 1854, Appendix 17, p.668.

3. N.Cour., Aug.30, 1850, p.4.

4. Ibid., p.4.

that an extraordinary degree of exasperation arose amongst the labourers in the village, and in many places the Irishmen were completely put hors de combat".<sup>1</sup> Lord Durham's agent, Henry Morton, remarked in 1837:

I dare say you have often observed that the poor Irish have been mobbed and driven away from the public works by the English and Scotch labourers.—They drove them away from the Hartlepoons, and I know that the Farm Labourers in Northumberland frequently drove them away during harvest in order to get higher wages. The working classes have all a decided dislike to Irishmen whom they consider lower the price of labour in this country.<sup>2</sup>

Morton's use of the word "consider", however, carries with it a certain significance, for it is not at all clear that the Irish did indeed lower English wages wherever they were employed. Evidence in 1836 forced the Commissioners reporting on the Irish poor in Great Britain to conclude that "when it is said that the Irish settlers in Great Britain have lowered wages, nothing more is probably meant than they have enabled the actual extent of work to be done at the existing rates".<sup>3</sup> The Commissioners went so far as to state that it was conceivable that wages "might perhaps have been lower, if the manufacturing districts of England and Scotland had not at their command a large and (as compared with their wants) and unlimited supply of Irish labourers." Moreover, it was only in specific occupations or in those sections of certain industries where the unskilled labour of the Irish and English were in direct competition that the Irish inadvertently prevented wage increases and, thereby, raised animosities.

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1. Larchfield Diary: Entry for 1830, pp.22-3.

2. Morton to Durham, Jan.15, 1837, Lambton MSS., quoted in Nossiter, D.Phil. Thesis, p.98.

3. 'Appendix G', 1836, p.462.



The economic boom in Durham and Newcastle greatly reduced these economic factors conducive to racial discord. The demand for labour through the expansion of the economy reversed the earlier competition for jobs. Thus "the importation of Irish families for the working of the mills and ironworks recently established in this town [Darlington]",<sup>1</sup> or those imported by the Londonderrys and referred to <sup>by</sup> Rev. Belaney,<sup>2</sup> created no disturbances and merited few remarks in the local press.<sup>3</sup> This was in marked contrast to Wales, for instance, where upon the arrival of hundreds of famine victims in Newport (who had been sent by Irish agents<sup>4</sup>) an era of troubled race relations was initiated. Whenever the Welsh economy slackened violent clashes, such as that which resulted in the banishing of the Irish from the Rhondda Valley in 1857,<sup>5</sup> were the result.

In the north east, conversely, the need for labour engendered a relaxation even in the traditional areas of English employment,

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1. Larchfield Diary: Entry for 1861, p.170.
  2. See, Chp.IV, p.158. Were the Irish "not here," wrote Belaney, "labourers would be wanting in your Ladyship's works, and labour would cost your Ladyship more."
  3. The number of importations from Ireland was probably very few. The Commissioners noted in 'Appendix G', 1836, p.460, that there was little foundation to the claims that Irish labourers were imported into England: "The great majority—so great as to form nearly the entire number—left their own country spontaneously, and at their own expense." This was even truer in the famine and immediate post-famine period.
  4. According to the Times "agents are appointed in many districts in Ireland to provide free passages to Newport, where it is promised them, the men will find employment on the South Wales railway at 4s. a-day, and women to be engaged in whatever numbers they please at 2s. and 2s. 6d. per day, at washing and other domestic work." This "delusive cajolery" was reported to have brought the Irish "like locust". Quoted in N.Chron., Feb.26, 1847, p.6.
  5. J. Hickey, Urban Catholics, pp.53-5; pp.128-9.

for the earlier dependence on jobs such as agriculture, mining and railway construction was greatly reduced. With an abundance of employment for both Irish and English, the former threat of the Irishman to the other's security was nearly abolished. In agriculture, the Irish were opposed on a decreasing scale by the migrations of native labourers to the town industries.<sup>1</sup> Quite literally, the field for Irish employment became more open while hostilities diminished proportionately.

With such a demand for labour it was as impossible as it was undesirable to prevent Irish employment, but discrimination against the Irish within the industries was widely practiced. Though the "greater majority of those entering the region during the peak phases of immigration were...without particular skills",<sup>2</sup> it was the non-Irish who were given greater opportunity for economic mobility.<sup>3</sup> The English worker was preferred for the semi-skilled operations and could, without difficulty, advance to the skilled trades; the Irish worker was almost irrevocably bound to his manual labour. This was not hostile prejudice: the Newcastle Chronicle was not incorrect in stating that

If in the workshop the sons of Erin are sometimes subjected to a little chaff, they are seldom the victims of prejudice. This, which we believe to be the general state of sentiment in England towards the Irish race, is in an eminent degree the

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1. When asked: "There has not been any migration from the country into Newcastle, has there?", a local spokesman replied, "There has been a little recently, but there has been a great deal in times past." 1st Report on Housing of the Working Classes, q.7402, p.331.
  2. House, op.cit., p.15.
  3. In Newcastle in 1872, 4,000 Irish were reputed to have "worked upwards" into the skilled trades but "there is still in the rank and file of labour, or dependent on it, 25,000." "Irish in England," Nation, Letter XV (Oct.19, 1872), p.662.

sentiment of these northern parts. Tyneside is famous for its hospitality.<sup>1</sup>

But as one alderman in Sunderland pointed out in the midst of the Fenian 'scare' in October 1867, "ill feeling might be prevented if Irishmen were treated with proper respect and had the chance of appointments for which they were otherwise well qualified."<sup>2</sup> This occupational discrimination, however, served to further minimise friction between the races, for it allowed non-Irish wages to surpass those of the Irish. Higher wages plus the knowledge that the Irish would be the first to be unemployed in times of bad trade, gave the non-Irish the psychological comfort of economic security. The lack of Irish occupational mobility also meant their eventual takeover of the lowest-paid jobs. To a certain extent this eliminated the room for animosities in the immediate working area of the Irish but, more significantly, it prevented the Irish from undermining the occupations and wages of the non-Irish portion of the work force. Hence, the industrial breeding grounds for hostilities with the Irish were largely kept in abeyance.

While varying degrees of persecution did persist, a closer examination of the disturbances between Irish and non-Irish working men reveals that occupational competition was rarely the motivating force. In railway construction the Irishman's low-paid and degrading labour was, in the midst of alternative employment for the non-Irish, little threat. The few reports of disturbances which reached the press from the isolated railway

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1. "Irishmen in England," editorial, Dec.24, 1867, p.2.

2. N.D.Chron., Oct.10, 1867, p.4.

camps—their isolation tending to enhance animosities—most commonly point to clashes over religious differences. The most fruitful source of this havoc was the outrage of the Scotch Presbyterians at the Irish Catholics' regard for the Sabbath as a day of recreation instead of a day of God-fearing piety.<sup>1</sup> Or in places of underemployment like West Hartlepool, clashes with the Irish were frequent but they had more to do with the impact of agrestic cultures (both Irish and native) in an unfamiliar urban situation, itself suffering from the pains of rapid growth.<sup>2</sup> As the Newcastle Chronicle noted of the mixed nationalities at Consett, "together in the harmony of labour...sometimes unhappily their differences break out when they are at 'play.'"<sup>3</sup> Such 'playtime' activity could become an "alarming disturbance" as in one riot between the Irish and English in Consett which lasted "for several hours, during which from forty to fifty on each side were more or less disabled by cuts and bruises" and from which three persons subsequently died.<sup>4</sup> But riots like this were limited in number and like the more common Saturday night affrays in public houses, were caused by factors extraneous to the occupations held by the Irish.<sup>5</sup> While disturbances between the Irish

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1. See, Coleman, op.cit., pp.83-4; and almost any of the accounts or governmental reports on railway labourers.
  2. Robert Wood, West Hartlepool: The Rise and Development of a Victorian New Town (West Hartlepool, 1967), p.113.
  3. "History and Progress of the Consett Iron Works," July 9, 1858, p.6.
  4. T. Fordyce, Local Register, III, Feb.8, 1846, p.204; G. Neasham, West Durham, p.72.
  5. To put the racial violence into proper perspective it should be borne in mind that the majority of fights had nothing to do with the Irish. John Wilson's description of the local pitmen who kept a "running fight, commencing at the Market Place [Durham] and extending to the gate at the top of Giles-gate" every Saturday night after 'closing', is a better picture of the realities. Memoires of a Labour Leader, p.91.

and non-Irish reflect a persecution syndrome common to all subjected nationalities and classes, it was the good fortune of the Irish in the north east that the prosperity of the population as a whole in conjunction with the previously discussed social and religious factors placed the persecution on a very restricted level. There is thus particular relevance in Durham and Newcastle for E.P. Thompson's statement that "it is not the friction but the relative ease with which the Irish were absorbed into the working-class communities which is remarkable."<sup>1</sup>

(iv)

There was one area, however, where hostility was endemic to Irish labour. This was in the use of the Irish 'blackleg' or 'knobstick' reputed to have played an instrumental role in defeating the aims of striking workmen. Repeated allusions to the use of Irish in the pitmen's strike of 1844 have tended to give rise to an undisputed legend of the widespread use of Irish strikebreakers in the north east. Because the Irish were utilised as pawns for capitalist exploitation in this one major instance, the assumption had been readily drawn that they must have been 'used' in the area's other labour disputes. This belief has gained popularity particularly with regard to the coal industry.

In truth, the Irish strikebreaker was not a familiar sight on the local battlegrounds between management and labour. There is nothing to suggest that they were employed in the coal strikes previous to 1844, while the experience gained through that strike did not encourage their further usage (see below). In the labour disputes of the other major industries there is even less evidence

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1. The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1963), p.480.

to substantiate the abuse of Irish labour. In the iron lockout of 1865 and the prolonged strike of 1866, when the workers refused to take a 10 percent reduction in wages, the Irish were themselves locked out and in some instances resorted to militant action.<sup>1</sup> It was only after they had been unemployed for seven months and had suffered the worst consequences, that some of the Irish in Middlesbrough and elsewhere began to defect from the ranks.

Part of the overemphasis on the significance of Irish blacklegs has, no doubt, arisen from the so-called Marxist interpretation of those strikes where partial use was made of Irish workers. It is interesting that the capitalist propaganda to the effect that the blacklegs were performing the work as well (if not better) than the striking workmen has been blandly accepted in deference to the thesis of ruthless exploitation of the indigenous working force. But in the majority of strikes in the north east the Irish could not subvert the worker's goals, for the strikers were most often skilled tradesmen while the Irish blacklegs were nearly always unskilled. Hence, seldom was any thought given to the introduction of Irish labour to replace striking craftsmen. Though, ironically, the prolongation to 21 weeks of a shipwrights' strike at Hylton,<sup>2</sup> near Sunderland, was caused by the disputed use of non-union Irish labour for 'boring', no attempt was made to employ them during the course of the strike. Or in the better-known engineering workers' strike on Tyneside in 1871,<sup>3</sup> the skilled

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1. D.Chron., Mar.17, 1865; July 20, Aug.31, Oct.12, Oct.19, Nov.30, Dec.7, 1866.

2. Clarke, M.A. Thesis, pp.94-8.

3. E.Allen, J.F. Clarke, N. McCord, and D.J. Rowe, The North-East Engineers' Strikes of 1871: The Nine Hours' League (Newcastle, 1971), pp.131-148.

workers could simply not be replaced by the labouring Irish. Some tradesmen were imported from Ireland, but the overwhelming majority of blacklegs were secured by agents sent to Denmark, Germany, Holland, Belgium and the other dockyards of England.

The use of Irish in the miners' strike of 1844 has not only engendered popular misconceptions concerning the use of blacklegs in the north east, but has itself fallen victim to gross exaggeration. Typical, is the statement made by Emil Strauss that:

The abuse of Irish labour as blacklegs against British workers was not confined to the industrial west coast nor to the textile trades: the great strike in the Tyneside collieries in July 1844 was defeated, at least in Durham, by the mass importation of Irishmen....<sup>1</sup>

Yet an examination of the strike of April 5th to September, 1844, reveals that the number of Irish imported was relatively small and that beyond all doubt the Irish were not responsible for the defeat.

The threatened mass importation of Irishmen, however, was often made public by the owners in a deliberate attempt to scare the miners back to work. Only 18 days after the commencement of the strike rumours began to circulate, supposedly from the Coal Trade Office, that "arrangements are in progress for introducing several hundreds of Irish labourers into the collieries."<sup>2</sup> A month later the Tyne Mercury announced that

we are informed a positive offer has been made to bring a large number (from 5,000 to 10,000) of Irish workmen to Newcastle, the expense of doing which would be moderate, the steam-boat fare being only 2s. 6d. per passenger across the Channel, and workmen

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1. op.cit., p.124.

2. T.M., April 23, 1844, p.2.

would be landed within five hours distance of the Coal district.<sup>1</sup>

But in another article in the same issue of the Tyne Mercury it was revealed that a deputation of union delegates had already met with

an authorized party as the representatives of the Newcastle Hibernian Society, and the result of the interview was that the Hibernian Society had transmitted communications to London, and to the repeal wardens of different towns throughout England and Ireland, advising them to prevent the immigration into Northumberland and Durham of more Irish labourers.<sup>2</sup>

The Northern Star further spread the alarm and in a "Warning to Irishmen" it appealed

to the warm and generous hearted sons of the Green Isle to remain at home, and as a warning, the whole of their brethren in Newcastle-upon-Tyne have held a public meeting in order to apprise them not to be duped or deluded by any fair promise the employers or their agents may make to them....At the above meeting the following resolution was unanimously agreed to— 'That the meeting having heard the manly and straightforward statements of the deputation of miners, do hereby agree to use all legal and constitutional means to prevent our countrymen from being deluded and entrapped by being induced to leave their native land to crush the miners of Northumberland and Durham.'<sup>3</sup>

That the owners had merely been employing scare technique was made clear in the "Address of the Special Committee...To the Coal Owners" of June 29th which was subsequently published in the local press.<sup>4</sup> For it was then stated that the time had at last come for the owners to have "recourse to the extreme measure of obtaining a supply of workmen from other parts of the United Kingdom." But the union in earlier giving countenance to the rumours

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1. "The Pitmen's Strike," May 28, 1844, p.2.

2. "Public Meeting of Pitmen," May 28, 1844, p.3.

3. Contained in Bell Collection [hereafter B.C.], XII, p.446.

4. D/LO/B-2; D.Chron., July 5, 1844, p.1.



of a threatened Irish importation had, in effect, beat the coal owners at their own game: the warning to Irishmen had already been sounded before the owners attempted their much-threatened coup. Though the address of June 29th. was itself partially for effect, it is probable that the warnings issued to the Irish were in part responsible for the failure of the Coal Owners' Association to put their threat into practice.

With the exception of Lord Londonderry (see below) those owners who managed to procure Irish blacklegs did so from other parts of England and in small groups only. Fifty men, "principally Irish" were reported to have been conveyed to Cramlington pit in early June<sup>1</sup> and others were reported to be employed at Seaton Delaval. Most of these Irish were secured by the coal owners' agents who, armed with promises of high wages, beer, tobacco and protection, lured workers from the railway and dock excavation crews. The owners were, of course, anxious to show that the Irish workmen were as valuable as the natives and the anti-union press gave full exposure to the eulogies. But few Irish took a liking to the work and most left the employment as soon as possible. It was stated at a meeting of pitmen on July 15th that "12 Irishmen at one colliery, and 14 at another...had already left: that 36 more had gone from Seaton Delaval and Cramlington".<sup>2</sup> As stated before the Poor Law Commissioners in 1855, when they asked about the numbers of Irish in the area's pits: "they are very rare; they do not make good miners."<sup>3</sup> It was this that the

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1. T.M., June 4, 1844, p.3.

2. Ibid., July 16, 1844, p.3.

3. George Grey, Select Committee on Poor Removals, q.598, p.40.

owners were destined to learn through the strike, making the welcome arrival of 204 Welsh miners at Cramlington and Seaton Delaval<sup>1</sup> typical of the relief measures that had ultimately to be relied upon by those owners who had secured Irish blacklegs. Indeed, references to 'strangers' in the articles of the Miner's Advocate, as in the reports of the Coal Owners' Association or in the local press, are most often connected with miners brought in from other parts of England, Scotland, and Wales.

The Irish retreat from the pits was further hastened by the hostile atmosphere surrounding all blacklegs. Though compared with the 1832 strike, violence was negligible,<sup>2</sup> small affrays and much verbal belligerence greeted the blackleg wherever he was employed. Reports such as the fracture of the shaft rope at Thornley which killed two blacklegs and brought "great shouting and marks of rejoicing" from a "mob, consisting principally of women,"<sup>3</sup> served as widespread discouragements to strikebreakers. The Irish had no desire to provoke this antagonism for a labour which neither suited their abilities nor was quite the goldmine they had been promised.<sup>4</sup> Most therefore, departed the pits well before the strike was over.

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1. "Arrival of Welsh Miners," D.Adver., Aug.2, 1844, p.2.
  2. For an account of the 1832 strike and its forerunners see, Richard Fynes, The Miners of Northumberland and Durham: A History of their Social and Political Progress (Blyth, 1873).
  3. T.M., July 9, 1844, p.3; for another example see, D.Adver., Aug.23, 1844, p.3.
  4. The agents often promised inflated wages to secure outside labour. In one case, at Redcliffe Colliery, 32 Cornish blacklegs joined the strikers when the promised 4s. per day turned out to be from 2s. 6d. to 3s. Fynes, p.91; Challinor and Ripley, op.cit., p.132. Such deceits, writes Welbourne, op.cit., p.74, were "at once an appeal to the cupidity of the men and an imposition on the credulity of the public."

The best instance of the use of Irish blacklegs in the strike of 1844 (and the example most commonly relied upon to substantiate the use of Irish strikebreakers in the north east) was Lord Londonderry's importation from his estates in Co.Down. Londonderry's action in 1844 has been seen to match the ultra-Tory aristocratic individualism which made him as much the despair of the members of the Coal Vend<sup>1</sup> as he had formerly been to his 'colleagues' in the House of Lords. He has been described as a man with

a slightly crazy consistency, especially in the extremism with which he conducted calvalry charges against any measure or men who threatened to override the basic principle that a man should be allowed to do what he liked with his own.<sup>2</sup>

Londonderry's behaviour, then, might be placed in the realm of the eccentric. He was not representative of the other local coal owners and was entirely dissimilar to the other two 'grandees' of the local trade, the Earls of Durham and Ravensworth. On the other hand, his place in the pantheon of industrial ogres is deceptive, for Londonderry often exposed surprising veins of humanity or at least noblesse oblige. Towards the Irish and towards Catholics he often sounded the most un-Tory opinions.<sup>3</sup> In the

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1. See, A.J. Taylor, "The Third Marquis of Londonderry and the North-East Coal Trade," Durham Univ. J., XLVIII (1955-6), pp.21-7; David Large, "The Third Marquess of Londonderry And the End of the Regulation, 1844-5," Durham Univ. J., LI (1958-9), pp.1-9.

