

Maynooth Library



00344557



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

JOHN O'MAHONY: REVOLUTIONARY AND SCHOLAR (1815-1877)

by

BRIAN SAYERS

**THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF PH.D.
DEPARTMENT OF MODERN HISTORY
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND
MAYNOOTH**

**HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: Professor R.V. Comerford
Supervisor of Research: Professor R.V. Comerford**

2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
Introduction:	Revolutionary and scholar	1
Chapter one:	Background and early years, 1815-47	6
Chapter two:	Attempted rising - July 1848	48
Chapter three:	Insurrection - September 1848	99
Chapter four:	Paris, 1849-53	142
Chapter five:	Emmet Monument Association, 1854-6	171
Chapter six:	(i)Fenian Brotherhood, early years, 1857-60 (ii)Back in Ireland, 1860-1	196
Chapter seven:	(i)Fenian movement in the ascendant, 1861-5 (ii)Fenian high point, 1865	243
Chapter eight:	Fenian Brotherhood split, 1866	298
Chapter nine:	Final decade, 1867-77	344
Chapter ten:	O'Mahony and Irish language, scholarship and revival	378
Conclusion:		399
Bibliography:		415

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Professor R.V. Comerford, for his encouragement, advice and guidance during the entire period of my research. I was especially fortunate to have had as my supervisor one whose various works have greatly contributed to our knowledge of Fenianism.

I am grateful to following people who provided me with help and advice during the course of my research; Dr C. J. Woods, Dr Seamus C. O'Mahony, Dr Proinsias Ó Drisceoil, Nora Hickey, John Gallahue, Count Anthony de la Poer, Brendan Kiely, Michael Coady, Derek Warfield, Dr William Nolan, Professor Pádraig Ó Macháin, Professor Trevor West, Dr Brendan Ó Cathaoir and Dr Owen McGee. Special thanks are due to Dr Diarmuid Ó Mathúna and Dr Marta Ramon for their information and assistance.

*I wish to gratefully acknowledge the funding received from **Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences**, between the years 2001-2004, which made it possible for me to devote myself to full time research, as an **IRCHSS Government of Ireland Scholar**.*