2. Large, p.2.

3. In his speech in the House of Lords, April 7, 1829, Londonderry "expressed a hope that hereafter an arrangement might be made to connect the Roman Catholic clergy with the government, by giving them what the Presbyterians in Ireland had at present—a provision, which was called the Regium Donum." Hansard, 2nd series, XXI, p.501. Londonderry was one of the peers who voted in persons in favour of the 3rd reading of the Emancipation Bill on April 10, 1829. Ibid., p.694.

In Ireland Londonderry had allowed his tenants "to accumulate

strike of 1844 he was not without his individualism nor his inherent contradictions.

For at least the first two months of the strike Londonderry had nothing to do with blackleg labour. Since he had stockpiles of coal with which to oversell the Coal Vend prices, the strike was a source of considerable profit. While other owners before the end of April<sup>1</sup> were desperately seeking means to crush the strike and hiring blacklegs at considerable expense, Londonderry and his chief agent Nathaniel Hindhaugh were delighting at their unbounded profits.<sup>2</sup> It was not until early June when the stockpiles were exhausted that Londonderry grew concerned. Desirous that his pits should be first in operation so that he could continue to benefit from the inflated prices, he held a mass meeting of his colliers and implored them to return to work, threatening that he would supplant them with workers from his Comber estate.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the Coal Owners' Association, Londonderry was quite prepared to back up his threat, but it is noteworthy that he proceeded with caution and was anxious only to frighten his men back to work. He wrote to Hindhaugh on June 28, "I am curious to

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up to three years unpaid rents, without evicting them, and whose estates were described by the tenant-right radical Sharman Crawford as the most flourishing in Ireland." Allan J. Heesom, "The Third Marquis of Londonderry as an Employer," unpublished paper presented to the North East Group for the Study of Labour History, May, 1972, p.34.

The Hull Advertiser, whilst castigating Lady Londonderry, spoke of the late Third Marquis as "a good Irish Landlord." Dec.7, 1861, D/LO/C-216.

1. T.M., April 23, 1844, p.3.
2. Hindhaugh to Londonderry, April 6 and 7, 1844, quoted in Large, op.cit., p.5.
3. Large, p.6.

see what moral effect the arrival of our 20 Irishmen will create", adding, "the Coal Trade are very wrong in thinking to force a general turn out [of the miners from their houses]. Each Colliery must be left to its own Discretion...Keep our efforts quiet".<sup>1</sup>

In fact, 35 Irishmen arrived on June 29th and were dispatched to Rainton Colliery where "the women got about our men and a Catholic [priest] was sent to speak to them from Houghton-le-Spring who invited them to chapel to-day, however, they resisted all these things".<sup>2</sup> Overviewer, George Hunter, described them as "a few as likely men as I ever saw for the purpose", and recommended that the importation be vigorously followed up with 100 more Irishmen, adding the enticement that they "will work for less wages than our old Colliers".<sup>3</sup> Under guard, the Irish were put to work in Adventure pit where "they did extremely well the first day earning 2/6 or 2/8."<sup>4</sup> They were all, reported Hunter, "in capital spirits and have written to their families and friends in Ireland to come to them. I have no doubt but these people will answer our purpose, at least as far as we can judge at present." And again Hunter implored Londonderry to allow him to "send for another 100," for "if we continue to bring over a supply from Ireland I think we will soon put an end to their [the strikers'] proceedings, in fact I see no alternative, but to establish our

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1. June 28, 1844, D/LO/C-326(23).

2. George Hunter to Londonderry, no.2, June 30, 1844, D/LO/C-149(265).

3. Ibid., no.1, D/LO/C-149(266).

4. Ibid., no.2, July 2, D/LO/C-149(264); Hindhaugh to Londonderry, July 4, D/LO/C-148(19).

Collieries in full work with these men from Ireland". But Londonderry was not anxious to use the Irish as strikebreakers: it was Hunter who attempted to force his hand. As he complained on July 2nd, "you are wrong in preventing me from getting more people from Ireland."<sup>1</sup>

Londonderry's private opinions, however, were not those revealed to his workmen in his proclamation of July 3rd. He pointed out that the pits were operating in spite of the strike and conjured the men to "look upon the ruin you are bringing on your wives, your children, your county, and the country. In twelve weeks more the collieries will be peopled by foreigners, and you will have neither shelter, protection, or work. While there is time—reflect!!"<sup>2</sup> Below this the broadsheet warned:

I have now brought Forty Irishmen to the pits; and I will give you all one more week's notice. And if by the 13th of this month a large body of my pitmen do not return to their labour, I will obtain one hundred more men, and proceed to eject that number, who now are illegally and unjustly in possession of my houses; and in the following week another one hundred shall follow.

The ultimatum, though expressing "not the language of tyranny, but of pleading"<sup>3</sup> was regarded as the limit in pomposity. As the Dublin Monitor put it, "Lord Londonderry has taken just such a part in the affair as any one might expect that he would."<sup>4</sup> With bitter sarcasm, the Monitor continued:

There is wisdom, too (if you could understand it), in replacing them [strikers] with your Irish serfs. It

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1. Hunter to Londonderry, no.1, July 2, D/LO/C-149(263).
  2. A copy of the original broadsheet is contained in the Wigan Collection, Wigan Public Library. It may also be found in B.C., XII, p.336.
  3. Heesom, op.cit., p.35.
  4. Reprinted by the Miner's Advocate in a broadsheet entitled "Lord Londonderry and the Irish Press". Wigan Collection; B.C., XII, p.415; Fynes, op.cit., pp.86-88.

will hide the workings of the property system in this country. An excellent mode it is of draining the over-charged surface of Downshire, to carry off the superfluities a hundred fathom or so beneath the spires of Durham Cathedral. Nevertheless, it seemeth unkind toward these convenient, easy tools or your marquissate's high displeasure, at the very moment when you are using them for so agreeable a purpose, that you should brand them as foreigners. 'In twelve weeks more,' you say, 'the collieries will be peopled by foreigners.' That is an ugly word, my lord; Irishmen do not like it....

The effect of this publicity was to exonerate the Irish by making them out to be the slaves of the Marquis, while his own character was thoroughly blackened. But while this<sup>v</sup> not a false picture of Londonderry, it is incomplete. Only a day after his broadsheet was tacked up over the county, Londonderry wrote: "I am fully aware [that] the importation of Irish is a great evil. Discord and Disaffection around us, poverty increasing Poor Rates more burthen..., yet it is of Evils the least, because standing still is Ruin—No Coals—No Money."<sup>1</sup>

While the agent at Comber was proceeding according to instructions and was making the final preparations to send off 100 men in "portions of 50",<sup>2</sup> Londonderry's other agents were becoming "anxious...to do without them but there is no alternative and if another week does not bring the men to work, we may allay our Accounts and act upon what you state in Hand Bill."<sup>3</sup> Thus by July 13th neither Londonderry nor his agents had much desire to instigate the threat contained in the broadsheet. But the policy throughout was that "our movements in Ireland must be governed by the Conduct of our Men here."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Londonderry to Hindhaugh, July 5, D/LO/C-326(24).

2. John Andrews to Hunter, July 6, D/LO/C-149(261).

3. Hunter to Londonderry, July 5, D/LO/C-149(262).

4. Ibid., July 10, D/LO/C-149(261).

A large gap in the extant letters does not allow us to trace the introduction of the promised Irishmen or to see exactly how many actually arrived. And, as Londonderry wanted to keep the Coal Trade Office in the dark about his activities and profits during the strike, the Office's circular of August 17th (one of whose questions asked for the number of outside 'strangers' imported for the strike) was not answered. ("I think you will agree with me," wrote Hunter, "that these Questionnaires [sic] are quite unnecessary."<sup>1</sup>) Two years later, however, Seymour Tremenheere, the Commissioner for the Report on the State of the Population in the Mining Districts, was told by one of Londonderry's agents that 180 Irishmen had been brought over.<sup>2</sup> This estimate is probably correct for by the end of July, 1844, some of the men were returning to work and Hunter was of the opinion that "we ought not to send for any more Irishmen at present, as it is evident we will get old Hands of our own to work."<sup>3</sup>

As less than 200 men could scarcely put one pit into full operation, it is obvious that among Londonderry's 15 or so collieries, the Irish could have had little effect in breaking the will of the strikers.<sup>4</sup> Though Londonderry was quoted in the Sheffield

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1. Hunter to Londonderry, Aug.19, D/LO/C-149(253).
  2. P.P., 1846, XXIV, p.397. The agent, Ralph Elliot, told Tremenheere: "It cost us 30s. per man to bring the men from Ireland; then we gave them all 3s. a-day and their food for five months, and they were so awkward at the work at first that they could scarcely earn what their food cost us."
  3. Hunter to Londonderry, July 31, D/LO/C-149(258).
  4. W. Fordyce in his History of Coal, Coke, Coal Fields [and] Iron, cites the "Statistical Account of the Various Collieries on the River Tyne, Wear, and Tees," Mar.25, 1843, given in the 1st Report of the Midland Mining Commission. This account, listing only 4 of Londonderry's pits, numbers the the men and boys employed at 1,497.



Independent on August 3rd as saying that from personal experience the Irish made the best blacklegs and that "though at first rather inefficient hands, [they] are now tolerable workmen",<sup>1</sup> he was on that date arranging for "from 200 to 500" miners to be sent from Gloucester and 50 to be sent from Wales.<sup>2</sup> Scare tactics were swept aside; the object became "only to Make Hay and care for Nobody but ourselves."<sup>3</sup> It thus became Hunter's turn to show restraint, but Londonderry had lost all patience and severely castigated Hunter's opinions.<sup>4</sup>

By August the men had been out of work for over four months. They were all badly in debt and not a little tired of the whole strike. Their leaders told them that "all the Irish in the world can do us no harm if we only stick firm",<sup>5</sup> but the numbers of men leaving the union were increasing and, worse, the weekly output of coal was rapidly being enlarged by the use of experienced miners from other areas.<sup>6</sup> While the miners knew that they would be given preference over the Irish at the strike's termination, they were less sure that they would supplant the Welsh and Cornish miners whose importations had cost the owners as much as £6 and £7 per family.<sup>7</sup> It took little perspicacity to realise that if the im-

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1. Cited in Challinor and Ripley, op.cit., p.164 and Frank Machin, The Yorkshire Miners (Barnsley, 1958), I, p.61.
  2. Hunter to Londonderry, July 31, D/LO/C-149(258); Londonderry to Hindhaugh, Aug.3, D/LO/C-326(25).
  3. Ibid., D/LO/C-326(25).
  4. See Hunter's very apologetic letter of Aug.8, D/LO/C-149(257).
  5. "Great Meeting of Pitmen," T.M., July 31, p.3.
  6. Beginning in June the local press gave weekly reports on the coal output and the men who had left the union.
  7. W. Baily of Hetton Colliery to the Report of the Commissioner ...State of the Population in the Mining Districts, 1846, p.402.

portations continued, not only would their demands be sabotaged, but they would lose their very jobs.

The Irish in Londonderry's pits, therefore, did not serve as a major instrument for the defalcation of his workmen. The men broke their own ranks and offered to return to work because the pits were filling up with competent miners who were starving them and their union out of existence.

In the aftermath of the strike it became apparent that only Londonderry had procured Irish blacklegs in any forthright manner or in any significant proportions.<sup>1</sup> But even Londonderry had experienced little satisfaction with his Irish. When the Irish expressed a desire to leave the employment, Hunter had "no objections to this...it will be well if the Irish will go, as they are a heavy charge upon us—indeed [as no one wanted to admit during the strike], they don't average above half a man."<sup>2</sup> By October another bunch of Irish were "for being off at the end of the Month" and Hunter was relieved, for he had been annoyed that the Irish were not quite the dupes he expected:

the change of pay being altered has made a wonderful difference amongst them—those who did only hew 6, 7, 8, & 9 tubs a-day are now hewing 12, 14, 16, & 20 tubs—only look at such knaves—the fact is they have not acted honourably with us at all.<sup>3</sup>

By the 25th of October, 77 Irish remained at Rainton Pit and 12 at Pensher. But "from the notices", wrote Hunter, "we calculate

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1. Evidence of the colliery overseers in the Report of the Commissioner...in the Mining Districts, 1846, pp.394-446. The only extant returns of the Coal Trade Office's circular of Aug.17 are those from Haswell and Shotton collieries. Both reported that no strangers had been imported.
  2. Hunter to Londonderry, Sept.4, 1844, D/LO/C-149(247).
  3. Ibid., Oct.1, 1844, D/LO/C-149(240).

that we will have notice from 39 this week, which will leave us fifty...I think they will all dwindle off".<sup>1</sup>

The Irish blacklegs cannot, therefore, be seen to have played a very significant role in the outcome of the major strikes in the north east. Their limited use by the employers did little to frighten the strikers or to give inspiration to other entrepreneurs. That the Irish later entered the coal pits in considerable numbers and did so unopposed, indicates that they did not become exaggerated figures in local folklore to the extent they are reputed to have done in Wales.<sup>2</sup> The non-Irish blacklegs were always seen to be more culpable than the Irish for the union failures<sup>3</sup> but the blacklegs themselves did not blind the union men to their real enemies, the employers. Thus the legends surrounding figures like Londonderry came to have much greater meaning in the history of the worker's struggles, while the small part played by the Irish blacklegs was gradually forgotten.

(v)

If the historical significance of the Irish blacklegs in the north east had been somewhat shrouded in myth, no such illusions have surrounded the Irishman's place in the local trade unions. Indeed, the concern with the Irish strikebreakers has virtually obliterated any contribution the Irish may have made to the trade union movement. Yet a search for this contribution is not

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1. Hunter to Londonderry, Oct.25, 1844, D/LO/C-149(232).

2. Morris and Williams, op.cit., pp.236-7; J. Hickey, op.cit., p.55.

3. This is clear from the miner's journals and contemporary pamphlets. See Challinor and Ripley, op.cit., p.149; Welbourne, op.cit., pp.80-1.

a very fruitful endeavour. As was pointed out in 1836, "the Irish in Great Britain are not in general members of trades, or mechanics, they have not often been placed in circumstances in which it was possible for them to appear as leaders in such associations."<sup>1</sup> Admitting that "they appear to have been, at least, as active as the natives, when ever they had an opportunity of combining", well into the 1880s, such opportunities were infrequent in the north east.

A number of factors prevented the Irish from becoming involved in the area's trade unions. That wages in the better areas of employment seemed high compared to the poverty the Irish man had fled, delayed the initiative to enhance his new position. As well, the nature of the employment, often piece-work on a contract basis, was not conducive to co-operative bargaining efforts. Payment for the amount of work carried out, put the worker in competition with his own exertion and ultimately in competition with other workmen performing the same job. The emphasis was thus on individual self-help and against collective or mutual improvement. It is noteworthy that the only class of Tyneside workers containing Irishmen which attempted to form a union in the 1870s were the 'helpers' in the shipyards who were paid on a time-work basis.<sup>2</sup>

The eventual monopoly of Irish in certain spheres of industry also tended to shelter them from the ideas and institutions of the native workers. The Catholic Church furthered this pro-

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1. 'Appendix G', 1836, p.449.

2. Clarke, "Labour in Shipbuilding," p.4; on the relationship between the helpers and the platers see, Royal Commission on Labour: Group 'A', Vol.III, P.P., 1893-4, XXXII, q.20,449-20,634, pp.25-31.

tection and separation. By waging her implacable war against the 'secret societies', the church divested the Irish of the working mens' clubs which had served as links with the English trade unions. The salutary role that the Newcastle Hibernians had played in the strike of 1844, for instance, was no longer possible after the church's suppression of such societies. The substitution of church-controlled and priest-led organisations did not replace these trade union connections. Catholic Friendly Societies or branches of the Catholic Institute were hardly respected by non-Catholic labourers while the societies themselves gave little encouragement to the solidarity of Irish workmen for bargaining purposes. Without effective labour organisations and leadership the Irish were, in effect, industrial eunuchs.

Previous to 1840 the Catholic Church had followed a fairly strong anti-unionist policy based upon the suspicion that secret oaths were involved in initiating union members. The case of the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs' in 1834 readily convinced the Vicars Apostolic that their suspicions had been correct and that trade unions smacked of subversion. But with the wider adherence of workingmen to trade unions and their less secretive nature, the church relaxed her stand. The social condition of the Irish immigrants and the obvious cases of their exploitation, forced many priests to side with the workers and in some cases to openly castigate the employers.<sup>1</sup> But the heads of the church were unwilling to commit themselves one way or the other. Not until 1865 with the introduction of Cardinal Manning's brand of social Catholicism did the

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1. See, for example, Rev. Hearne's (of Manchester) tirade on Lord Londonderry's importation of Irish for the 1844 strike, quoted in Treble, "The Attitude of the Roman Catholic Church Towards Trade Unionism in the North of England, 1833-1842," Northern History, V (1970), pp.93-113.

clergy have a clearer idea of the position to take with respect to the unions. While Manning generally shifted the clergy to a position more in sympathy with the workers and largely abolished the stigma against Catholic involvement in trade unions, he was careful not to commit the church to any fast rule. The Papal decree to justify this attitude towards the trade unions had to wait until Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum of 1891, but then the ambiguity of that encyclical served to substantiate more conservative opinions as well.<sup>1</sup>

For the most part, as long as there was neither secrecy nor subversion, the Catholic workman had a carte blanche for union entry after 1840. But the Irishman's employment, primarily outside the trade-organised unions and in the lowest-paid jobs, gave him little opportunity for involvement. It was not until the rise of 'New Unionism' in the 1880s and '90s with the organisation of unskilled workers that the bulk of the Irish became union affiliated.<sup>2</sup> On Tyneside many of the Irish were incorporated into the

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1. K.S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Class, pp.313-4.