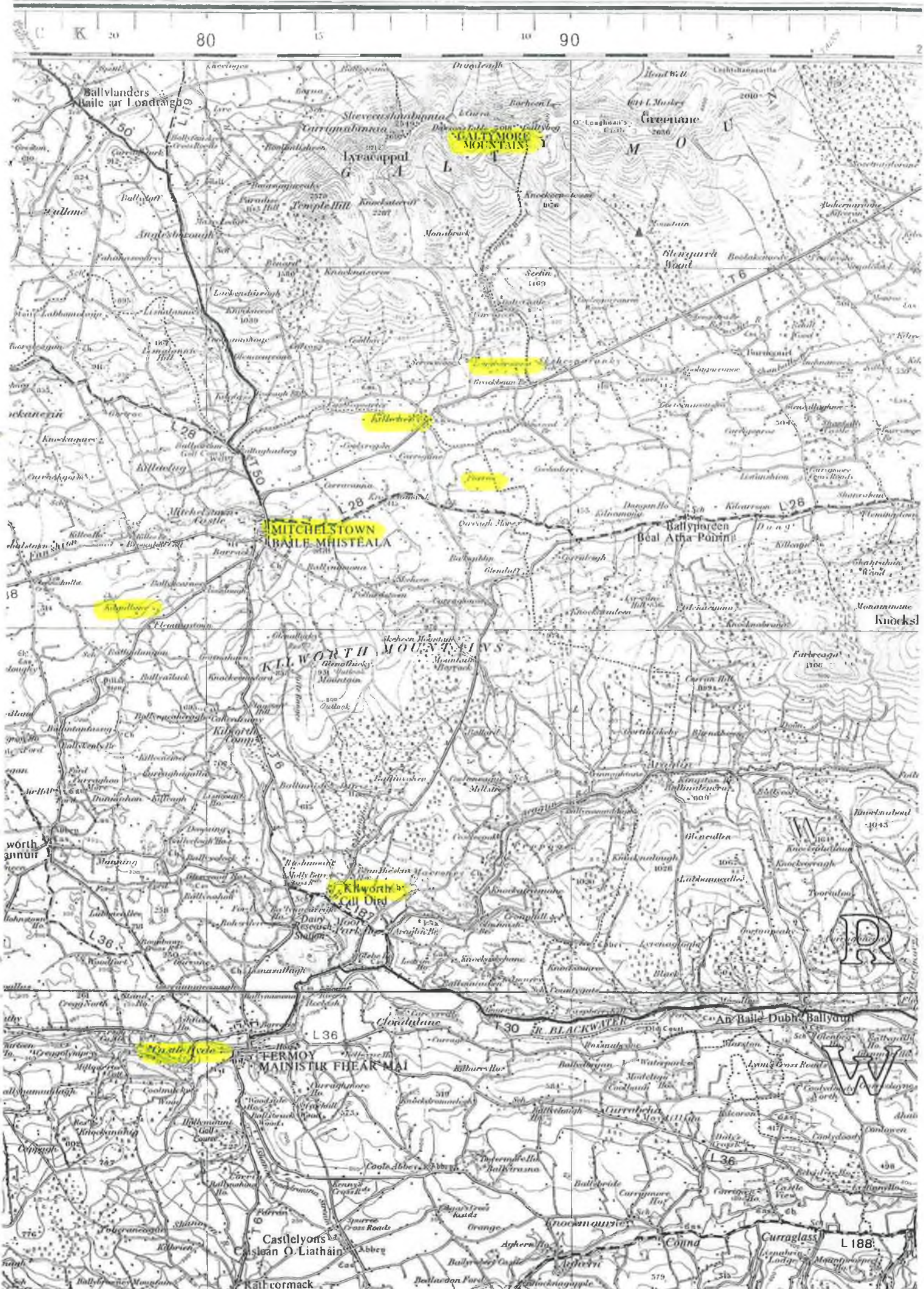
ABBREVIATIONS

C.U.A.	Catholic University of America, Washington D.C.
J.P.	Justice of the Peace
M.P.	Member of Parliament
N.A.	National Archives, Dublin
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland
N.Y.P.L	New York Public Library
R.M.	Resident Magistrate
T.A.B.	Tithe Applotment Books

MAPS

Ordnance survey for East Cork-Waterford, No. 22 (Dublin, 1986)

Ordnance survey for Tipperary, No. 18 (Dublin, 1986)