2. One manifestation of the New Unionism which also displayed Catholic influence was the formation of Local Assembly 3,504 of the Knights of Labour which came into existence in Nov. 1884 as the organisation of the English Window Glass Workers with its head branch at Sunderland (Hartley's glass Works), and sent delegates to Pittsburg in July 1885. An Independent Order of the K. of L. was established at Jarrow in 1889. A listing for this union, with P. McNeary as secretary, is given in the "Directory of Trade Union Secretaries," 7th Annual Report on Trade Unions, 1893, P.P., 1895, CVII, Appendix III, p.305, and again in the 8th Annual Report, P.P., 1896, XCIII, Appendix B, p.478. Henry Pelling writes of this Jarrow Order that "to judge by its rules [it] was expected to become a nation-wide organisation with 'lodges' in all the principal towns of the country." But the Order had only 82 members in 1891 and survived as a sick benefit society until 1901. "The Knights of Labour in Britain, 1880-1901," Economic History Review, IX (1956-7), pp.315-31.

Tyneside and National Labour Union, later the National Amalgamated Union of Labourers, which also had branches in Belfast.<sup>1</sup> The number of Irish names of north-eastern labour spokesmen which occur in the commissions on labour in the 1890s suggest that once unionised, the Irish rapidly became an outspoken and militant section of the organised labour force. By 1893 the general manager of Palmer's works could state that "we are not employing a single man at the present moment who is not in one society or the other—from the highest skilled mechanic down to the commonest labourer."<sup>2</sup>

Before 1880, the Irish in the north east penetrated union ranks most in the very area where as blacklegs they had done the greatest damage—in the miners' union. This seeming paradox is indeed a worthy comment both upon the extent to which the Irish blacklegs were held culpable for earlier union failures and upon the state of toleration in the mining districts. Despite the evident bias of T.P. O'Connor's retrospection in 1917, there is still some truth to his statement that "the Irish miners very soon were able to form the friendliest relations with the English miners of Tyneside. They took part eagerly in the various movements of the Trade Unions to improve the conditions of their class".<sup>3</sup> The Irish appear to have played an important part in

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1. An example of the workings and difficulties of the N.A.U.L. may be found in the Minutes of the Executive Council Meetings, April 6-27, 1894. N.C.L. Lts. In the 7th Annual Report on Trade Unions, 1893, p.110, the N.A.U.L. is listed as having 142 branches with 21,634 members; see also, Royal Commission on Labour: Group 'A', 1893-4, q.20,425, p.24.

2. Royal Commission on Labour: Group 'A', 1893-4, q.26,344, p.414.

3. "The Irish in Britain," in Lavery, op.cit., p.21.

the Durham Miners' Association almost from its inception in 1869. Aside from the ostracism which often resulted from not joining, the D.M.A. offered many Irish their first real chance for economic security. By the 1880s the Irish were an integral part of the Association as may be judged by the executive's minutes where numerous wage and rights appeals on behalf of the Irish in local branches are found. A list of candidates who had been elected by the local lodges in 1885 to stand for the election of the executive, reveals that clearly 10 percent were Irish or of Irish extraction.<sup>1</sup> William Crawford, the first head of the new union, was always sympathetic to the Irish and throughout the 1880s he made numerous speeches disapproving of coercion in Ireland and in support of Irish Nationalism.<sup>2</sup> And at the D.M.A.'s annual galas there was always at least one Irish politician of national reputation on the rostrum, from R. O'Connor Power in 1876 to T.D. Sullivan in 1890.<sup>3</sup> Though there continued to be a number of small strikes in the industry that employed blackleg labour, few of these blacklegs were Irish. The fact that the executive repeatedly exposed the hypocrisy of the miners in mingling with non-union men "at home over your glass of beer, in your chapels, and side by side you pray with them"<sup>4</sup> hardly suggests that they

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1. D.M.A. Minutes, April 4, 1885.
  2. In this he worked closely with Joseph Cowen, M.P., in placing the Irish cause before the English workers of the north east. At a meeting at Brandon on Oct.21, 1885 the audience was told that if Crawford was sent to Parliament he would vote for coercion in Ireland. Crawford strongly refuted the charge and quoted from his D.M.A. monthly circulars from 1881 to prove his Nationalist support. D.M.A. Minutes, Oct. 1885.
  3. E. Allen, The Durham Miners' Association, A Commemoration (Durham, 1969), pp.60-1. D.M.A. Pamphlet.
  4. Quoted in Sidney and B. Webb, The History of Trade Unionism (London, 1896), p.280.



Irish. Indeed, John Denvir's mention of a coal strike near Seaham in 1890 points to the place of the Irish in the trade by that date:

A recent strike at New Silksworth showed them [Irish] that this [process of eviction] was not entirely unknown on this side of the Channel. The colliery owner was the Marquis of Londonderry, and on his behalf the work people with whom he had the dispute were evicted from their dwellings. It was singular that, when the first cottage was broken into and the furniture ejected, the first article brought out was a picture of Robert Emmet, and the second a picture of St. Patrick. When added to this the 'man of the house' was named Dunleavy, there cannot be much doubt as to his faith and nationality.<sup>1</sup>

A rather extraordinary strike at Ushaw Moor in 1882<sup>2</sup> gives a clearer indication of the place of the Irish in the D.M.A. as well as revealing the attitudes of the Catholic Church, the non-Irish workers and the public to the striking colliers. Ushaw Moor was a fairly new colliery which like others of its kind had attracted an Irish workforce. Not all of the approximately 200 workmen were Irish but there were enough to warrant the erection of a sizeable Catholic school and to force the enlargement of the church at Newhouses.

The dispute began in the last week of 1881 when the president of the local union lodge was dismissed, allegedly for filling the coal tubs in an incorrect manner. A hasty meeting was convened and the men walked off in a sympathy strike. When the secretary of the D.M.A. arrived he was careful to point out to the men that "the strike was for union principles, and exhorted them not to remove away from the village on being evicted from their houses, as by so doing they would be abandoning the strike."<sup>3</sup> Little did

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1. Irish in Britain, pp.442-3.

2. A brief account of the strike in the context of the history of the miners' associations is given in Welbourne, op.cit., pp.214-20.

3. D.Chron, Jan.6, 1882, p.7.

he realise to what lengths the men would carry the principle. Next on the scene was the local priest, Rev. Philip Fortin, who, the Durham Chronicle stated, was "respected by all classes of dwellers in the Dearness Valley".<sup>1</sup> Fortin "expressed his warmest sympathy with the men and their families...[and] proffered the use of the large schoolroom at Ushaw Moor for the women and children to shelter in." Meanwhile the lodge president had obtained the permission of Rev. C. Gillow of Ushaw College to erect a tent on one of the adjoining fields.

From its commencement the strike captured public sympathy: the evictions coming at the worst time of year; the manager's remark in the presence of William Crawford that the men were a "set of lazy b---s";<sup>2</sup> the kindness of Father Fortin and Ushaw College; the revelation that Fortin's generosity would cost the school the loss of the government capitation grant of £140;<sup>3</sup> and the exposure that the houses the men were driven from were the worst imaginable;<sup>4</sup> all contributed to the miners' support. Though the Chronicle might justifiably refer to "the somewhat monotonous history of the prolonged strike at Ushaw Moor Colliery"<sup>5</sup> when it had been in progress for 19 months, there were enough provocative incidents throughout the strike to sustain public sympathy and especially to draw the support of other miners. Thomas Robinson,

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1. D. Chron., Jan.6, 1882, p.7.

2. D.M.A. Minutes, Jan. 1882; Welbourne, op.cit., p.214.

3. D.Chron., Feb.17, 1882, p.2.

4. See, Chp.II, p.30.

5. Aug.24, 1883, p.5.

the colliery manager, in attempting to incite the Irish to violence by planting intimidators about the pit-head, by smashing the Irishmen's pig crees before they had sold their pigs and by harassing the women and children in the schoolroom,<sup>1</sup> exposed himself as an object of common derogation. Before finally resigning, Robinson was prosecuted four times for crimes ranging from cutting down a private footbridge which lead to the pit, to shooting a young boy while trying to protect his blacklegs.<sup>2</sup> On one occasion Fortin, while administering to his flock, became the victim of Robinson's outrage. In a lengthy letter to the press, Fortin wrote:

Much has been said about tyranny and despotism at Ushaw Moor, but now the manager seems determined to rule over the souls as well as the bodies of the unfortunate creatures in his power. This however, is not the first time he has outraged Catholic feeling....Without any warning or notice he turned the Catholic teacher out of her house, throwing the furniture on the high road, where it still remains, and he has publicly expressed his desire to have 20 pounds of dynamite to blow up the school.<sup>3</sup>

"There is a limit", commented the Chronicle,

beyond which no one in authority ought of go; and when it comes to pass that one placed in the capacity of an employer takes upon himself to say that those whom he employs shall not receive the ministrations of the clergy of their own faith, the public will be inclined to declare that the bounds of prudence have been overstepped....No one can properly find fault with what Mr. Fortin has hitherto done....<sup>4</sup>

The public indeed felt that the bounds of prudence had been overstepped and support for the miners was almost unanimous. Funds flowed in from all of the miners' lodges as well as from Irish centres like the Consett Iron Works.<sup>5</sup> Several co-operative stores

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1. D.Chron., Feb.10, 1882, p.6; Feb.3, 1882, p.7.

2. Ibid., Sept.15, 1882, p.3.

3. Ibid., Mar.31, 1882, p.5.

4. Ibid., p.8.

5. Ibid., July 14, 1882, p.3.

donated supplies and carts of bread arrived weekly. Besides this, the miners' hearty endorsement of the strike—shown also through their pilgrimages to the site for mass demonstrations—resulted in raising the strike pay from the usual 10s. per week to 16s.<sup>1</sup> When some isolated voices were raised in opposition to the strike, they were either condemned or simply ignored. One member of the Durham Board of Guardians in February 1882 attempted to use his position to attack the authorities of Ushaw College for their unparalleled behaviour. The result was a vote of condemnation against the member from the rest of the Board.<sup>2</sup> Noteworthy as well, was the letter from a dissenting clergyman who wrote to the press to "remind Father Fortin that the Roman Catholics, who possess the land of Ushaw Moor, will not allow the Dissenters to have a piece of land, for either love or money".<sup>3</sup> But the anti-Catholic approach, even from a dissenting clergyman, could not alter the feelings of the mining population. Father Fortin, who earned himself the lasting title of the 'Pitmen's Priest',<sup>4</sup> was too highly respected.<sup>5</sup> And when the Anglican Tories condemned

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1. Welbourne, op.cit., p.215.

2. D.Chron., Feb.10, 1882, p.6.

3. Ibid., letter to the editor signed 'Fairplay', April 7, p.8.

4. N.C.C., 1902, Obituary on Father Fortin, p.125: "His sympathies were for the most part with the miners of the district, and amongst these the whole of his missionary life was spent. He espoused their cause without fear of consequences when he considered that their just rights were in question."

5. On Dec. 16, 1882, Fortin was presented with a purse of gold and a watch and chain by the D.M.A. At the presentation, Crawford stated, "Whether the strike ends to-day or twelve months to-day, that strike had been a complete success...the name of Rev. Philip Fortin has become a household word among the miners of Durham, and a name which will long be cherished and sincerely honoured by them...in after life you may remain, as you are now, in the broadest and truest sense, an ambassador

the strikers from the bench<sup>1</sup> or the pulpit, or called Robinson's management "long, successful, and generous",<sup>2</sup> it only served to further the rightness of the cause in the eyes of the majority. As the Chronicle wrote at the fortieth week of the strike, "Great interest is still displayed in the dispute, and the support given to the men on strike by their fellow workmen throughout the country is nearly as good as it was at the commencement of the conflict."<sup>3</sup>

In his efforts to secure blacklegs, Robinson inspired further condemnation; but while his initial endeavours were frustrated, he eventually met with some success. Though Crawford stated in December 1882 that " a full year has now passed away, and...[full employment at the pit] has not yet been accomplished,"<sup>4</sup> the pit was by that date in partial operation. The strikers, however, never defected from their ranks. Nevertheless, by the strike's anniversary the stalemate was realised. The union had nothing but its existence to bargain with, while the owners had "not the least intention of making an arrangement with them [strikers]."<sup>5</sup> The men celebrated the anniversary with speeches from union dele-

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of Christ amongst those over whom God has appointed you." Fortin's reply to the presentation is a perfect illustration of the leanings of the church, and of its guarded pronouncements: "If it is right and not wrong for workmen to combine together and form a union as it is now...if it is lawful even in the eyes of the law of the land for men to combine together, and appoint officers in their union, it is surely right and lawful for them to defend those officers." D.Chron., Dec.22, 1882, p.3.

1. Rev. A.D. Shafto, Ibid., June 22, 1883, p.3.
2. Cited in Welbourne, op.cit., p.218.
3. Sept.22, 1882, p.8.
4. D.Chron., to editor, Dec.15, 1882, p.8.
5. Ibid., W.M. Hill (agent to Robinson) to editor, Dec.8, 1882, p.6.

gates and Father Fortin, followed by a rendition of the 'True-Hearted Sons of Ireland', "sung in a very credible style."<sup>1</sup> But there was a certain falsetto to both the speeches and the singing: the union was stumped and it knew it.

Ashamed to admit defeat, the strike continued. The men took their daily stroll to the pit-head to badger the workers and then went to Newhouses to show their gratitude to Father Fortin by volunteering their labour towards the rebuilding of the church. When the church reopened on St. Patrick's Day, 1883, the men were still on strike although in February the villain of the piece—Thomas Robinson—had resigned. But Robinson's resignation still gave the workers no leverage to bargain their way back into the pit. When in August the Lords of the Privy Council "expressed a desire that the school should be restored to its original use",<sup>2</sup> and the women and children were removed to the neighbouring villages the checkmate was at hand. For four more months the strike lingered on, the men were as united as ever, but defeated in purpose. In November Crawford resolved to terminate the strike but the union, in its continued support of the men, rejected the proposal. Finally, in December, Crawford put the matter before the county, reciting the history of the strike, describing the plight of the evicted miners and, in a face-saving appeal to martyrdom for the 'sacrificed men', called for a vote from the miners to bring the strike to its sad conclusion.<sup>3</sup> An affirmative vote was counted.

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1. Other titles included: 'Where are our Friends When Our Money is Gone', 'No Irish Need Apply', 'Exiles of Erin', 'Boys From Donegal', and 'Toils in the Mine'. D.Chron., Dec.29, p.7.

2. Ibid., Aug.24, 1883, p.5.

3. Welbourne, op.cit., pp.219-20.

The cost of the strike, £5,707 3s. 6½d., has been described as purchasing "nothing but ridiculous defeat."<sup>1</sup> Yet for the Irish Catholics in the coal industry of Durham, the strike was a succes d'estime. No one could dispute that the Irish had served the union's cause nobly for a principle basic to the rights and integrity of working men everywhere. The hanging of Father Fortin's portrait between the other 'worthies' of the D.M.A. would be a lasting tribute to the privileged place of Catholicism among the miners as well as proud symbol of the position of the Irish in one of the area's major unions.<sup>2</sup>

The conclusions to be drawn from this material are not, therefore, those which have persistently surrounded the economic place of the Irish in England. While the industrial composition of the north east resulted in a relatively different spectrum of Irish occupations, the pace of the expansion heightened the need for and the remuneration of Irish labour as well as diminishing the hostilities surrounding their employment. As strikebreakers their role had clearly been exaggerated and distorted. And though union entry was delayed by their position in the workforce and combined socio-religious factors, when the opportunity for unionisation prevailed, the Irish appear to have been eager, dedicated and well respected members. Above all, the 'paddy' as a worker either overtly or implicitly in competition with the native workers does not emerge from this regional examination.

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1. Welbourne, op.cit., p.220.

2. The whereabouts of the portrait were proudly pointed out to me by a retired Irish miner in South Shields.

## VI

### Politics and the Irish: Awakening and Reception

"Dungeons might enclose their bodies, sin might cover their souls inches deep, the drink of English public-houses might damn them ten thousand times, but they would never lose the love of their country.... Let Irishmen, then, rise in their thousands and do the best they could for themselves in a peaceful and constitutional sort of way. They must band themselves together firmly, must enter upon their great political campaign with ardour, and must never cease their agitation."

Dr. Mallen at the "Great Amnesty Demonstration on Newcastle Town Moor," N.D.Chron., October 28, 1872, p.3.

"the worst thing about the Irish is that they become corruptible as soon as they stop being peasants and become bourgeois".  
Engels to Marx, 1869.

"Nowhere had he found the exiles from Ireland more warm-hearted or more determined to do the best that in them lay for the welfare of their native land....He had also to thank the people of Newcastle for the care that they took of the interests of Ireland during the last general election. In dealing with Irish subjects, they got the greatest assistance from the two members from Newcastle-upon-Tyne."  
Parnell at the "Great Meeting in the Town Hall," N.D.Chron., August 10, 1880, p.2.



For the majority of Irishmen in England concerted political action or direct involvement with English politics represented the last phase in their progress as immigrants. Though they were welded together by a fervent patriotism for the homeland, the effective mass exploitation of those sentiments for specific political ends had to wait until the more basic struggle for existence had been overcome. Thus, many, in the slums for instance, had no more than a sentimental attachment to the politics of their more comfortably situated brethren. Some Irish never got beyond the politics of the Catholic Church while still others found more interest in their immediate local surroundings than in the national aspirations of those who rallied behind the political banners of the 'seventies and the 'eighties. It is possible to speak, however, of a general political emergence of the Irish which, in the last third of the century, grew to a national political conception. In this chapter we trace the evolution of that concept, the general politicisation of the Irish and the reception of those politics in Durham and Newcastle.

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Despite the evident desire of some historians to show a connection or at least a degree of empathy between the Irish immigrants and the early political movements of the working classes,<sup>1</sup> few such bonds existed, while those which did were extremely tenuous. Feargus O'Connor's failure to carry any

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1. "There is thus a clear consecutive alliance between Irish nationalism and English Radicalism between 1790 and 1850", E.P. Thompson, op.cit., p.482. Thompson admits, however, that in the north of England the influence of the Irish immigrants in the period was not explicit.

large body of Irish immigrants over to Chartism and away from the politics of Daniel O'Connell<sup>1</sup> is a good illustration of an Irishman involved with an essentially English working-class movement and subsequently not regarded as a spokesman for the majority of immigrants. O'Connor might have been "an Irishman in the strictest sense of the word",<sup>2</sup> but his nationality became incidental to his appeals for the People's Charter and did not serve as a basis for Irish support. O'Connor's relative lack of impact among the Irish might be measured by comparing it with the popularity of the Lancashire-born, working-class Irishman, Michael Davitt a quarter of a century later.