80 15 10 90

Ballylanders
Baile ar Londraige

GALTYMORE
MOUNTAINS

GREENANE

MITCHELSTOWN
BAILE MHISTEALA

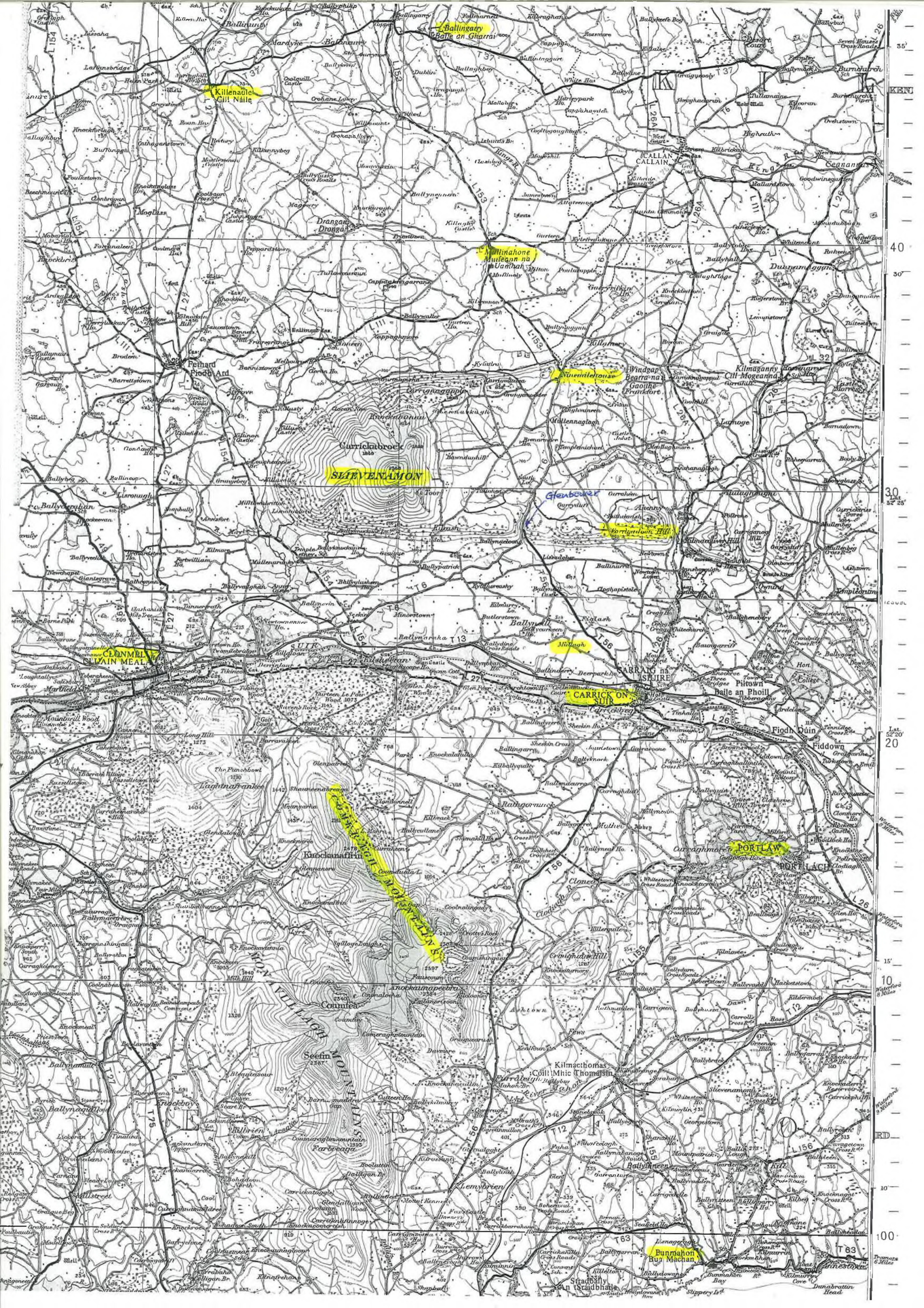
KILWORTH MOUNTAINS

Kilworth
Baile Dúir

FERMOY
MAINISTIR FHEAK MAÍ

Castle Lyons
Castlean O. Liatháin

L 188



Ballingary
Balle an Ghairri

Killenaule
Cill Naile

Mullinahone
Mulleann na
Uanah

SLIEVENAMON

Nuimileonise

Carrick on Suir

CLONMEL
SAIN MEAL

CARRICK ON
SUIR

CLONMEL
SAIN MEAL

PORTLAOIGH

Bunmahon
Bun Machan

55'
40
30
30
25
20
15
10
100
T.M. 6 Miles

INTRODUCTION - JOHN O'MAHONY: REVOLUTIONARY AND SCHOLAR (1815-1877)

INTRODUCTION

John O'Mahony was born in 1815 near Mitchelstown, County Cork. After the failure of William Smith O'Brien's attempted rising in July 1848, O'Mahony led his own insurrection. Afterwards he escaped to France and thence to the United States. In 1858 the Fenian movement was founded with O'Mahony as its elected head centre - an office he held for the period during which it was a force in Irish politics in America. O'Mahony tendered his resignation as Fenian head centre some days before his death in February 1877.

O'Mahony is, perhaps, the most surprisingly overlooked figure of mid/late nineteenth century Irish history. Much has been written of his contemporaries in the Young Ireland movement such as William Smith O'Brien or John Blake Dillon, while O'Mahony himself has not received much attention. Yet he is arguably the most important of the Young Irelanders, on account of his participation in the 1848 events and as the link between the 1848 rising and the foundation of the Emmet Monument Association and the Fenian movement.

Similarly, although there has been ample recognition of the significance of the Fenian movement, O'Mahony - its chief embodiment and guiding spirit for twenty years - has been largely ignored by historians. Instead they have mainly concentrated on subjects for which sources were more easily accessible, as is the case for the papers of James Stephens in the National Library and Trinity College, Dublin.