Nor can the Ribbon Lodges in England be regarded as making any large contribution to Chartism. Not only were their movements restricted by the church's opposition, but their agrarian concerns with tithes and rents in Ireland had little in common with the aims of English labourers. There is little to suggest that the communications gap which existed between them and the Chartists was ever effectively bridged.<sup>3</sup> Where the Irish became significantly involved with Chartist activity, it was most often to the detriment of that movement. By standing on the side of their

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1. Donald Read and Eric Glasgow, Feargus O'Connor, Irishman and Chartist (London, 1961), pp.49-50.
  2. Nottingham Mercury, Oct.1, 1847, quoted in Read and Glasgow, p.5.
  3. Rachel O'Higgins has speculated that Ribbonmen strengthened Chartism in northern England and has pointed to the "unusually high proportion" of Irish labourers involved with local radicalism wherever a Ribbon Lodge was formed. Without some numerical substantiation of Irish names within radical labour circles and without evidence that the Irish in these circles were also Ribbonmen, the presumptions must remain dubious. "The Irish Influence in the Chartist Movement," Past and Present, XX (Nov. 1961), p.85, p.93.

employers, as in Wales,<sup>1</sup> or in deliberately disturbing Chartist meetings, as in Manchester,<sup>2</sup> the Irish contributed only to the defeat of the working-class movements.

Though Chartism was weaker in the north east,<sup>3</sup> the Irish response to most labour movements was similarly adverse. The interruption of Robert Owen's "perpetration of blasphemy"<sup>4</sup> in Newcastle in 1843, for example, by a gang of Irishmen who "forced an entrance, and soon compelled the audience to retreat through the doors and windows",<sup>5</sup> suggests the same sublime indifference to and ignorance of English radicalism. As the Commissioners noted in 1836, "the Irish appear to have little sympathy with the political or religious feelings of the natives, either in England or Scotland, and have taken little part in elections".<sup>6</sup> Though some urban Irish were enfranchised by the Small Tenements Act of 1850,<sup>7</sup> in 1856 it was not incorrect to state that the English

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1. J. Hickey, op.cit., pp.137-145.
  2. D.Read, "Chartism in Manchester," in Asa Briggs ed., Chartist Studies (Toronto and New York, 1959), p.51; Read and Glasgow, op.cit., pp.93-4.
  3. "No local chartists actually went to the poll either in 1841 or 1847; and although there was an active chartist movement in the area in 1839, it virtually disappeared after the purge of chartist leaders in the second half of the year. 1842 produced ripples, and 1848 virtually nothing." Nossiter, D. Phil. Thesis, p.112.
  4. N.Cour., Feb.3, 1843, p.4.
  5. T. Fordyce, Local Register, III, Jan.31, 1843, p.173.
  6. 'Appendix G', 1836, p.441.
  7. In Newcastle the Act meant virtual household suffrage and in the first year of its implementation the electorate increased by 81 percent to nearly 8,000. Dr. Nossiter had described the Act as having "brought about the biggest change in Newcastle local politics between 1835 and 1888, and drastically altered both the composition of the electorate and the council." D.Phil. Thesis, p.181. The fact that Watson in 1852 made

know the Irish "to be upon the whole a peaceable body of men, who trouble themselves but little with the politics of the country".<sup>1</sup>

For the most part the Irish were interested only in the political affairs of the homeland. But though some early attempts were made to organise the Irish in England behind various Irish causes, success was always minimal. Bernard McAnulty,<sup>2</sup> Newcastle's leading Irish spokesman for the next half-century, is reputed to have established the Irish 'Precursor Society' as early as 1842,<sup>3</sup> but it appears to have elicited little support. Repeal Associations, backed by the moral force of Daniel O'Connell, met with

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reference to the 100 Roman Catholic voters in Newcastle (Chp.IV, p.112) suggests, however, that few Irish were immediately enfranchised by the Act. And it was not until 1885 that any significant number of Irish county voters became eligible.

1. Todd, op.cit., p.39.
2. 1818-1894. Came to Newcastle in the late 1830s and developed a prosperous bedding and drapery business. Denvir described him as "one of the best types of Irish in Britain that we have....Working his way by the sheer force of ability and integrity into the very front rank of life in the town of his adoption, there has been no more ardent champion of his native land for over half a century.....son of the northern province of Ireland, like so many of our people who have settled on the banks of the Tyne, his once powerful frame, bright cheery face, racy mother wit, and keen judgement, are familiar to all who have ever taken anything like a prominent part in the various Irish movements on this side of the channel." Irish in Britain, p.141.
3. His obituary in the Irish Tribune, Sept.15, 1894, stated that he had organised the following local branches: Precursor Society, 1842, Repeal Association, 1843, Young Ireland Confederate Club, 1845, Tenant League, 1850, National Brotherhood of St. Patrick, 1859. Cited in E.P.M. Wollaston, The Irish Nationalist Movement in Great Britain 1886-1908, unpublished M.A. Thesis (London Univ., 1958), p.5ln. The list is suspect if only because Denvir, pp.140-1, quotes a letter of McAnulty's showing the formation of a Repeal Club in June 1848.

greater response from the Irish but the break-away factions, the death of O'Connell and the failure of the Young Ireland uprising of July 1848 rendered Repeal a sterile issue for the next 30 years. As John O'Leary recollected of the Young Irelanders in their own country, it was their "proud and not undeserved boast...that they 'brought a soul back into Eire,' but before Fenianism arose that soul had fled."<sup>1</sup> In England what little spirit had been aroused in the 'forties was rapidly exhausted. For, more than anything else, the famine and post-famine immigration forestalled any significant political awakening. Though it is claimed that McAnulty wrote from the Corn Market in June 1848 that "'The friends of Ireland have formed a club here, called the "No.1 Newcastle-on-Tyne Felon Repeal Club"' and announce[d] that one hundred and twenty-four members were enrolled in almost twenty minutes",<sup>2</sup> the majority of Irish were precluded from organised political activity by their poverty.

In the midst of this poverty the confessional rather than the political rostrum usurped Irish 'political' interests. Though the church did not attempt to suppress the national aspirations of her Irish flock, she ensured that the Irishman's first allegiance was to his religion by denying the sacraments to Hibernians, freemasons, Ribbonmen and Fenians. The church never tired of reminding the Irish that 'the better the Catholic the better the Irishman'. And just as the enfranchised working classes took their cue from their employers or their landlords, so those

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1. Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, II, p.243.

2. Denvir, Irish in England, pp.140-1.

Irish who secured the vote took their lead from the church. They were encouraged to clamour for the rights of the church: to oppose bills and administrations that were hostile or unsympathetic to Catholic claims, to support Catholic endowments and Catholic education. Because both Irish and Catholic interests were inextricably bound up in the Independent Irish Party between 1852 and 1859,<sup>1</sup> the Irish had no hesitation in supporting these political causes, though before the enfranchisement of 1867 they were "a dead weight, contributing little to the political strength of Catholicism, while demanding a large share of social services and of the attention of Catholic politicians."<sup>2</sup> It was not until much later in the century when the church became publicly allied with the Conservatives over the education issue that Irish politics and church politics came into conflict.<sup>3</sup>

But in adhering to the politics of his church, the Irishman became separated from the mainstream of the period's social and political reforms. Consequently, he was further alienated from those who should have been his moral supporters in the struggle for Ireland—the working classes. In supporting the Pope against Garibaldi, for instance, the Irish showed themselves to be clearly opposed to liberal reform. As Disraeli proclaimed of his party's non-intervention policy in Italy, Catholics and

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1. J.H. Whyte, The Independent Irish Party 1850-9 (Oxford, 1958).
  2. Josef Altholz, "The Political Behaviour of English Catholics, 1850-1867," J. of British Studies, IV (1964-5), pp 89-90.
  3. The Catholic Church had flirted with the Conservatives since Lord John Russell's defection to no-poperly in 1850 but, for the most part, Catholics remained in political vacillation. Representatively, John Wallis' Toryism (as editor of the Tablet after 1855) may be juxtaposed to Lord Acton's Liberalism.

Tories were "natural allies".<sup>1</sup> The Irish on Tyneside, at least, saw no relation between their feelings for Ireland and those of Garibaldi's for Italy. In accordance with the statements of Cardinal Wiseman, the battle in Italy was seen quite simply as a war on the Pope. In Newcastle in January 1860 Father Suffield

spoke to a crowd of six thousand labourers, assuring them that though the Temporal Power might be mentced [sic], the Spiritual Power would last as long as the world itself. The Church was entering on a period of martyrdom than which nothing was more spiritually grand. He urged the Catholics to demand the expulsion from the Pope's dominions of the insolent foreigner who held the Sardinian dagger in one htnd [sic], English gold in the other.<sup>2</sup>

Catholics in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle not only gave public support to the Pope but attempted to counter the English 'republican gold' with a Papal Fund which by October 1860 had amounted to £1,042 0s. 3d.<sup>3</sup> And in St. Mary's Sunderland, as in Catholic Churches throughout England, a solemn requiem mass was held "for the Irish Volunteers who had lost their lives in defence of the Holy Father in Italy."<sup>4</sup>

To the English working classes, who regarded Garibaldi as the hero of social revolution, the public demonstrations by Irish and Catholics were regarded with considerable displeasure. Upon Garibaldi's arrival in Tyneside in April 1854 he had been

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1. J.J. Dwyer, "The Catholic Press, 1850-1950," in Beck, op.cit., p.484.
  2. Press, Jan.28; Times, Jan25, 1860, quoted in Miriam B. Urban, British Opinion and Policy on the Unification of Italy 1856-1861 (Pennsylvania, 1938), p.352.
  3. Tablet, XXI (Oct.13, 1860), p.645. No other diocese in England was reported as having a Papal Fund.
  4. Tablet, XXI (Sept.29, 1860), p.613.

presented with "a magnificent sword, indicative of the future hope of successful revolution in Italy."<sup>1</sup> In 1860 the Newcastle Chronicle gave open support to Garibaldian recruiting and when the mayor of Gateshead took exception to this support, the Newcastle magistrates could find no grounds for prosecution.<sup>2</sup> Thus, when in the course of this ill-feeling between the Irish and the English over Garibaldi, Fenianism came into public prominence, Tynesiders tended to see both affairs as part and parcel of a distressing flaw within the Irish character. This seemed to be confirmed in a melee which took place at Newcastle races in June 1866. During the riot the "supposed Fenians, numbering several hundreds" belonging "principally to Jarrow and the neighbourhood of the shipbuilding yards on the river"<sup>3</sup> were heard by witnesses to have shouted "'Down with Garibaldi;' and 'May the Pope get to heaven'."<sup>4</sup> Whether the Irish were Fenians or militant Roman Catholics (quite possibly they saw no conflict in being both) it is obvious that through this event the public came to regard both Fenianism and Catholicism as a distinctly Irish blend of the absurd that was totally out of touch with English political realities. As one justice stated at the trial of the 'Town Moor rioters', "The sooner the people gave up such folly as was set forth by the Fenians the better. It was folly of the grossest kind...[but] why the Irish people disliked Garibaldi

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1. Tablet, XV (April 29, 1854), p.262.

2. M. Urban, op.cit., p.506.

3. N.Cour., June 29, 1866, p.5.

4. Ibid., July 6, July 13, 1866, p.5.



he did not know."<sup>1</sup> General Booth's statement that "Amongst the Irish, rebellious blood turns not against both Church and State as in Italy, but against the State alone",<sup>2</sup> must have summed up for many these seeming contradictions in the Irish character.

Up to the time of the Fenian disturbances in England, however, the politics of the Irish were largely church controlled and as such, were seldom in alignment with either English liberalism or working-class radicalism. While increasingly, Irish leaders emphasised that "it was the duty of every Irishman to do his utmost to secure the independence of his native country"<sup>3</sup> Irish politics in the north east played second fiddle to those of the church. Though the church as late as 1895 in the face of Irish Nationalist opposition could still influence the Irish-Catholic vote,<sup>4</sup> after the Fenian disturbances, the politics of the Irish became less dependent on church directive and more concentrated on purely Irish affairs.

(ii)

By the 1860s the Irish in the north east had rid themselves of much of their earlier destitution. But their social status was low and they were virtually unrecognised by the larger society.

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1. N.Cour., July 20, 1866, p.5.

2. Life and Labour of the London Poor, 3rd Series, VII, p.246, quoted in Samuel, op.cit., p.24.

3. Peter Flannigan (a minor Irish figure) at the St. Patrick's Day speeches in Newcastle, N.D.Chron., Mar.22, 1862, p.6.

4. The Irish in Sunderland were influenced to vote for the Tory candidate by the church promoting the schools issue while claiming that Home Rule was a dead issue. Wollaston, M.A. Thesis, p.135.

At the St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Newcastle in 1862 one Irish spokesman "drew attention to what was necessary to be done to raise the social status of the Irish in this town. He thought that it was highly desirable that they should have a Catholic Newspaper in Newcastle, where their body was so numerous."<sup>1</sup> No Irish-Catholic press was established in Newcastle until 1884,<sup>2</sup> but much recognition came about long before this. The shooting of Sergeant Brett during the forced escape of Colonel Kelly and Captain Deary from the police van in Manchester, the subsequent capture of these and other Fenian 'criminals', the execution of the 'Manchester Martyrs' and the Clerkenwell prison explosion all served to <sup>give</sup> the Irish in England an unprecedented amount of notoriety—indeed, to put them for a time in the forefront of public interest. In England's major cities editorialists suddenly became keenly aware of their Irish communities while the Pall Mall Gazette supplied the (quotably) frightening figures of their actual size from the 1861 census.<sup>3</sup> Police authorities spoke of buying guns, army garrisons had their weapons locked up and their barricades fortified, municipal officials began to investigate the location and extent of any explosives they had stored. Bloody-faced Irishmen turned up at police stations to report dastardly outrages that had been perpetrated upon them for not supporting their local Fenian organisation.<sup>4</sup> In the dark hours

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1. Flannigan, N.D.Chron., Mar.22, 1862, p.6.

2. The Irish Tribune was established by Charles Diamond in March 1884, later to become the Tyneside Catholic News which was syndicated in Irish districts throughout England. For a biographical note on Diamond, see, Wollaston, M.A. Thesis, p.244.

3. "Irishmen in the North," N.D.Chron., Oct.12, 1867, p.3.

4. See, for example, "Alleged Recruiting at Hartlepool," N.D.Chron., Oct.14, 1867, p.3.

of the morning more than one passing stranger saw the local Irish brigades drilling on some barren field or moor. Even Her Majesty Queen Victoria, while staying at Balmóral, was not spared the shocking rumours of a Fenian attempt to kidnap her.<sup>1</sup> If the Irish had been the forgotten victims of English exploitation, they became with amazing swiftness, the dreaded Fenians who with American funds and ammunition had maliciously devised the overthrow of the English Government.

While the Irish in Manchester received the greatest amount of public attention and came under the most scrutiny by the authorities, the Irish in the north east soon gave rise to a considerable amount of alarm. The Times, which did not fail to draw attention to the "outbreak of Fenianism...at Newcastle races a year and a quarter ago", reported in October, 1867, that

A good deal of anxiety prevails in the north of England with regard to the movements of the Fenians. A large number of the lower order of Irish are employed in the factories, ironworks, and iron shipbuilding yards of the Tyne and Tees, and in some of the pit districts of Durham and Northumberland, and of late midnight drillings and other such like movements have been observed among them. All the garrisons and barracks are now guarded by soldiers....Fears, however, are entertained of street outrages, and if such were to occur they would be almost certain to bring conflict between the lower orders of English and Irish....<sup>2</sup>

In another article the Times quoted the Mayor of Middlesbrough as saying that while "nothing like danger in the town from Fenianism was apprehended...it was the duty of the council and the

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1. In mid-October, 1867, every English paper was discussing the suspected seizure of the Queen, though there was likely no foundation to the rumours. After the Clerkenwell explosion, the Queen was surrounded with 200 Guardsmen at Osbourne.

2. Oct.8, p.9.

duty of everyone to be forearmed."<sup>1</sup> It was also noted that both Hartlepool and Sunderland had increased the strength of their constabulary. When a letter was intercepted by London detectives which contained an accurate depiction of the plans of the garrison at Berwick, rumours were rampant of a threatened invasion "by a party of Fenians who were to come from the south."<sup>2</sup> The militia were put "on duty day and night, and their arms... fully charged" and the coastguard were readied for action.<sup>3</sup> The 22nd Regiment were put to guard Tynemouth garrison while the 'nipples' were "removed from the rifles stored in the Armoury in Nelson Street, Newcastle".<sup>4</sup> Alleged Fenian recruiting at Hartlepool, South Shields, Sunderland, Stockton and Middlesbrough in October brought about the enrolment of 'special constables' from householders, shopkeepers and the Volunteer Corps.<sup>5</sup> After the Clerkenwell explosion these precautionary measures were further stepped up in response to the circular from the Home Office to the mayors of about 50 towns "requesting that special constables may be sworn in for the preservation of property and the suppression of any riotous proceedings."<sup>6</sup>

Public reaction in the north east was not dissimilar to that found in other areas of Irish settlement in England. The state-

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1. Oct.10, p.10.

2. N.D.Chron., Oct.7, 1867, p.3.

3. Ibid.

4. Times, Oct.11, p.8; N.D.Chron., Oct.8, p.3.

5. N.D.Chron., Oct.9-15.

6. Ibid., Dec.28, 1867, p.3, most major towns in the north east received such instructions.

ment at the trial of the Town Moor rioters that the Fenians "seemed to be people who, in the first place, must be fools... come from America to Ireland, hoping, with the assistance obtained from America, to overturn the English Government",<sup>1</sup> was fairly typical of the general ignorance on the subject. That the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood had been in existence in Ireland since the 1850s or that it had been the growing concern of Dublin Castle, was virtually unknown in England. When the British did hear of Fenianism, during the period of its greatest strength in Ireland, in 1865,<sup>2</sup> most agreed with the Times that "A more extravagant and chimerical idea never entered the head of an Irishman....It is entirely of exotic growth, an importation from America, and entirely out of harmony with real Irish sentiment".<sup>3</sup> From 1865 onwards the Fenian 'threat' received sporadic public attention, occasionally being the subject of an editorial as, for example, when a shipload of arms was seized in Cork in November 1866. On this event the Newcastle Chronicle wrote: "The Fenian conspiracy is once more raising its head, promising to create uneasiness in this country, and probably a great deal of alarm in Ireland."<sup>4</sup>

That by the end of 1866 the Fenian 'scare' was part of every day conversation in the north east and that the Irish

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1. N.Cour., July 20, 1866, p.5.
  2. For a perspective on Fenianism in Ireland see, Kevin B. Nowland, "The Fenian Rising of 1867," in T.W. Moody ed., The Fenian Movement (Cork, 1968), p.38.
  3. Sept.18, 1865, quoted in Norman McCord, "The Fenians and Public Opinion in Great Britain," in Maurice Harmon ed. Fenians and Fenianism (Dublin, 1968), p.38.
  4. Nov.30, 1866, p.8.

were being regarded with some suspicion, can be illustrated by a Fenian 'outbreak' which took place near West Hartlepool in December.<sup>1</sup> The incident occurred when 14 Irishmen, who had been issued with pike poles and boat hooks to retrieve some jettisoned cargo on the beach, entered the local public house and jokingly announced that they were 'Fenianism come to invade Seaton'. The barmaid, who later admitted that they "looked like Fenians",<sup>2</sup> fled to the local constable and raised the alarm. "The village was kept in disorder and alarm for nearly two hours", stated the Durham Chronicle, until "a body of armed policemen from West Hartlepool could be called to quell the disturbance."<sup>3</sup> The Irishmen, fleeing when the police were called, eventually gave themselves up rather than remain out in the cold night. They were subsequently charged 5s. and 'costs' and the matter became, according to a local writer, a huge joke among the local inhabitants. In the outside press, however, the 'Fenian scare' was greatly exaggerated. Fourteen Irishmen became an army of 50 Fenians, while the pike poles were reported to have been pointed at policemen's breasts.