My doctoral thesis provides the first full account of the factors that led to the foundation and development of the Fenian movement by explaining O'Mahony's crucial role therein in terms of leadership and the formulation of its revolutionary strategy. O'Mahony's realistic policy, formulated and written down in the late autumn of 1848, was one of constant preparation until some external opportunity provided the circumstances favourable for insurrection. This plan of campaign for revolutionary organization anticipated the Fenian strategy of seeking assistance for an Irish revolution from a power in conflict with Britain and further mapped out the necessary course, which almost came to fruition in 1865.

O'Mahony, who had once led the comfortable life of a gentleman farmer, happily pursuing his scholarly interests, had been, by his inherited political commitment and by his public involvement in 1848, forced into the life of conspiracy politics. Nevertheless, O'Mahony carried throughout his stormy political career a sense of the significance of literature and a deep love of the Irish language, and one of the most poignant undertakings of his American days was his translation of Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras feasa ar Éirinn* (1857).

EXISTING STATE OF KNOWLEDGE AND SCHOLARSHIP

In spite of how much attention the Fenian movement has attracted, the published work on its originator and dominant figure, John O'Mahony, is remarkably sparse. As far as I have been able to determine, the following is all that has been written on O'Mahony's life and career: Sister M. Angeline, 'An elusive Fenian scholar in America, John O'Mahony: lover of Ireland' in *Ireland-American Review* (1938-9), pp. 208-16; Desmond Ryan, 'John O'Mahony' in T.W. Moody (ed.) *The Fenian Movement* (1968), pp. 63-75; Brendan Ó Cathaoir, 'John O'Mahony: moulder of the Irish American dimension' in *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna* (1973), pp. 3-7, and 'John O'Mahony, 1815-1877' in the *Capuchin Annual* (1977), pp. 180-93; Diarmuid Ó Mathúna 'The vision and sacrifice of John O'Mahony' in *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna* (1978), pp. 30-5.

Sister Angeline's article is a relatively short, but well documented piece. While Desmond Ryan's paper shows his familiarity with Fenianism, his treatment of sources is vague and inadequate. Brendan Ó Cathaoir's article in the *Capuchin Annual* (1977) is an expanded and annotated version of his earlier essay in *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna* (1973). In both pieces he relies chiefly on secondary sources. Diarmuid Ó Mathúna's article represents the nearest approach to a serious study of O'Mahony. Also of significance is James Maher's *Chief of the Comeraghs: A John O'Mahony anthology* (1957) which contains letters sent by O'Mahony from New York to his sister's family in Ireland. These intensely human and moving documents afford intimate glimpses of O'Mahony's personality.

Despite O'Mahony's central role in Irish political life from 1848 to his death in 1877, no full-length biographical study of his career has been attempted up to now.

It is hoped that the completion of such a work will contribute to a substantial re-evaluation of the development of Irish nationalism.

PRINCIPAL PRIMARY SOURCES

In researching the life of John O'Mahony, I have engaged in a thorough and detailed investigation of all the sources available to me in Ireland. My *modus operandi*, in researching this large and diverse body of evidence, has been to seek out the evidence and to let it speak for itself. In doing so, I have placed O'Mahony's writings and actions in the context of the times in which he lived. For example, in chapter one of my doctoral thesis I have resolved a number of issues such as the support of the O'Mahonys of Kilbeheny for Irish political movements including their leadership role in the United Irishmen, and later in the tithe war of the 1830s, in Cork, Limerick and Tipperary. This was accomplished by researching what information is contained in contemporary newspapers, deeds, wills and tithe applotment books extending to 1778.

My research into O'Mahony's life and work involves the uncovering of many new sources overlooked by historians in the past. The analysis of this documentary evidence, in a number of instances, sheds a completely new light on entire episodes of nineteenth century Irish history. For example, the government and police records (contained in the Outrages Papers, National Archives, Dublin) show that the authorities perceived that the O'Mahony-led insurrection of September 1848 was potentially a very serious threat, an apprehension they never felt during the period of William Smith O'Brien's perambulations in July 1848.

This work also benefits from the reports of Sub-Inspector Thomas Doyle who was sent from Dublin Castle in 1859, to monitor the progress of the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States. These documents are held in the National Archives, Dublin. By comparing and cross-referencing the reports of police agents as well as contemporary newspaper files, and the accounts of events given in the papers of O'Mahony and his associates, there emerges a reasonable picture of O'Mahony's political life.

When Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa was elected president of the Fenian Brotherhood in 1876 he came into possession of the account books, military roster, cashbooks, and thousands of letters, which had passed between the leading members

of the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States and the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood in Ireland from 1858-1876. Following O'Donovan Rossa's death in 1915, all the documents pertaining to the Fenians, as well as a mass of personal correspondence, were deposited in twenty-two barrels and trunks in the cellar of his home on Staten Island, New York.¹ One of the manuscript sources used by Fr William D'Arcy in his study of *The Fenian Brotherhood in the United States, 1885-1886* (1947) was this compilation of documents which had been in the possession of Mrs Eileen McGowan, daughter of O'Donovan Rossa. In the preface to his book D'Arcy expresses his gratitude to her 'for allowing him to search for and retain Fenian material found in the huge collection of her father's papers'.²

The material from the O'Donovan Rossa papers, given by Mrs McGowan to D'Arcy, was subsequently donated by him to the Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., and is now in the Department of Archives and Manuscripts of that university.³ This very significant collection, known as the O'Mahony papers (otherwise Fenian Brotherhood collection), constitutes an invaluable archive for any student of Irish or Irish-American political life from the 1850s to the 1880s. The recent online availability of this collection enabled me to use it as one of the main sources in writing the chapters of O'Mahony's years in the United States.

The O'Mahony papers are just one important source which this work draws extensively on. Equally as illuminating is the large number of O'Mahony's letters, articles, editorials and public addresses found in a variety of Irish-American newspapers published, for the most part, in New York. In 1859 O'Mahony founded the *Phoenix* (New York), in 1866 the *Irish People* (New York) and in 1873 the *American Gael* (New York) each of which were successive organs of the Fenian Brotherhood. O'Mahony's writings in various Irish-American newspapers from the mid 1850s onwards give us some insight into his political thought. However, it was not until O'Mahony became a regular contributor to the *Irish People* (New York) in the late 1860s/early 1870s, that he defined his ideology in a more detailed and coherent manner. O'Mahony's writings during this period comment upon social and political matters on both sides of the Atlantic and constitute an invaluable repository

¹ William D'Arcy, *The Fenian movement in the United States, 1858-1886* (Washington, 1947), pp. 412-13.

² *Ibid.*, p.x.

³ Seamus Pender, 'Fenian papers in the Catholic University of America – a preliminary study' in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* (1969), p.130-1.

of Irish nationalist thinking. They also provide a unique insight into the mind of Irish and Irish-American nationalism at a key moment of its development.

CHAPTER 1: O'MAHONY'S BACKGROUND AND EARLY YEARS 1815-47

INTRODUCTION

It would appear that the earliest O'Mahonys who came to the Mitchelstown tri-county border area first settled in the Kilbeheny district located at the southern foot of the Galtees. The fact that the traditional burial place of the O'Mahonys of this area is Kilbeheny and not any neighbouring parish would support this assertion. In his *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs* (1868) Dublin born John Savage¹ records that 'Kilbenny (sic) had been the first resting place of the branch of the O'Mahonys which settled in the neighbourhood'.² Because sources are not very explicit prior to 1782, Savage's statement cannot yet be verified; neither is there any evidence that would throw doubt upon it. It could be surmised that the O'Mahonys of Kilbeheny were already in the area during the hegemony of the White Knights. It has been conjectured by the local historian Mainchín Seoighe that the first Kilbeheny O'Mahony and/or his descendants served the White Knights in some significant capacity, such as land steward, and succeeded in obtaining leases of large areas of land in the district.³ S. Trant McCarthy, in his survey article published in the *Kerry Archaeological Magazine* (1918), includes a pedigree of a branch of the O'Mahonys which may have been established in the Fitzgerald lands of North Munster from the late fifteenth century onwards. This branch was descended from Fineen, a brother of Diarmuid Spaineach, the then reigning chief in Carbery, West Cork.⁴

In the *Irish People* (New York), of 14 December 1867, the Fenian leader John O'Mahony wrote that 'For the last two hundred years, since as proscribed outlaws they found refuge in the fastnesses of the Galtees, my family were revered and loved in those quarters as patriots and as men'.⁵ O'Mahony's statement tells us that his forebears had been in the Kilbeheny district from the mid seventeenth century. It is

¹ John Savage was a long time associate of the Fenian leader John O'Mahony.