The events in Manchester in September of the following year temporarily made local Fenianism a deadly earnest issue. But the sheer number of false rumours about Kelly being spotted in Durham City and Weardale or his expected arrival in Newcastle,<sup>4</sup> plus the abundant reports on local Fenian organisations, soon

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1. A more detailed account is given in R. Wood, West Hartlepool, pp.191-3.
  2. N.D.Chron., Dec.11, 1866, p.3.
  3. Dec.7, 1866, p.7.
  4. N.D.Chron., Sept.20, 26, 28, 1867.

effected a change in public temper. There was a backlash in feeling against the police who were believed to be exaggerating the alarm. As a local gossip columnist wrote:

'There has been a fearful outbreak,' of the Fenian villains, exclaim a crowd of old women of both sexes, —O dear no, but of panic and fright amongst a good few people in authority, whom we generally expect to find with their heads tolerably well set on their shoulders...in the north-eastern districts we hear of no 'movements' of an alarming character except among the police.<sup>1</sup>

Or, as an alderman in Sunderland stated, "The evil they all deplored had its origin, more or less, on the conviction...that there was danger where there were a large number of Irishmen" but there was no foundation to the many rumours "except in the morbid imagination of those who circulated them."<sup>2</sup> Though the Newcastle Chronicle had earlier spoken of "large numbers of Irishmen [who] are still madly bent upon any wild movement to which their leaders may summon them",<sup>3</sup> by the middle of October its editorials were calling Fenianism so much humbug. "The farce succeeds the tragedy", ran one editorial which spoke of "the public...being entertained by the farce of constabular alarm" and Fenianism as the "scapegoat of every villain in England."<sup>4</sup>

But the Clerkenwell explosion of December 13th was no farce and in its wake, the aspersion levied on the local police came to a rapid halt. For a brief while the Fenian 'scare'

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1. N.D.Chron., Oct.14, 1867, p.2.

2. "Sunderland Council Meeting," N.D.Chron., Oct.10, p.4; the "unwarranted nervousness" of Sunderland's mayor and chief constable in purchasing arms without council's consent, led to a local scandal and divided the council into 'Revolver' and 'Anti-Revolver' factions, N.D.Chron., Nov.6-8.

3. "The Fenian Outrage in Manchester," editorial, Sept.20, p.2.

4. "The Arming of the Police," Oct.11, 1867, p.2.

became the Fenian 'panic' and the fear and anger that was provoked was by no means safely contained in London. It "is quite clear", the Chronicle wrote,

that a sufficient number of the disaffected can at any time be got together, ready to venture upon any enterprise, no matter how lawless and desperate its character ....Should such outrages become of frequent repetition, the Irishman in England will be regarded and treated as no better than a wild beast.<sup>1</sup>

But once again the paper soon had the situation in hand and it is indicative of the liberalism it represented as well as a reflection of the toleration in the north east generally that only a week later it was calling for sanity and levelheadedness. To the proposal that the Irish workforce in England should be dismissed, the Chronicle replied:

There could not possibly be a more preposterous proposition. The idea...is monstrous....After what has happened, the metropolis had indeed cause for apprehension, but this cure for terror would be very quickly found worse than the disease.....if the respectable Irish workman, who has no feelings save those of execration and abhorrence for the machinations of misguided countrymen, is punished simply because he is Irish, it needs no prophet to predict that the latter end of Fenianism will be worse than the beginning... to abandon ourselves to unreasoning suspicion is simply to awaken distrust....Ours is a district where Irishmen have hitherto conducted themselves with eminent propriety, and what they have done we believe they will continue to do.<sup>2</sup>

Still, the fear of an outbreak and where it might next occur was an issue uppermost on the public mind. When an explosion rocked Newcastle on December 17th people rushed into the streets shouting incoherent statements about Fenians<sup>3</sup> in precisely the same manner that the explosion of 1854 had been

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1. N.D.Chron., Dec.16, 1867. pp.2-3.

2. "Irishmen in England," editorial, Dec.24, p.2.

3. N.D.Chron., Dec.18, p.3.



immediately connected with a Russian invasion of Tyneside.<sup>1</sup> Though the explosion itself was only incidental to the Clerkenwell blast—in so far as the municipal officials became aware of the danger of nitro-glycerine and were attempting to dispose of their stockpiles—the fatal consequences to five high-ranking officials of the corporation had a salutary effect with regard to the local Fenian scare. While the national press had little space for anything other than Fenianism, in Newcastle and district the issue became somewhat eclipsed by the disastrous explosion on the Town Moor. Thus public concern was shifted to a less dangerous quarter at the very time when the potential for an outbreak against the local Irish was at its greatest.

Throughout the Fenian disturbances, working-class opinion was largely in agreement with the rest of society. The mainly working-class readership of the Newcastle Chronicle were not allowed to forget the Irish opposition to Garibaldi. The paper felt that the Irish were deliberately "putting the steadfastness of their friends to the test. By acts of culpable indiscretion", it remarked,

they have contrived to throw away much of the sympathy they would otherwise have had the right to claim... what occurred nearer to home a few years ago? When a public discussion respecting Garibaldi was advertised to take place in Birkenhead, the Irish residents kept the town in an uproar for days and nights together.... Again, when the Pope wanted mercenaries to keep the Roman populace in bondage, it was Irishmen who furnished him with a contingent.<sup>2</sup>

Though a few radical labour leaders gave endorsement to Fenianism<sup>3</sup> and there was some talk of Ireland being indisposed by

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1. An Account of the Great Fire and Explosion, op.cit., p.3.

2. "The Fenian Alarm," editorial, Oct.9, 1867, p.2.

3. McCord, "The Fenians," p.46.

conditions that "we would not tolerate ourselves",<sup>1</sup> or, that "Fenianism is nothing more than the sign and fruit of long existing wrongs",<sup>2</sup> the working men had little understanding of the issues in Ireland and hence little sympathy with the Irish cause. Hostility toward the Irish from the working class, however, was surprisingly negligible. "An Irish Row at South Shields" in late October, 1867,<sup>3</sup> was an exception which was not repeated during the course of the Fenian scare. When J.W. Pease, M.P., opened a new mechanics' institute in Crook on October 16th and "could not help observing that the Government seemed to be making at the present moment unnecessary alarm with regard to the Fenian movement in this country", his audience (few of whom would have been Irish) heartily endorsed the statement.<sup>4</sup> Earl Derby's Government, after all, was no favourite with the labourers of the north east. Indeed, it is likely due to the lack of support for the Conservatives that the working classes, along with other Liberals, maintained a kind of indifference to the political ramifications of Fenianism. As the judge at the trial of the Town Moor rioters of July 1866 queried, "why they [the Irish] came here and enforced these opinions on people who cared nothing about them, and who were peaceful people, he could not understand....No one wanted to tyrannise over the Irish; but there must be peace and quietness".<sup>5</sup> Such warnings, moreover, sufficed

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1. "The Church of Ireland," editorial, N.D.Chron., Sept.21, 1867, p.2.
  2. "Fenianism: Its Causes and Cure," editorial, N.D.Chron., Oct.2, 1867, p.2.
  3. N.D.Chron., Oct.28, p.3; the riot was not attributed to Fenianism.
  4. N.D.Chron., Oct.17, 1867, p.3.
  5. N.Cour., July 20, 1866, p.5.

to keep the Irish in check and thus gave the indigenous population little opportunity for any mass anti-Irish demonstrations. The Times, in an article on Newcastle on December 17th, noted that the area "has been remarkably peaceful, and no disturbances of any kind have taken place."<sup>1</sup>

The lack of local hostility over Fenianism made the issue seemingly ephemeral in public eyes. As Norman McCord has written of the press reaction generally, "even in the crisis months there were many other topics like Reform and Government changes with which Fenianism had to struggle for attention."<sup>2</sup> When in 1868 Fenianism faded from public view, it left few scars in Durham and Newcastle. The strongly liberal bias of the population also prevented the Tories from launching a campaign on the basis of any anti-Irish feeling. Unlike Salford, for instance, where "the Orangemen and home-bred militants were in no mood to let anti-Irishness die" and exploited these sentiments (with the help of William Murphy) to bring off Salford's 'Conservative Reaction' of '68,<sup>3</sup> the north east had neither the sympathies to exploit nor the exploiters. Thus if the Fenians "failed to attract any large or influential body of support at any level of British society,"<sup>4</sup> in the north east they also failed to serve as a platform for political advantage. Other than raising

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1. p.10.

2. "The Fenians," p.44.

3. R.L. Greenall, "The Rise of Popular Conservatism in Salford 1868 to 1874," unpublished paper presented to the Urban History Conference, Canterbury, April 1972, pp.7-8.

4. McCord, "The Fenians," pp.47-8.

a minimal amount of interest in Ireland, the Fenian scare was relegated to the dustbin of history.

Among the area's Irish, however, Fenianism had a much greater value and permanence. Though actual Fenian membership must remain uncertain, few Irish had any desire to confess a non-allegiance with the Brotherhood.<sup>1</sup> To have done so would have diminished the amount of attention which had been finally attained. In a sense, the recognition the Irish received through Fenianism was analogous to that received by the Catholic Church through no-popery. And like the church, the Irish were eager to sustain the public attention—though it sometimes meant over-acting. In Middlesbrough the Irish were "reported to openly boast that they [had] plenty of arms hidden" and the police were given to know from 'one who had been there' that "the Fenians drill secretly on the marshes in the vicinity of the town and that...at one particular meeting...it was decided that a number of persons in Middlesbrough should be shot, among others the superintendent of police."<sup>2</sup> It seems fairly certain that such reports, most often made by the Irish themselves, were deliberately designed to keep the police and the public guessing. Like the 'mysterious' confessional, supposed secret societies were a perfect medium for the most incredible rumours. Though the public often ridiculed these 'Irish tales', beneath the bravado lay a definite uncertainty of the extremes to which the Fenians might go and of the actual extent of the organisation in England.

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1. The only recorded case of an Irishman disavowing any connection with the Fenians was that of Digby Seymour, Recorder of Newcastle. N.D.Chron., Dec.24, 1867, p.2.
  2. "The Fenian Alarm," from the Daily Telegraph, N.D.Chron., Oct.9, 1867, p.3.

"That there are some members of the Fenian Brotherhood in Newcastle and Tyneside", wrote the Newcastle Chronicle, "does not admit of doubt."<sup>1</sup> In 1859 a branch of the National Brotherhood of St. Patrick—the public body of the Fenians—was established in Newcastle and this probably served as a headquarters for a 'circle' of the I.R.B. D.M. O'Connor reflected<sup>about</sup> the idea of secret oaths: "A large number of the labouring Irish were pronouncedly in favour of this."<sup>2</sup> The Fenian journal the Irish People is reputed to have "almost annihilat[ed] the circulation of the Nation in many places north and south of the Tweed."<sup>3</sup> There was no doubt some recognition of John Walsh of Middlesbrough as a Fenian organiser for him to have had the honour of being one of the four representatives of Great Britain on the Supreme Council of the Fenian Brotherhood.<sup>4</sup> But the fact that no suspicious Irish activity was reported before the Fenian scare reached its peak (presuming that there was some substance to the many reports), suggest a late and somewhat superficial adherence. Nevertheless a large body of the Irish community expressed a warm support for the Fenian cause. In local Irish folklore, at least,

many a hunted Fenian, escaping from English police, found a welcome and safe hiding in the home of a poor Tyneside worker, or in the fine house of a well-to-do compatriot, whose worldly success, wealth, and high social standing put him above all suspicion of Fenian sympathies.<sup>5</sup>

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1. "Irishmen in England," Dec.24, 1867, p.2.
  2. "The Irish in Countries Other than Ireland: IV: In Great Britain and Wales," Catholic Encyclopedia (New York, 1910) VIII, p.152.
  3. Denvir, Irish in Britain, p.182.
  4. Joseph Keating, "The Tyneside Irish Brigade," in Felix Lavery ed. Irish Heroes in the War (London, 1917), p.59.
  5. Ibid., pp.49-50.

While such sympathies provoked a good deal of Catholic reaction from the Pope downwards,<sup>1</sup> in the north east the church remained extremely quiet. Though making its position clear with respect to secret societies or violence, the church had no desire to cross swords with the inflamed patriotism of the Irish. It was not until after the Clerkenwell explosion that the bishop of the diocese felt compelled to speak out. "If we have not before this taken occasion to address you", he stated, "it is only because we did not feel ourselves called upon to do so...we [now] feel that we cannot any longer remain silent."<sup>2</sup> But the retreat from silence was not specifically against Fenianism; the Bishop had waited for a more demanding motivation: the proposed funeral procession and capital punishment discussion to commemorate the memory of the 'Manchester Martyrs' who had been executed one month before, on November 23rd. Even this event would likely not have resulted in the address from the Bishop being "freely posted throughout Newcastle...and read in the Catholic chapels in that town and surrounding district after mass", had not the Clerkenwell disaster unfortunately taken place only two days in advance of the proposed procession. As it was, the Bishop was probably only anticipating the discretion that the Irish themselves would have exercised. It is noteworthy too,

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1. On the Pope see, Times, Oct.24, 1865, p.10; on Cardinal Cullen see, Record, Dec.6, 1861, p.4; on Manning and priests in London see, Purcell, Life of Manning, II, pp.274-5; on the attitude of the church in Ireland see, O'Leary, Recollections, II, pp.41-2; T.W. Moody, "The Fenian Movement" in Moody, op.cit., pp.108-9; D. McCartney, "The Church and the Fenians," in Harmon, op.cit., pp.11-23.
  2. Quoted in Times, Dec.17, 1867, p.10; N.D.Chron., Dec.16, p.2.

that the Bishop's address, though it commanded "by the virtue of our sacred office," took pains to show sympathy with "your long-trying country". It therefore "affectionately entreat[ed]" the Irish not to take part in the procession because it would "but only serve as an occasion to your opponents to inflict injuries both upon it [Ireland] and upon you."

The proclamation must have had a contributory influence on the abandonment of the proceedings for though they "created considerable curiosity in the town and neighbourhood as to what would be the result should such a meeting be allowed to take place...[this] curiosity was in no way gratified, for no one likely to be interested in discussing the question of 'Capital punishment for political offences' attended the place of meeting."<sup>1</sup> But the church could hardly call this her victory over Fenianism or over the non-Catholic politics of the flock. With a shrewdness that surpassed that of the church in Ireland, Catholic authorities in the north east realised that their best course was to maintain just the right amount of aloofness in Irish affairs. In not forcing the Irish to make a decision between either their fidelity to the church or their loyalty to Ireland, the church acted wisely and thus retained the confidence of the Irish at that crucial stage in their political maturity. Through this precedent the Irish remained within the fold but did not feel it was necessary for them to compromise their politics for those of the church.<sup>2</sup>

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1. N.D.Chron., Dec.16, p.3 (italics mine).

2. The only instance I have found of a Catholic leader having 'dangerous' Fenian connections was that of Michael J. Kelly, master of a Catholic boys school, later headmaster of St. Cuthbert's Grammar School, Newcastle. Kelly has been described as an "ardent Fenian". It was possibly his political

Thus Fenianism, though a failure in Ireland and of no revolutionary significance in the north east, was a catalyst for an Irish political awakening outside the church's control. Whether they actually took part in Fenian activity, expressed sympathy, or opposed the return to the ways of 1798, it was almost impossible for the Irish not to be concerned with Irish nationalism. Particularly among the younger Irish, many of whom had never set foot in Ireland, the separatist ideal took root. It was something positive and something that no Englishman could share or remove. It marked the Irishman, if only in his own eyes, as something special, something perhaps even to be feared. What had previously been only a nationalistic pride thus became a political consciousness. Secondly, the Fenian scare demonstrated the Irish political potential in England at a time when the electorate was being enlarged.<sup>1</sup> Hence Fenianism could not have arrived at a more opportune moment. In the north east where the improved economic position of the Irish made political interest and/or involvement more feasible, Fenianism served as a political beacon. It removed much of the former apathy of the Irish and made them more aware of their strength and more eager to employ it in furthering Irish interests at the municipal and national levels. If Fenianism, then, was a failure in the use of force as a means of winning national salvation, it was a conquest in "the realm

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views within Catholic institutions that forced his emigration to America in 1881. Father Charles Hart, The Early Story of St. Cuthbert's Grammar School, Newcastle (London, 1941) p.2.

1. The parish of All Saints, Newcastle, saw an increase in its electorate between 1865 and 1868 of 215 percent. Nossiter D.Phil. Thesis, p.526; see also, pp.123-131 on the significance of the second Reform Bill in the area.



of the spirit"<sup>1</sup> which, among the Irish exiles, was of vital importance both to keep alive the nationalist ideal and to alert the Irish to their political potential.