² John Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs* (Boston, 1868), p.301. In some sources Kilbeheny is spelled as Kilbenny. I will consistently spell it as Kilbeheny.

³ Mainchín Seoighe, 'The O'Mahonys of the Galtees' in *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna* (1978), p.21; *Portrait of Limerick* (London, 1982), pp.172-3.

⁴ S. Trant McCarthy, 'The O'Mahonys of Kerry' in *Kerry Archaeological Magazine*, vol.iv, no.20, Apr. 1918, pp.223-55.

⁵ John O'Mahony, 'Fenianism as it was' in *Irish People* (New York), 14 Dec. 1867.

more than reasonable to assume that they had held land in the area for some years before this time. The Confederate War saw a general Catholic rising throughout the country; hence O'Mahony's reference to his family as 'proscribed outlaws', which was most likely after 1650. It is very likely that they hid out in the glen of Aherlow. Under the Cromwellian land confiscation (1652-53), Irish landowners who had not supported parliament during the Confederate War forfeited their estates.⁶ However, there is no evidence to suggest that John O'Mahony's antecedents were transplanted at that time. They probably retained at least some remnant of their lands after the Cromwellian land confiscation or possibly regained it under the Restoration land settlement (1660-65). We do know that a century later John O'Mahony's great-grandfather, Tomás, lived south of Kilbeheny in the townland of Ardglar, located in the civil parish of Brigown, barony of Condons and ClanGibbons.⁷

In a letter to Thomas Francis Meagher, then editor of the *Irish News* (New York), of 19 June 1858, John O'Mahony wrote:

The property called the Kingston estate, which lies around Mitchelstown, was at that time [1772] managed by a gentleman named [Colonel Richard] Fitzgerald, who was the husband of one of the co-heiresses of the, then late Lord James of Kingston, for whose branch of the family of King the O'Mahonies have always entertained the highest respect, for they had ever been the friends of the persecuted Catholics, and had shown special kindness to themselves upon more than one occasion.⁸

It is evident from the above that the O'Mahonys were in a very favourable position with the Fitzgeralds/Kings in 1772, and probably much earlier. Landlords were dependent on middlemen, and the O'Mahonys may have played such a role at this time. James, the fourth Baron Kingston, was the first of the family to devote some effort to improving Mitchelstown. He died on 28 December 1761, leaving his estates in trust for his daughter, Margaret, who married Colonel Richard Fitzgerald of Mount Ophaly, Queen's County (Laois). Margaret Fitzgerald died soon after her father, and

⁶ Aidan Clarke, 'The colonisation of Ulster and the rebellion of 1641 (1603-60)' in *The course of Irish history*, edited by T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (Cork, 1967), pp.189-203.

⁷ Letter from John O'Mahony, dated 1 June 1858, published in the *Irish News* (New York), 19 June 1858.

⁸ *Ibid.*

her four-year-old daughter, Caroline, became sole heir to the Mitchelstown estate. As Caroline was a minor, her father, Colonel Richard Fitzgerald, obtained temporary guardianship of her estate. In 1769, Caroline Fitzgerald's family arranged her marriage to her cousin, Robert King of Boyle, County Roscommon, who was the eldest son of Edward King, the first Earl of Kingston. This marriage was arranged to consolidate the King family's power and wealth. Caroline became the sole owner of the Mitchelstown estate after she reached the age of 21, in 1776. She separated from Robert in 1789.⁹

The Penal Laws did not prevent the emergence during the eighteenth century of a Catholic leasehold interest among large farmers. Few deeds involving Catholics were recorded at the Registry of Deeds before 1778. However, when the County Dublin M.P. Luke Gardiner introduced the Catholic Relief Act, Catholic tenants were allowed to take leases for any fixed term not exceeding 999 years or for any number of lives up to five. A further measure sponsored by Gardiner in 1782 finally allowed Catholics to buy land.¹⁰

The earliest deed involving the O'Mahonys that has been located was signed on 11 May 1782 when Francis Drew of Drewsborough, County Clare, leased to John O'Mahony's grandfather, Tomás óg na bhForadh, (then of the townland of Gurteenabole) 'that part of the Couraghowen estate called East Clounkilly containing 121.1.20 acres'.¹¹ This O'Mahony landholding is located beside the Kings' Mitchelstown Demesne, on the road to Kildorrery, County Cork. The term of the lease was for the lives of Tomás óg na bhForadh's three sons Daniel, Thomas and John, and renewable forever at a yearly rent of £140.