(iii)

That the political infusion rendered through Fenianism was not transitory could be seen in the rise of the many Irish political clubs in the late 'sixties and 'seventies. Both Newcastle and Consett established Irish Institutes and Gateshead and Hartlepool, along with many other towns, formed branches of the Irish Foresters. The extent of these organisations and the political solidarity they expressed with Ireland was clearly witnessed in an amnesty meeting for the release of the Fenian prisoners which took place in Newcastle in October 1872. Between 20,000 and 30,000 Irish congregated on the Town Moor. The press described them coming

from all parts of Tyneside—Sunderland, Consett, Middlesbrough, and other distant towns being well represented—and as a large majority of them wore green ribbons, sashes and scarves, their appearance was exceedingly attractive. Some of the most numerous bodies were headed by large silk banners; the prevailing tints being the much-revered emerald, the most conspicuous pieces of ornamentation the cross, the harp and the shamrock.<sup>2</sup>

Such a circus of colour and noise parading through the streets of Newcastle to the Town Moor could have left little doubt as to the rising political strength of the Irish. As the chairman of the demonstration, Bernard McAnulty, told the crowd, "The

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1. T.W. Moody also considers this to have been the essential permanence of Fenianism in Ireland. op.cit., p.111.
  2. "Great Amnesty Demonstration on Newcastle Town Moor," N.D.Chron., Oct.28, 1872, p.3.

Irish were a formidable and powerful body in this country if they only exercised their power properly...the day would fast approach when they would be able to make an impression on the legislature of this country." Though amnesty to the Fenian prisoners was a genuine enough basis for such a rally, it was only a front—albeit a good one—for this more ambitious goal of welding all the Irish into one political force. The organisers of the meeting were undoubtedly conscious of the article in the Nation only a week before which spoke of Newcastle as having

certainly the numbers that constitute power...the highest patriotic spirit, and no lack of men capable of organising and directing the people. But there is want of community spirit—an absence of that sentiment which produces unity and the organisation which is absolutely essential to make the crude elements of political force a power to be exercised with effect.<sup>1</sup>

The speakers thus implored the Irish to "drop their religious distinctions, and cease to play their tomfooleries about the difference in their creeds",<sup>2</sup> to

endeavour to get their names placed on the list of electors to let their weight be felt in the selection of Parliamentary representatives.....and not allow their differences on religious grounds to separate them into hostile factions....<sup>3</sup>

A number of overtures to the English working classes were also made at the demonstration. Perhaps the most effective of these was the speech made by an Englishman who "professed to be a cosmopolitan...[who] believed in the brotherhood of all mankind."<sup>4</sup> If "the reforming working men of England combined with

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1. "Irish in England," Letter XV (Oct.19, 1872), p.662.
  2. Dr. Mallen, Gateshead Irish spokesman.
  3. Mr. Johnson, M.P., Kanturk.
  4. Mr. George Tweddle of Newcastle.

those of Scotland, and then lent a hand to their fellows across St. George's Channel, he was sure that the career of the country would be brighter and more glorious than it had ever yet been." Though there was a good deal of wishful thinking by another speaker<sup>1</sup> who believed that the "working classes of England... were beginning to examine the question for themselves; they were beginning to ask the reasons for the unfriendliness which existed between the two important parts of their nation; and were beginning to see that the dust had been thrown in their eyes;" his conclusion, that the workers were beginning "to say that if it were right to give sympathy to Italians, Poles, Frenchmen, Russians, Hungarians, and Germans, it could not be right to keep it from poor Paddy", quite possibly provoked some thought among the working classes. It at least prevented the liberal press from dragging out the usual Garibaldi rhetoric.

In light of the later unofficial liaison between the Liberals and the Home Rulers, it is interesting to note the parliamentary expressions at this meeting. While the Irish were encouraged to get registered on the voting lists, they were not instructed as to how they should vote. "They must make up their minds only to support the Government which best served their turn;" stated one speaker,<sup>2</sup> "and then try to make England worth living in, and to give Irishmen Ireland for themselves." As Gladstone was the culprit with regard to the political

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1. Mr. Henry Campbell, Co. Down; was involved with much of the Nationalist movement on Tyneside and became private secretary to Parnell in 1880.

2. Mr. George Hill of Newcastle; honourary organiser for Tyneside of the National League in the 'eighties.

prisoners, the speakers could not profess much sympathy with the leader of the Liberals. Indeed, Gladstone was shown to <sup>be</sup> a hypocrite for having spoken in Lancashire "about removing the wrongs of the Country [Ireland] owing to the increase of Fenianism.... Was it not cruel, therefore, for Mr. Gladstone, who vaunted of his great remedial acts to punish those men who were the first to open his eyes to what he should do for the country?"<sup>1</sup> Though there was definitely a desire that Gladstone should release the prisoners so that the Irish could support the Liberals with greater impunity, the speakers were careful not to indict the whole of the Liberal Party. Nor was there any denunciation of Conservatives. In other words, the Irish were being instructed to cast their vote to the highest bidder, a practice which in parliamentary terms had the fitting precedents of the Independent Irish Party in the 1850s and the Catholic, Stafford Club, in the early 1860s. At an extra-parliamentary level, however, this non-partisan voting tactic—which would climax (and somewhat contradict itself) in the 'Parnell Manifesto' of 1885—was a strategic innovation.

Though the amnesty demonstration gave a clear indication of the future political role of the Irish and gave testimony to their increased politicisation, it is only in hindsight that we might have expected to find any encouraging response in the local press. The Conservative Newcastle Courant believed that the meeting proved only that the Irish had "become more resolute and headstrong than ever in their Fenian and rebellious tenden-

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1. Mr. John Nolan; secretary of the Amnesty Committee; became known as 'John Amnesty Nolan'. David Thornley, Isaac Butt and Home Rule (London, 1964), p.94.

cies."<sup>1</sup> In complaining that the Irish were making the Sabbath "at least in our own district...the chosen time for almost all their demonstrations", the Courant was perhaps attempting to provoke some religious animosities. One Sunderland paper, also interpreting the event as Fenian in character, so misconstrued Nolan's speech in Sunderland (given the day previous to the Newcastle meeting) as to have him say that "Irishmen in England should at once possess themselves of bowie knives, swords, and pistols, carry these on their persons at all times, and in leisure hours learn how to use them."<sup>2</sup> The Newcastle Chronicle, though it gave a full coverage of the meeting, did not express much sympathy with the cause. It is significant that in the Chronicle's next issue,<sup>3</sup> two articles on Irish disturbances appeared in bold type. One, a "Serious Sequel to the Town Moor Amnesty Meeting" depicted the drunken return of 120 Consett Irishmen; the other, a "Serious Irish Assault in Durham", was a trivial affair that would normally have been relegated to the small print in the court's column.

But if some still believed that Irish politics had not outgrown Fenianism or intemperance, such beliefs were soon dispelled with the formation of the Home Rule Confederacy in 1873. Again the Irish in the north east fully responded to the call and the fact that the first general meeting of Home Rulers was held in Newcastle in August 1873, is indicative of the recognised strength

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1. "The Amnesty Orators and Their Aims," editorial, Nov.1, 1872, p.3.

2. Quoted by Nolan in his speech at the demonstration.

3. Oct.29, p.3.

and potential of the Irish in the area.<sup>1</sup> As Butt acknowledged in a private letter at the close of the Newcastle Conference, "We are weilding a tremendous power here in the north of England and I feel confident it will tell immensely at an election."<sup>2</sup>

A good deal of Home Rule's success in the north east was attributable to the influence and energy of the clergy. Not only Irish priests, of whom there were few, but the English priests as well, gave the movement encouragement and leadership. Fenianism had taught the church that opposition to Irish politics was futile; if at all possible it was better to side with the aspirations of the flock. Hence, one could find, for example, Father Waterton in South Shields using the occasion of St. Patrick's Day, 1873, as a suitable time for establishing a branch of the Home Rule Association. He told his audience in St. Bede's:

many people did not understand what it meant, and there were many who kept aloof from it because they thought some danger lurked in the name of Home Rule. That was a great mistake. Home Rule was the embodiment of the principle that the Irish nation was perfectly able to know what it required, and to legislate for that purpose; and that neither Scotch, English, nor Welsh could possibly have an adequate idea of the wants of Ireland.... Some thought that Home Rule was Fenianism in disguise, but that also was a mistake. Home Rule was only an earnest appeal for justice.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The earlier Home Rule Conferences of Jan.18, 1873, in Manchester and of Feb.24 in Birmingham were mainly executive meetings which had a much smaller attendance and received no comments in the local press. There were representatives at the Aug.21 conference, from Consett, South Shields, Gateshead, Newcastle, Tunstall, Sunderland, Durham and Jarrow. Six priests were present as was the self-styled miners' historian, Richard Fynes. N.D.Chron., Aug.22, p.3.
  2. Butt to Mitchell-Henry, Aug.23, 1873. Butt MSS. 832. Quoted in Wollaston, M.A. Thesis, p.54.
  3. N.D.Chron., Mar.18, 1873, p.3.

Long before Cardinal Manning gave his endorsement for the support of the Irish Party in 1885, the clergy were heavily involved with Irish nationalism. On the platforms with the Irish politicians the clergy were always present in substantial numbers. "There were a great many people who had objections to any Catholic clergyman, or any other clergyman, taking the chair on occasions when political matters were about to be discussed;" stated Durham's Rev. Perrin, while seven other priests sat on the platform beside him at an anti-coercion meeting in 1881,<sup>1</sup>

but though this meeting did partake of a political nature, still there were other considerations which might warrant a clergyman taking part in it....He had a notion that if clergymen could stand forth for the claims of the poor and starving foreigner, surely it could not be inconsistent for a clergyman to stand forth to stop the cruel starvation which was almost always at the heels of his poor unhappy fellow countrymen.

But however the clergy might justify their involvement in order to maintain their position at the head of the Irish community, they were nonetheless effective in making Home Rule ubiquitous among the Irish Catholics. From 1873 onwards St. Patrick's Day celebrations lost much of their former sentimentality and, while still remaining religious, became occasions for hard-core political rallies.<sup>2</sup> Even the more solemn foundation stone ceremonies or church openings of March 17th could not escape spontaneous nationalist outburst. Laying the foundation stone for SS. John and Patrick's Church, Felling, in 1873, Bishop Chadwick was forced to join in the "vehement response" to a call for three

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1. D.Chron., Mar.4, 1881, p.6.

2. See, for example, the local St. Patrick's Day proceedings of 1875, accounted in D.Chron., Mar.19, 1875, p.8.

cheers for "the nation we belong to."<sup>1</sup>

The quality of the non-religious leadership and the attachment that some of the Irish politicians had for the north east further explains the success of the Nationalist movement in the area. Besides Bernard McAnulty, who was among the executive of the Home Rule Confederacy, there were Nationalist delegates from almost every town in Durham. Lewis Barry of Newcastle, brother of John Barry, M.P. for Co. Wexford, was also in the executive (along with Edward Savage<sup>2</sup>) and was responsible for organising much of the Irish vote in the area. Timothy Healy, who came to Newcastle in 1873, acted as secretary of the local branch of the Home Rule Association and for a number of years was secretary of the Irish Institute in Newcastle. Throughout his political career, Healy retained a vital interest in Newcastle's Irish and was largely responsible for the repeated visits of Parnell, Joseph Biggar, O'Donnell, A.M. Sullivan and O'Connor-Power to the north east. It was Healy also who prevailed upon Michael Davitt, after his release from prison, to speak at the rally in Newcastle at which Davitt was nearly murdered by a local Fenian faction who resented his disaffection to constitutional means.<sup>3</sup> As Parnell's secretary, Healy assured the recognition of the area's Irish and when he resigned from his secretarial duties to take a seat for Wexford, he used his

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1. N.D.Chron., Mar.18, 1873, p.4.

2. An official of the N.E. Railway Co. and local Irish leader. He was hailed as a possible Nationalist M.P. at the time of his death in 1887.

3. T.M. Healy, Letters and Leaders of My Day, I (London, 1929), pp.55-7; J. Keating, op.cit., p.62. Davitt was apparently spared his life by a platform priest who beat the mob back by wildly flailing his walking stick.



influence to get another Newcastle-connected Irishman, Henry Campbell, to fill the vacancy. Though in the schism between the National League and the Parnell Leadership Committee, Healy's reputation in the north east suffered, he later came to be remembered as the "life and soul of the National movement in Newcastle-on-Tyne."<sup>1</sup> In the light of these personalities and the efforts of the church, it is not surprising that Newcastle became the centre of the short-lived Northern Land League (1879-1881)<sup>2</sup> when the Home Rule Conferation declined.

The strength of Irish nationalism in the north east meant that few politicians could ignore Irish issues or fail to make a play for the Irish vote in any electoral campaign. Particularly in those contests where the Irish votes could determine the outcome, politicians were anxious to take the Home Rule pledge. Though in practice the Irish vote went mainly to the Liberals, there were occasions when the Tory candidate could serve to benefit from the non-partisan tactics. Such was the fortune of the Newcastle Tory, Charles Hammond, who, good to his word, was one of the ten English members to support Butt's Home Rule motion of July 1874.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Sunderland Liberal, John Candlish, or the Hartlepool Liberal, Ralph Ward Jackson, were blacklisted by Home Rulers because, as Philip Callan, M.P.,<sup>4</sup> pointed out with respect to Candlish and Jackson at the conference of 1873, "the man who voted for coercion was

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1. Denvir, Irish in Britain, p.275.

2. Charles Diamond was honorary secretary. Wollaston, M.A. Thesis, pp.60-2.

3. Healy, I, op.cit., p.36.

4. Member for Dundalk, 1868-80; Louth, 1880-85.

not likely to support Home Rule."<sup>1</sup>

In a peculiar municipal contest in Gateshead in 1877<sup>2</sup> the importance of the Irish vote was readily witnessed. Gateshead, unlike most other municipal corporations in the area, had come under the domination of a Liberal machine known as the Liberal Registration Association (L.R.A.) which controlled the town council.<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Biggar, a dyed-in-the-wool Tory who represented the East Ward had been expelled from the council by this Liberal clique shortly before the November elections. The L.R.A. in a desire to keep Biggar out put forward their candidate for the East Ward—Mr. Robson—and conducted a vigorous campaign on his behalf. It was largely taken for granted that the Irish vote, upon which the ward was heavily dependent, would be in L.R.A. favour, especially since Gateshead's Irish spokesmen, Messrs. Devine, Cassidy and Doyle were involved with the L.R.A. It was to create considerable consternation, therefore, when Biggar announced that his radical nephew, Joseph, M.P. for Cavan, alias the 'Belfast Pork Butcher', Roman Catholic convert and one of the pillars of Home Rule in Westminster, was about to come to Gateshead in support of his 'Uncle Ben'. While Robson began avidly denouncing Benjamin Biggar as "the worst enemy of Ireland that Ireland ever had",<sup>4</sup> the Gateshead Irish spokesmen

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1. "Home Rule For Ireland—Great Meeting in Newcastle," N.D.Chron., Aug.22, 1873, p.3.
  2. N.D.Chron., Nov.16-24, 1877.
  3. For a background on the politics of Gateshead and the earlier movements of the Liberals there, see, Norman McCord, "Gateshead Politics in the Age of Reform," Northern History, IV (1969), pp.167-183.
  4. N.D.Chron., Nov.19, 1877, p.4.

sent a telegram to Joseph Biggar asking if the announcement were true. J. Biggar replied: "I intend to address a meeting in favour of Benjamin Biggar, but not against your interests."<sup>1</sup> This naturally threw the L.R.A., not to mention the Irish voters, into a greater quandary, while 'Uncle Ben', scarcely campaigning at all, awaited the arrival of his trump card.

Two days before the election Joseph Biggar arrived in town and was met at the train station by Healy, who informed him of his uncle's great unpopularity. Healy reflected,

'Ben' had sent Irishmen to jail after a St. Patrick's Day procession at Jarrow-on-Tyne, so Joe asked me to get our friends together that evening in order that he might talk to them. I yielded, but the gathering was a 'frost.' Joe, however, grimly earnest, went on the platform at the Gateshead Town Hall to face the opponents of 'me Uncle Ben.'<sup>2</sup>

According to Healy, Joseph Biggar seduced the Irish by telling them that "'Tory and all as my Uncle is, he was the only member of my family, except my sister, who did not disown me when I joined the Catholic Church.' Loud applause." In fact, however, Biggar made no such statement. He did swing the Irish vote, but did so through an appeal to the non-partisan plank of the Home Rulers. He began,

Now what are the Irishmen of the east ward of Gateshead asked to do on this occasion? They are asked to follow the lead of the Liberal Registration Association of Gateshead. If we, in the House of Commons, were to act as you are asked to do here, we would immediately lose our individuality, with the result that we would be a mere cypher....They [the L.R.A.] wish to use the Irish vote, if possible in this ward, because the Irish vote is very important....Mr. James, the member for Gateshead, is their mouthpiece for the time being...and we know how he has voted on Irish questions.<sup>3</sup>

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1. N.D.Chron., Nov.19, 1877, p.4.

2. Healy, I, op.cit., p.42.

3. N.D.Chron., Nov.22, 1877, p.4.

Despite the cries of "What has that to do with Benjamin Biggar", Joseph continued to expose Mr. James as a hostile M.P. to Home Rule, and as hostile to equal facilities for Roman Catholic education in Ireland. "Speaking as an Irish Roman Catholic Nationalist," he concluded,

speaking as a Radical, because my sympathies are entirely in favour of Radicalism no matter where it is, I would implore you gentlemen here present, to enter on Friday next your decided protest against this system of nomination by a small clique who affect to speak for the rate-payers of this community.

The Irish voters largely agreed, with the result that the Tory, Benjamin Biggar, won the contest by a majority of 204 votes over the L.R.A. candidate.<sup>1</sup>

(iv)

By the mid-'seventies the Liberal politicians of the area were almost unanimously in support of Home Rule. The fact that four of the ten English Members who voted with Butt in 1874 were from the north east,<sup>2</sup> gives credence to the political image of the area as one "unsurpassed for strength of character, wealth of intellect, and...of a sturdy outspoken democracy".<sup>3</sup> Though some of Tyneside's and Durham's reputation for radical activism is based on myth and exaggeration,<sup>4</sup> the area taken as a whole

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1. Biggar: 778, Robson: 574. N.D.Chron., Nov.24, p.4.