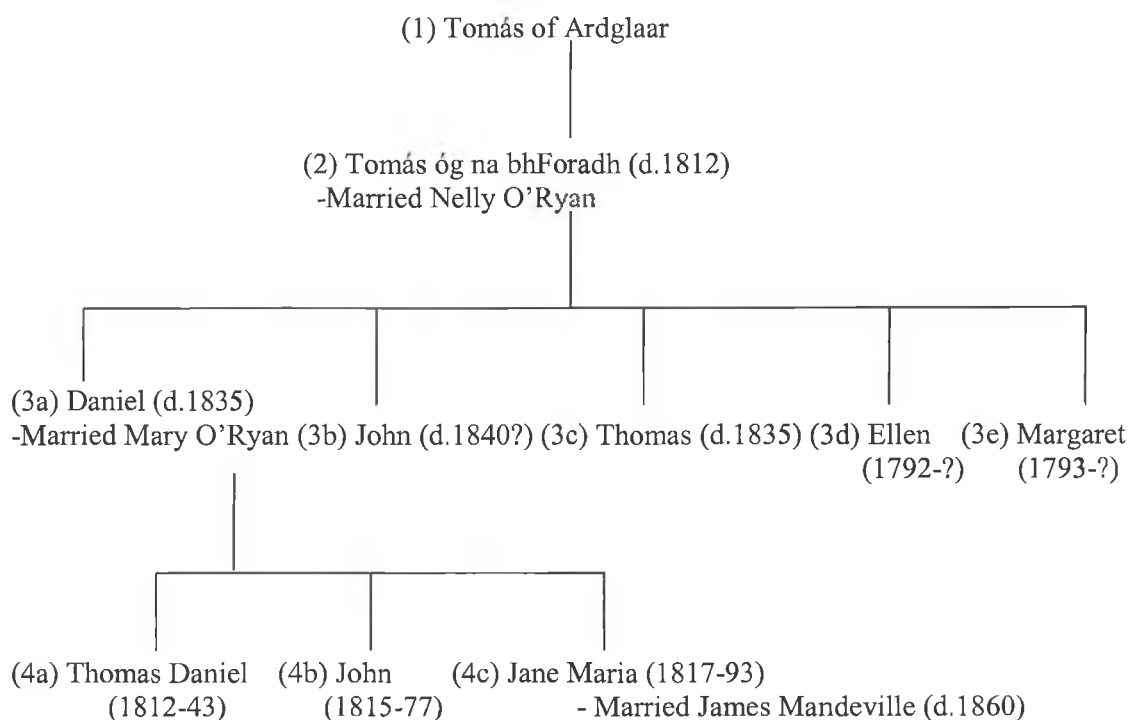
Below is a chart of the O'Mahonys of Kilbeheny dating back to Tomás of Ardglar and includes wives where known. In order to avoid confusion, in distinguishing between the first names of the third and fourth generations of the family, we will refer to (3a) as Daniel, (3b) as John the elder and (3c) as Thomas the elder. We will allude to Daniel's sons as Thomas Daniel (4a) and John (4b). The

⁹ Bill Power, *White knights, dark earls: the rise and fall of an Anglo-Irish dynasty* (Cork, 2000), pp.1-11, 38-9 (Hereafter cited as Power, *White knights, dark earls*).

¹⁰ James S. Donnelly, *The land and the people of nineteenth century Cork* (London, 1975) pp.9-10; *The Oxford companion to Irish history*, edited by S.J. Connolly (Oxford, 1998), pp.77-8.