2. Hammond, Edward T. Gourley (L.), Joseph Cowen (L.), and Thomas Burt (L.).

3. Evan R. Jones, The Life and Speeches of Joseph Cowen, M.P. (London, 1885), pp.3-4.

4. The only radical representing the north east before 1865 was John Bright, who had procured a seat in Durham City in 1843 as a result of Lord Londonderry having split the Tory vote. As an outsider, Bright cannot be seen as a product of indigenous radicalism.

for the period of this study, displayed a distinctively liberal orientation. The reasons for this liberalism were essentially those we have already touched upon in exploring the social and religious toleration toward the area's Irish: the geographical isolation combined with the role of religious dissent, the few High Anglican-High Tory spokesmen and the large proportion of working-class population as a result of the economic progress. To these factors must be added the long-standing Whig tradition as epitomised by Lords Grey and Durham. Largely undisturbed by the major Victorian radical movements—chartism, anti-poor law, factory reform and free trade—the north east was not provoked into reaction and thus quietly slipped into a role of Liberal Reform.<sup>1</sup>

At a parliamentary level, Liberal Reformism chiefly characterised the north-eastern politicians who had little quarrel with the Nationalists. Indeed, three of the four Liberals in all of England for whom Parnell made exceptions in his anti-Liberal, anti-Radical manifesto of 1885, were Members from Durham and Newcastle: Joseph Cowen, Samuel Story of Sunderland and Thomas Thompson of Durham City.<sup>2</sup> Of these, Joseph Cowen was for the Irish their local spokesman in Westminster. "His sympathy with Irish Tynesiders was extraordinary. They almost adored him for defending the obstructive tactics of Parnell and Biggar in the House."<sup>3</sup> While most other north-eastern Liberals who supported

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1. For a brief summary of the area's liberalism see, Dr. Nos-  
siter's conclusions, D.Phil. Thesis, pp.514 et passim.
  2. The other was Henry Labouchere, standing for Northampton.  
C.H.D. Howard, "The Parnell Manifesto of 21 November, 1885,  
and the Schools Question," English Historical Review,  
LXII (January 1947), pp.42-51.
  3. J. Keating, op.cit., p.55.

Home Rule were unwilling to endorse the Land League or oppose Gladstone's Coercion Bills of the early 1880s, Cowen consistently supported Irish claims and opposed coercion with, as much vigour as he had earlier led the local opposition against the House of Lords' amendment to the Irish Church Bill.<sup>1</sup> In 1876 Cowen with his "extraordinary gift of florid, impassioned, ingenious and overwrought rhetoric"<sup>2</sup> delivered a powerful speech in the House for the release of the Fenian prisoners and in 1883, when Healy and company were imprisoned for 'seditious speeches', it was Cowen's well-phrased questions in the House that resulted in the two-month sentences being remitted.<sup>3</sup>

Cowen had no vested interests in Ireland or the Irish nor did he act out of any self-interest for the Irish vote; he scarcely required their support. He responded to what he believed to be purely democratic principles. His speech, delivered at an Irish conference in Newcastle in August 1881, is typical of many of his addresses on behalf of the Irish:

the Irish immigrant carries with him bitter memories; and with honourable devotion and commendable liberality he aids his countrymen to free themselves from laws that overmastered him or drove him into exile.

But is it not a fact that movements both legal and rebellious have often been helped from the outside? The money with which the Greeks commenced their War of Independence was found by English sympathisers. Repeated funds have been raised in England during the last century for revolutionary efforts to secure the independence of Poland, Italy, and Hungary. Did we not send English legions to fight against Don Carlos in Spain, and King Bomba in Naples? How can we consistently cry out against help being sent by Irishmen

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1. Jones, op.cit., pp.63-4; D.Chron., July 16, 1869, p.5.
  2. John Morley, Recollections, I (London, 1918), p.185.
  3. Healy, I, op.cit., p.186.

abroad to Irishmen at home to promote objects in which they are equally alike interested?<sup>1</sup>

It was little wonder, then, that the Irish idolised him. In October 1880 they presented him with a formal address of thanks and Alderman McAnulty, making the presentation, "spoke the sentiments of every honest Irishman on the face of the globe [when] he wished that Mr. Cowen might be spared [from his lingering illness] to be an honour to his country".<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to compare Cowen with Thomas Burt, the so-called radical spokesman of the Northumbrian pitmen. While Burt voted with Butt in 1872 and claimed like all Liberals that he did not endorse coercion, he nevertheless voted for coercion, justifying his position by arguing that the Land Bill should have been introduced before the Coercion Bill. As he saw it,

The choice [in Ireland] was between anarchy and despotism; between the coercion of the Land League and the coercion of the Government; and, for my part, much as I detest coercion, if we must have it applied, I think it is much better to have it applied by a responsible representative government rather than by an irresponsible and ferocious mob.<sup>3</sup>

Cowen's principled radicalism strongly rebuked this argument and he lashed out at Burt as pandering to Gladstone.<sup>4</sup> It was perhaps in an attempt to revenge himself on Burt that Cowen included the former president of Burt's own union (John Bryson of the Northumberland Miners' Association) in his fact finding

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1. Jones, op.cit., pp.196-200.

2. Held in the Irish Literary Institute, Clayton St., Oct.27. Jones, p.99; N.Cour., Oct.29, 1880, p.8.

3. Quoted in Aaron Watson, A Great Labour Leader: Being a Life of the Right Honourable Thomas Burt, M.P. (London, 1908), p.265.

4. Cowen broke with Gladstone over the San Stefano Treaty in 1878.

labour delegation to Ireland in 1881. When Bryson returned to Tyneside full of support for the Land League, he did a lecture tour of the area, much to the chagrin of the normally dispassioned Burt.<sup>1</sup> This division between two of the area's leading labour M.P.s was ultimately to the detriment of local working-class support for the Land League (see below) but it clearly did damage to Burt's radical mystique while further promoting Cowen as a champion of Ireland.

As the owner of the Newcastle Chronicle, which had one of the highest circulations of any provincial paper in England,<sup>2</sup> Cowen was able popularise the cause of the Irish Nationalists and to bid for their support among the non-Irish. By the time of the 1873 Conference, the Chronicle was already appealing for a "fair hearing" for Butt and his coadjutors, stating that on the strength of liberalism in the area: "Not here need any Irishman 'fear to speak of ninety-eight.'"<sup>3</sup> But the immediate reaction to the conference of '73 was by no means favourable. The Chronicle did not take lightly to the "unmeasured invective against England"<sup>4</sup> and declared as "absurd" the

notion that whenever a Liberal candidate for a seat in the House of Commons declines to accept the Home Rule platform in its integrity, a Tory should be supported quite independent of the Tory's opinion on the question....

Home Rule might be peculiarly advantageous, but Home Rule inspired by Ultramontane agency were the direst curse that could be inflicted upon Ireland.

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1. Watson, op.cit., pp.262-3.
  2. In 1873 the paper reported that its daily sales had reached 35,534 which was considerably above its nearest competitor, the Manchester Guardian. "Clearly, then, the editorial standpoint of the Chronicle was a matter of considerable significance, locally and nationally." Maurice Milne, The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham (Newcastle, 1971), pp.69-72.
  3. Aug.21, 1873, pp.2-3.
  4. "Home Rule," editorial, Aug.22, 1873, pp.2-3.



Such a statement was little different from the Courant's reaction to an earlier speech by McAnulty, upon which it had commented, "If the Pope were infallible, it is hard to see how devout Catholics can be Home-Rulers."<sup>1</sup> The Examiner's comment on Home Rule a year later, aptly summed the enigma it presented to Liberals and Conservatives alike:

While the English Tory hates it because he believes that in two years after its establishment not an English landowner would be left in the country, there are English Liberals who distrust it because they see in it civil discord, the opportunity of Ultramontanism, and the triumph of a narrow, bigoted form of patriotism. It looks too much like the substitution of Cardinal Cullen for the Castle.<sup>2</sup>

Through Cowen's maturing radicalism, however, the Chronicle gradually outgrew its former fidelity to Gladstonian Liberalism. By the 1880 Home Rule Conference, which was also held in Newcastle, the paper was speaking with pride about "our good town" being "the scene of the present conference" and about Ireland as "the CINDERELLA sister, for whom a side table must be prepared."<sup>3</sup> Well might one speaker proclaim at the conference that

he had never seen in an English journal such a high tone of moral principle enunciated with regard to England's dealings with other nations, and particularly with the people of Ireland, than he had read that day and at other times in the columns of the Newcastle Chronicle.<sup>4</sup>

Nor was there any lack of sincerity in the "prolonged cheers" which greeted this announcement.

How successful Cowen, the Chronicle and the other advocates of the Nationalist movement were in stimulating working-class

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1. Mar.21, 1873, p.8.

2. Quoted in N.Cour., July 10, 1874, p.3.

3. "Home Rule Demonstration," editorial, Aug.9, 1880, p.2.

4. John Ferguson, quoted in N.D.Chron., Aug.10, 1880, p.3.

interest and support is not readily ascertained. While at a grass-roots level it is probably correct to state that "Irish questions were no more popular [in the north east] than anywhere else in England",<sup>1</sup> it was, at the same time, impossible for local politicians to ignore Irish questions whilst casting for the Irish vote. Evidence would suggest, however, that the working classes generally recognised much of the political rhetoric as token overtures to Ireland while remaining themselves largely unmoved by Irish political question. Working-class leaders were virtually forced to show sympathy with Ireland to thwart charges of hypocrisy (if only in their own minds)<sup>2</sup> while Liberals who were not anxious to alienate either the Irish voters or the Irish Party in the House, were similarly pressured. The only notable exception to this Irish befriending from a Member of Parliament who relied on working-class support was that of Thomas Burt, who probably spoke the silent sentiments of many of the native miners in both counties when he defended himself against the attacks of Cowen and Bryson. His statement that "those persons do a poor service to Radicalism who make it a synonym for anarchy and violence,"<sup>3</sup> would have struck a responsive chord among many of the more conservative workers. Burt's 'rational' arguments also had a wide appeal to those who found it difficult to reconcile union aims with those of the Land League. The following defence against endorsing the Land League could be

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1. Nossiter, D. Phil. Thesis, p.99.

2. Both William Crawford (Chp.V, p.212n) and John Wilson were warm supporters of Irish nationalism.

3. Watson, op.cit., p.262.

readily understood by many workmen:

It has been said that they [the Land Leaguers] were fighting a great battle of the rights of labour, and that we should have joined our forces with theirs, and given or active sympathy and practical help in the severe struggle in which they were engaged. If they were actually a trade union, it does not necessarily follow that we should have rushed to their support until we knew something of their constitution, their aims, their methods, and the spirit by which they were animated. I suppose there is no doubt of the fact that, notwithstanding the tremendous and not always over-scrupulous efforts put forth on behalf of the League in this district, very few English working men have joined it. There is scarcely an accredited trade union leader who has boldly advocated the claims of the League....<sup>1</sup>

Though radical labour leaders and politicians like Crawford and Wilson together with the platform Irish Nationalists like O'Connor-Power could counter Burt's type of arguments, the communion of interests between the Irish Nationalists and the English workers was not easily translated.<sup>2</sup> The occasions were rare when evicted miners could be shown that the owners were doing "nothing less than Boycotting" and that these owners were the same so-called Liberals who "would pass the Coercion Bill to stop it [boycotting] in Ireland (applause)."<sup>3</sup> While on this particular occasion—the strike at Seaham Colliery in 1881—the colliers passed a resolution "condemn[ing] the action of the House of Commons in passing the Coercion Bill", there were many

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1. Watson, op.cit., pp.262-3.

2. At the 1881 Land League Conference in Newcastle, both Crawford and Cowen were among the executive and both declared that their aim was to "inform English workmen as to the merits of the question [of tenant rights in Ireland]." Quoted in Wollaston, M.A. Thesis, p.61.

3. D.Chron., Mar.4, 1881, p.7. Land Leagues throughout Durham were at this time holding meetings to protest "against the tyrannical arrest of Mr. John Dillon, M.P. for Tipperary, by the so-called Liberal Government". The Crook Land League Meeting, D.Chron., May 20, 1881, p.3.

more workers who were only too willing to agree with Liberals like Joseph Pease that the Land League was disgracing Ireland by invoking a "reign of violence" or that the obstructionist policy in the Commons by the Irish Party was most definitely not in the interests of the working classes.<sup>1</sup>

There was also a good deal of annoyance among workers at the sheer repetition of Irish politics (particularly in the early 1880s) in sacrifice to their own concerns. This was not unlike much of the local reaction to Fenianism. The Courant, for example, though it had little readership among the working classes, expressed an irritation over Irish affairs that was shared by many outside its circulation. The Irish "settle themselves in increasing numbers in our midst", the paper stated,

In the enjoyment of comfort, and an abundance of the good things of English life, they do not all of them forget the political whine and cant to which they had been trained in the land of their birth....And so we have Irish political deputations, Irish political oratory, and Irish organizations on English soil, with a view to action on English elections. The whole thing is purely Irish. It is Irish life in England.<sup>2</sup>

The Durham Chronicle, which by the 1880s had become an organ for the Liberal working class, similarly tended to regard the local Irish as self centred and not a little over-wearying. Discussing an "Irish Distress Meeting at Willington" in 1883, the Chronicle remarked:

Calling upon the Government to prevent distress in Ireland, after all that has been said and done on this painful subject during the past few years, can only be the merest piece of platform formality...if

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1. "Mr. Pease, M.P., and the Coercion Bill," D.Chron., Feb. 25, 1881, p.5.
  2. "The Irish Home Rule Cry," editorial, Aug.29, 1873, p.5.

the Irish colony at Willington had subscribed but a single five pound note for the furtherance of emigration, they would have done more for their fellow countrymen than all the speaking and resolutionizing of Sunday last.<sup>1</sup>

While apathy, indifference or annoyance at Irish politics could often be found among the working classes, there was also a conservative element that openly repudiated Irish claims. As in times of prosperity there were factions who opposed the formation of unions—bodies who felt that union leaders only duped the workmen<sup>2</sup>—so, when the franchise was extended, there were many who, especially in times of depression, found their metier in associations such as the Conservative Working Men's Clubs.<sup>3</sup> With regard to Irish issues that had a questionable relevance to their own interests, these conservative opinions gained an audience. Related to these opinions was the racism that could be easily provoked when trade declined. As Welbourne noted in his study of the miners' associations: when jobs became scarce and wages fell,

It was a common saying that prosperity would not return to the north until every Scotchman went home, bearing two Irishmen on his back. And jeer at him as his leaders

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1. Jan.5, 1883, p.5. The Willington Land League replied to the editor of the Chronicle, Jan.12, p.6: "is it fair to expect that we, as exiles, should be made to continue to pay in reality for the prodigality and extravagance of landlords...? I daresay, sir, you have no ill-will towards the Irish, but we think you might be mistaken in your way of being charitable."
  2. For example, A Warning Voice to the Miners of Durham and Northumberland, Being a Series of Letters Published in the Durham Chronicle on Unions and Strikes by a Durham Pitman (Newcastle, 1864). N.C.L. Lts.
  3. The Club at Hartlepool was established in the 'seventies and boasted a membership in 1880 of 600 "and flourishing". N.D.Chron., Dec.14, 1880, p.3.

might, the Conservative working man stuck firmly to his political faith, the more so as foreign policy was of absorbing interest. Not every miner was captured by the cry of 'Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform'....<sup>1</sup>

Thus, despite the fact that a leader like John Wilson who was an integral part of the D.M.A. and whose constituency was almost wholly composed of miners, his support for the Irish politics in the 'bad days' of the mid-'eighties, was partially responsible for his defeat at the polls.<sup>2</sup>

(v)

It would be wrong to infer from the lack of indigenous working-class support for Irish nationalism that hostility against the Irish was the inevitable corollary. Overall, an examination of the political career of the area's Irish points to a high level of political toleration. The very success of the local Nationalist movement and its recognised strength by leading Irish spokesmen, tells us something of the leniency and less arbitrary nature of the society. While part of the 'acceptance' of these politics was a result of mere public indifference and a certain apathy or psychological removal from things Irish, a large measure of the local toleration towards the Irish must be credited to those radical working-class spokesmen—best represented in Joseph Cowen and William Crawford—who recognised the principles involved in the Irish cause and were willing to jeopardise their influence and to fully employ the publicising tools at their disposal in defence of those principles. The

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1. The Miners Unions of Northumberland and Durham, pp.199-200.

2. Ibid., p.200.

disproportionate amount of discussion on Irish affairs provoked by these largely disinterested spokesmen not only kept Irish issues alive in an area where they could easily have become the exclusive domain of the Irish population, but frustrated much of the potential for anti-Irishness. If we compare (though somewhat unfairly) the riots that resulted from the cry of Home Rule in Portraught and Glasgow in August 1875<sup>1</sup> and again in Glasgow in 1880<sup>2</sup> with the calm that prevailed in the north east, the propitious circumstances of the Irish in the area are sharply evident. It was, after all, extremely difficult for those who professed to be radical Liberals to react to the Irish in the manner that Lord Londonderry and the Tory clique did in calling for the suppression of the Land League tyranny.<sup>3</sup> The alternative, therefore, was to remain detached from Irish affairs; ergo, the appeal of Burt. Thus one cannot account for the lack of anti-Irishness through any particular adeptness of the population at fathoming the Celtic frame of mind, nor can one state, as T.P. O'Connor did, that there existed a "community of occupation, interest, and struggle" which accounts "for the fact that in no part of Great Britain [were] the relations...so friendly and

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1. During the O'Connell centenary celebrations. N.D.Chron., Aug.9, Aug.10, p.3.
  2. For an easily accessible depiction of the riots see, Noel Annan, "Thoughts on Ireland," Listener (Mar.23, 1973), p.369.
  3. A meeting in the Town Hall, Durham, had been convened by Londonderry in response to a letter from the Lord Mayor of London. D.Chron., Feb.3, 1882, p.8. It is interesting as well, to note the support for 'Queen and Parliament' by the 'Varsity boys' of Durham University who, with typical Conservatism, occupied the front row at an anti-coercion meeting in Durham City in 1881 in order to heckle O'Connor-Power. D.Chron., Mar.4, p.6.

intimate as on Tyneside."<sup>1</sup> Rather, the political sentiments of the majority of the population and the stream of rhetoric that emphasised a radical tradition and spirit of liberalism made hostility to the Irish an inexorable contradiction. In the light of this almost enforced toleration, plus the strength of the Irish organisations and the support of several political and labour leaders, it is not surprising that the north east was one of the few areas that remained solidly behind Gladstone in 1886 after his endorsement of Home Rule.<sup>2</sup> Fitting, as well, that Newcastle was the site for the elevation of Home Rule to the forefront of the Liberal platform in 1891.<sup>3</sup>

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1. "Irish in Great Britain," pp.21-22.

2. Nossiter, D.Phil. Thesis, p.139.

3. The 'Newcastle Programme', Robert Ensor, England: 1870-1914 (oxford, 1936), p.207.



### CONCLUSION

The composite picture of north-eastern society between 1840 and 1880, while not foreign to Victorian England, is a picture made unique in the intensification of many of its details. The sheer growth of the population in response to an unprecedented amount of industrial expansion, the strength of the dissenting religious bodies relative to the weakness of the Church of England, and the degree of allegiance to Whig, Liberal and Radical politics are features that in their aggregation and geographical isolation made the area distinct.

The extensive Irish population that emigrated to Durham and Newcastle after 1840 thus entered a society that if not favourably disposed to Irish was relatively free from the fears and insecurities conducive to religious and racial intolerance. As a part of the larger influx to the area, the Irish found themselves in a not over-conspicuous position and were not therefore singled out as the chief agent behind those Victorian social ills of which Durham and Newcastle had their fair share. The heavy Irish contributions to north-eastern Catholicism, numerical and corporal, did little to mar the accepted place of the Roman Catholic Church which, even at mid-century, was not severely circumscribed by militant Protestantism. The recognised value of the Irish in the workforce and the lack of occupational competition further diminished the potential for anti-Irishness and this allowed the Irish to fairly rapidly enhance their social and economic position. The Fenian rising, occurring when the Irish had shed much of their earlier destitution, sparked a

political interest that matured with the emergence of Home Rule and became partially viable through the passage of the Second Reform Bill. While Fenianism was greeted with many of the same fears and angers that were nationally expressed, it did not permanently embitter north easterners to the Irish and with the shifting to constitutional means for the independence of Ireland the local Irish Nationalists gained the support and encouragement of many of the area's leading political spokesmen.

Unlike their brethren in many other parts of Great Britain, therefore, the Irish in Durham and Newcastle were rarely the victims of hostile circumstances. As such, the record of Irish life in the area is a slender one, composed primarily of passing comments, significantly unequivocal on only those occasions when the Irish forced their existence to be an issue of public concern. While there is evidence that north easterners shared some of the popular Victorian prejudices against Irish, the geographical separation of the area, its religious composition, social makeup, economic prosperity and political traditions served to diminish the inculcation of these prejudices. The proof for this ~~most~~<sup>u</sup> clearly rest with the social, economic and political advancement of the Irish themselves. While there were few 19th-century national surveys of the Irish in England which included the north east, those that do exist are all in agreement upon this fact: that the Irish population centred around Newcastle enjoyed a climate of opinion that when combined with their economic position allowed them to thrive and prosper like nowhere else in England.

## APPENDIX I

Churches and Missions in Co. Durham  
and Newcastle to c.1880

Location	Church	Date of Mission or First Structure	Date of Church or Chapel	Remarks
Barnard Castle	St.Mary		1847	
Birtley	St.Joseph	1696	1842	Former Benedic. M.
Bishop Auckland	St.Wilfrid	1844	1846	
Blackhill	Our Lady	1856	1884	
Brooms	SS.Mary & J.	1745	1857	Former. St.Cuth.'s.
Byer-Moor [Burnopfield]	Sacred Heart		1869	school-chapel
Castle Eden [Hutton Henry]	SS.Peter & P.	1740	1832	
Chester-le-St.	St.Barnabas		1875	school-chapel
Consett	St.Patrick		1870	school-chapel
Cornforth	SS.Patrick...		1874	served from Trimd.
Coxhoe	St.Patrick		1866	served from Trimd.
Crook	St.Cuthbert	1853	1854	
Croxdale Hall	St.Herbert		1807	
Darlington	St.Augustine SS.Mary & Pat St.William	1783	1827 1859 1871	closed in 1872 school-chapel
Dunston	St.Philip	1880	1895	
Durham	St.Cuthbert St.Godric	1685 1860	1827 1864	
Easington	St.Thomas	1863	1876	room cum chapel
Esh Laude	St.Michael	1799	1832	Smyth estate
Gainsford	St.Osmund		1852	chapel of ease
Gateshead	St.Joseph St.Wilfrid St.Patrick	1850 185?	1859 1904 1841	Jes. Mis. c.1697
[Felling]				
Hartlepool	St.Mary	1834	1851	priest in 1832
Hartlepool, W.	St.Joseph	1859	1867	room; school 1873
Haverton Hill	SS.Michael...	1865		room let
Hebburn	St.Aloysius	1871	1888	school-chapel
Houghton-le-S.	St.Michael	1832	1837	
Jarrow	St.Bede	1860	1861	school-church
Langley Moor	St.Patrick	1876	1883	

cont.

Monkwearmouth	St. Benet		1864	school-chapel
Newcastle	St. Andrew	1798	1841	new church, 1875
	St. Mary		1844	had chapel of ease
	St. Patrick		1853	closed in 1874
	St. Dominic	1860	1873	
	St. Michael		1873	school-chapel
Newhouse [Waterhouses]	Qn. of Martyrs		1871	former ancient ch.
Port Clarence	St. Thomas	1865		temp. mission
Sacriston	SS. Michael		1867	school-chapel
Seaham Harbour	St. Mary M.	1852	1870	
Sedgefield	St. Joseph	183?	1854	served from Thronley
South Shields	St. Bede	1849	1876	formerly St. Cuth.'s
Stanley	St. Joseph		1872	school-chapel
Stella	SS. Mary...	1700	1832	
Stockton	St. Mary	c1693	1842	
Sunderland	St. Mary	1769	<del>1844</del>	1835
	St. Patrick	1860	1861	
	St. Joseph		1873	
Thornley	St. Godric	1850	1858	school-chapel
Tow Law	St. Joseph		1869	school-ch; Taylor-Smith fam.; served from Wolsingham
Trimdon	St. Williams	1861	1864	
Tudhoe	St. Charles	1858	1870	Salvin Family
(New) Tunstall	St. Leonard		1873	
Tyne Dock	SS. Peter & P.		1884	
Ushaw Moor			1909	school from 1879
Washington	Our Lady		1861	school-chapel
Willington	Ly. of Perpetual Succour	1874	1877	school-chapel
Witton Park	St. Chad	1871		room; served from Bishop Auckland
Wolsingham	Thomas of C.	1849	1854	

Sources: Bernard Kelly, Catholic Missions (London, 1906); Whellan's Directory of Durham and Newcastle, 1856; Kelly's Directory of Durham, 1890; Catholic Directory, 1800-1869; N.C.C., 1869-1910; Bishop Bewick, "List of Missions opened Since A.D. 1850," (written before 1884) in possession of Rev. W. Vincent Smith. None of these contain a complete or accurate list; by cross checking and with the help of Rev. Smith it is hoped that most of the errors have been removed, though name changes, churches being rebuilt and missions being abandoned and later reopened makes any such list contain some margin of error.

## APPENDIX II

Diocesan Statistics, 1847-49

Mission	Est. Nos. of Caths.	Adults	Bapts.	Easter Commts.	Confirms.	Con- verts
Barnard Cas.	(260)		(36)			
Birtley	386	298	78	212	30	
Bishop Auck.	1,100	845	179	104	80	
Brooms	1,540	1,149	259		70	
Castle Eden	350	200	42	120	23	
Croxdale	220	135	24	124	37	
Darlington	400	320	90	280	80	
Durham	1,220	880	70	320	84	
Esh Laude	310	250	60	193	58	
Felling	850	550	320	400	117	21
Hartlepool	650	560	120	370		
Houghton	400	110	99			
Newcastle St. Andrews	5,500	3,500	1,020	1,170		
St. Mary	5,000	2,500	540	1,000		
Sedgefield						
Stockton	560	370	126	240	102	38
S. Shields	1,000	800	180			
Sunderland	3,300	2,500	220	900		
Wolsingham	240	165		30		
	23,286	15,132	3,463	4,463	681	59

Source: Status Animarum, etc. for the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, v.2, 1847-1912 (passim), pp.5-9. These are the extant statistics of the diocese as transcribed by Rev. J. Lenders, between January and March 1931. Where no figures are given, the returns were not made. The figures in parenthesis are taken from the 1st Annual Report of the Catholic Poor-Schools Committee, 1848, pp.91-93.

## APPENDIX III

Diocesan Statistics, 1852

Mission	Est. Nos. of Caths.	Adults	Bapts. 49-52	Easter Commts.	Confirms. 1849-52	Con- verts
Barnard Cas.	414	281	14	101		11
Birtley	450	300	33	200	62	21
Bishop Auck.	750	600	70	280	80	17
Brooms	1,930	1,360	373	430	133	12
Castle Eden	221	191	54	126		5
Croxdale	280	196	33	127	30	6
Darlington	1,150	800	120	600	176	38
Durham	1,307	896	117	430	125	30
Esh Laude	530	260	57	192	68	25
Felling	1,106	756	236	370	180	56
Gateshead	1,948	1,062	276	543		21
Hartlepool	1,000	800	67	556	121	70
Houghton	830	478	165	400	31	30
Newcastle St. Andrews	8,500	8,000	360	1,000	330	94
St. Mary	6,500	6,000	285	1,600	376	50
Seaham Har.						
Sedgefield	150	80	51	70		
S. Shields	1,200	800	176	600	149	16
Stella	800	560	120	261	61	30
Stockton	740	570	139	233	30	18
Sunderland	8,000	4,000	297	2,000	257	115
Thornley	130	90	82	40		10
Wolsingham	700	620	157	250	55	70
	38,636	28,700	3,282	10,409	2,264	745

Source: Status Animarum, etc. v.2, pp.11-15.

## APPENDIX IV

Diocesan Statistics, 1855

Mission	Est. Nos. of Caths.	Adults	Bapts. 52-55	Easter Commts.	Confirms. 1852-55	Con- verts
Barnard Cas.	372	245	63	112		2
Birtley	806	490	121	302		15
Bishop Auck.	1,295	841	240	255		18
Brooms	3,700	2,800	396	530		5
Castle Eden	123	101	20	130	49	7
Crook	1,120	880	112	181		13
Croxdale	500	430	59	140	30	15
Darlington	1,273	821	165	580	123	29
Durham	1,460	1,110	421	540	124	30
Esh Laude	550	290	54	208	69	24
Felling	1,505	915	270	400		30
Gateshead	2,000	1,100	300	600		20
Hartlepool	1,573	1,074	227	666	154	47
Houghton	1,080	605	195	400		28
Newcastle St. Andrews	8,700	8,000	434	1,500	230	73
St. Mary	8,000	6,000	1,100	10,000	219	75
Seaham Har.	included with Sunderland					
Sedgefield	140	64	43	71		
S. Shields	1,750	1,219	245	650		20
Stella	1,100	770	133	300	81	18
Stockton	800	600	156	280		14
Sunderland	6,748	3,987	1,026	1,600		
Thornley	557	329	100	139		
Wolsingham	532	344	138	240		45
	45,684	33,015	6,018	19,824	1,079	528

Source: Status Animarum, etc., v.2, pp.19-25.

## APPENDIX V

Diocesan Statistics, 1861

Mission	Est. Nos. of Caths.	Adults	Bapts. 58-61	Easter Commts.	Confirms. 1858-61	Con- verts
Barnard Cas	496	330	32	168	46	11
Birtley	1,664	941	104	633		14
Bishop Auck.	2,324	1,924	160	1,200	546	60
Blackhill	2,760	1,915	165	1,340	508	30
Brooms	1,134	783	113	850	327	26
Castle Eden	557	307	40	242		
Crook	2,416	1,523	137	1,060	194	44
Croxdale Hall	700	376	32	202	97	22
Darlington	1,694	1,146	104	787	86	24
Durham	2,700	1,500	160	1,100	700	150
Esh Laude						
Felling	2,500	1,600	140	900	170	29
Gainsford	88	49		36	18	
Gateshead	3,570	1,774	220	1,000		
Hartlepool	1,856	837	163	1,300	167	200
Hartlepool, W.	1,127	600				
Houghton	1,520	927	94	1,070	45	
Jarrow	1,155	728		472		8
Newcastle						
St. Andrews	5,964	4,666	424			239
St. Mary	8,496	6,496	531	3,248	1,433	116
Seaham Har.	799	473	43			11
Sedgefield	1,500	900	82	850	128	58
S. Shields	1,330	874	472	541	590	72
Stella	1,270	825	65	540	240	40
Stockton	1,035	710	102	460		15
Sunderland	6,800	4,000	450	4,041		105
Thornley						
Tow Law & Wolsingham	590	249	39	275	50	9
Tudhoe	643	420	57	315		18
	56,688	35,999	3,929	22,630	5,345	1,301

Source: Status Animarum, etc., v.2, pp.27-33.



## APPENDIX VI

Diocesan Statistics, [1874]

There are no extant statistics for the diocese between 1861-75. There is, however, one paper unsigned, undated and scribbled in pencil within the record book in the archives. Rev. Lenders has deduced that this must have been the rough draft for the Elenchus Sacerdotum...quo progressus Religionis Catholicae in Anglia ab Hierarchia restaurata a.d. 1850 usque ad annum 1875 indicantur, which was to be presented to Rome in 1875. Lenders substantiates this claim by the following: "Langley Moor which started in 1876 is not in the list; Sunderland has three churches and St. Joseph's started in 1874; several of the Missions, the names of which have been inserted between the lines, date from 1874"<sup>1</sup> also, the titles were written in Latin and the mileage from the seat of the bishop in Newcastle was listed in another column. We will assume this draft to have been written in 1874 and extract from it the estimated numbers of Catholics for those parishes in Durham and Newcastle for which figures were given.

Mission	Nos. of Caths.	Mission	Nos. of Caths.
Barnard Cas.	350	Houghton	1,000
Benfieldside [Blackhill]	3,220	Hutton House [Castle Eden]	600
Birtley	1,093	Jarrow	4,100
Bishop Auck.	2,500	Monkwearmouth	2,000
Brooms	2,052	Newcastle	17,000
Burnopfield [Byer-Moor]	1,300	Newhouse	1,340
Crook	2,000	Sacrison	480
Croxdale	800	Seaham Har.	1,000
Darlington	3,596	S. Shields	3,500
Durham	1,950*	Stella	1,220
Easington	1,000	Stockton	2,500
Esh Laude	760	Sunderland	7,840
Felling	3,300	Thornley	1,300
Gainsford	150	Tow Law	1,050
Gateshead	5,000	Trimdon	1,862
Hartlepool	2,000	Tudhoe	1,965
Hartlepool, W.	2,000	(New)Tunstall	800
Haverton Hill	550	Washington	1,050
Hebburn	1,800	Total	86,052

\* Since Durham listed 2,700 Catholics in 1861, this number must remain extremely suspect. It perhaps should read 2,950.

1. Status Animarum, etc., v.2, p.121.

Diocesan Statistics, 1875

Mission	Estimated. Nos. of Caths.	Baptisms	Easter Commts.
Barnard Cas.	386	18	227
Birtley	1,130	55	502
Bishop Auck.	3,600	192	1,500
Blackhill	3,270	153	1,330
Brooms	1,800	121	850
Byer-Moor & Stanley	1,200	65	450
Castle Eden	700	25	220
Cornforth, Coxhoe&Trimdon	3,000	86	853
Crook	2,330	107	1,100
Croxdale	492	49	205
Darlington			
St. Augustine	3,000	123	750
St. William	1,800	123	1,000
Durham			
St. Cuthbert	1,300	120	800
St. Godric	1,000	99	656
Easington	1,500	65	
Esh Laude	[680]	31	420
Felling	3,100	198	
Gainsford	149	7	107
Gateshead	[7,500]	381	1,500
Hartlepool	1,500	124	690
Hartlepool, W.	2,000	127	400
Hebburn	[2,282]		
Houghton	1,100	70	
Jarrow	4,000	283	1,200
Monkwearmouth	2,000	150	931
Newcastle			
St. Mary	8,000	424	2,534
St. Dominic	4,000	281	1,900
St. Michael	1,290	83	400
St. Andrews	3,000	121	300
Newhouse	1,600	72	970

cont.

Port Clarence	600	34	110
Sacriston	560	35	208
Seaham Har.	1,000	104	407
South Shields	3,500	176	1,200
Stella	1,445	84	631
Stockton	2,750	181	
Sunderland			
St. Mary	2,100	188	1,140
St. Joseph	1,500	92	
St. Patrick	4,000	170	1,200
Thornley & Sedgefield	1,800	92	400
Tow Law & Wolsingham	947	45	500
Tudhoe	1,800	125	600
(New) Tunstall	800	58	308
Washington	900	47	
	92,031	5,184	28,499

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Source: Status Animarum, etc., v.2, pp.131-139. These figures are taken from a large master copy dated 1875. Of the original returns made by the priests only one is extant: Washington, whose figures are correctly copied onto the master sheet. The figures in parenthesis are calculated averages from the 1882 and 1874 statistics.

## APPENDIX VIII

Diocesan Statistics, 1882

Mission	Estimated Nos. of Caths.	Baptisms	Easter Commts.
Barnard Cas.	300		140
Birtley	1,200	60	700
Bishop Auck.	2,265	159	1,663
Blackhill	3,600*	148	1,700
Brooms	1,800	95	850
Byer-Moor & Stanley	1,450	54	420
Castle Eden	1,200	40	330
Chester-le-St.	120(a)	15	84
Cornforth, Coxhoe&Trimdon	1,000	59	159
Crook	1,250	76	712
Croxdale	160	14	75
Darlington St. Augustine	1,800*	106	950
St. William	950	58	
Dunston	547	31	[201](b)
Durham St. Cuthbert	1,231	71	
St. Godric	970	69	640
Easington	1,230	43	175
Esh Laude	600	48	620
Felling	3,200	155	1,050
Gainsford	150*	9	118
Gateshead	10,000(c)	406	3,000
Hartlepool	1,600	94	609
Hartlepool, W.	4,000*	140	1,050
Hebburn	2,764	102	1,200
Houghton	1,450*	92	500
Jarrow	5,800	327	2,537
Langley	800	40	600
Monkwearmouth	3,684	165	1,976
Newcastle St. Mary	9,000*	455	2,400

cont.

St. Dominic	4,800	299	1,700
St. Michael	2,520	95	450
St. Andrews	2,288	183	1,089
Newhouse	1,368	54	630
Port Clarence	855	30	
Sacriston	900	89	450
Seaham Har.	1,100	49	594
S. Shields & Tyne Dock	4,300	168	1,338
Stella	1,496	73	625
Stockton	6,000	308	1,600
Sunderland			
St. Mary	2,000	138	1,200
St. Joseph	2,000	107	
St. Patrick	3,900	142	
Thornley & Sedgefield	900*	73	400
Tow Law & Wolsingham	1,100	50	398
Tudhoe	1,800	98	645
(New)Tunstall	1,500	66	448
Washington	1,300	71	563
Willington	825	57	454
Witton Park	1,100	56	775
	106,173	5,369	37,818

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\* noted as approximations

- a. "The number varies very much on account of the number who leave the mines and go elsewhere." Mission priest.
- b. The figure for 1883; a house to house census gave a Catholic population for that year of 800.
- c. "8,000 known; 2,000 unknown."

Source: Status Animarum, etc., v.2, pp.141-149.

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