¹¹ 121 acres, 1 rood and 20 perches: Memorial of an indenture between Francis Drew and Thomas Mahony, 11 May 1782 (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 347/224/232120). The townland in question is now known as Clonkilla, which is the form we will constantly use. Clonkilla is situated in the civil parish of Glanworth, barony of Condons and ClanGibbons.

books of Mitchelstown parish record that a Thomas Mahony and Nelly O’Ryan had registered the baptisms of two children: Ellen (23.07.1792) and Margaret (07.08.1793), both born at Clonkilla. They clearly are Tomás óg na bhForadh’s two daughters.¹²



1798 RISING

In the *Tipperary Advocate*, of 10 May 1862, Charles Joseph Kickham, of Mullinahone, County Tipperary, wrote that the O’Mahonys of Kilbeheny were ‘outlawed in 1798 and escaped the “triangle” by what might be truly called a miracle.’¹³ There is a persistent oral tradition in the district of Kilbeheny, recorded in stories in the *Celt* (Dublin) and in David Power Conyngham’s novel, *The O’Mahony* (1879), concerning the O’Mahonys’ clashes with the British authorities in the 1798 period.¹⁴ Conyngham’s novel includes many events that he had heard related in his

¹² It may be worth noting that Tipperary born David Power Conyngham wrote in his novel, *The O’Mahony, Chief of the Comeraghs: a tale of the rebellion of 1798* (New York, 1879) p.14 (Hereafter cited as Conyngham, *The O’Mahony*) that Tomás óg na bhForadh had two daughters.

¹³ Charles J.Kickham ‘Apologia pro amico suo’ printed in the *Tipperary Advocate*, 10 May 1862. The ‘triangle’ was a triangular wooden frame for tying up and securing a man while he was being flogged.

¹⁴ Dr John Thomas Campion ‘Carolan’, ‘Vengeance and grace (two scenes in 1798)’ in the weekly *Celt*, 10 Oct. 1857, pp.179-83; ‘The wild geese’ in the weekly *Celt*, 14 Nov. 1857, pp.241-6; ‘The inn at Kilbenny’ in the monthly *Celt*, Apr. 1858, pp.70-6. The weekly *Celt* (Dublin) was first issued on 1

early years.¹⁵ I have found independent corroboration of enough incidents in *The O'Mahony* to suggest that the tradition Conyngham was recording was based on fact.

In a story published in the *Celt* (Dublin) in April 1858, Dr John Thomas Campion details how in one incident Tomás óg na bhForadh was attacked by eight soldiers in a Kilbeheny inn. Armed only with a stool and pewter mug he succeeded in winning the unequal fight and was subsequently arrested and tried. The evidence showed that Tomás óg na bhForadh had been the victim of an unprovoked attack.¹⁶ An episode in Conyngham's novel, *The O'Mahony*, concerns a version of this story of the encounter in the inn.¹⁷ In his own later account published in the *Irish News* (New York) of 19 June 1858, John O'Mahony set the record straight:

It was not in the year 1798 that the Thomas O'Mahony, therein mentioned, met with his adventure with the party of English soldiers. His collision with them took place in or about the year 1772, whilst the Penal Laws against Irish Catholics were still in full force, and whilst every English hireling thought himself at liberty to insult them with impunity. Thomas O'Mahony was then a very young man. In 1798, he was verging upon old age.

Secondly, the rencountre did not take place at the 'Village of Kilbenny.' There was then no 'village inn' at Kilbenny at which it could have happened, and Thomas O'Mahony did not come to reside on his farms in the parish of that name until the year 1800, when he built the cottage of Lochananna, which is still standing, though no O'Mahony dwells in it now. He fell in with those soldiers at the inn of Kilworth, as he was returning to his father's house at Ardglar, a few miles northeast of that town and south of Kilbenny. Had he been attacked at Kilbenny, he would not have fought alone. ... Lastly, the hero of the tale did not come off so safely as he is made to

August 1857. It was edited by the one-time Mayor of Kilkenny, Dr Robert Cane. After his death, on 17 August 1858, the journal ceased publication for some months. In August 1859, Kilkenny born Dr John Thomas Campion became editor and the *Celt* (Dublin) resumed publication on a monthly basis.

¹⁵ Conyngham was the registered proprietor of the *Irish People* (New York) - the Fenian newspaper founded by O'Mahony on 20 January 1866. For further information on Conyngham see Michael Fitzgerald, 'From Ballingarry to Fredericksburg: David Power Conyngham' in *Tipperary Historical Journal* (1988), pp.192-200.

¹⁶ Campion, 'The inn at Kilbenny' in the *Celt* (Dublin), Apr. 1858, pp.70-6.

¹⁷ Conyngham, *The O'Mahony*, pp.63-4.

appear. His victory cost him several severe flesh wounds from which he was for some months confined to his bed.¹⁸

In the summer of 1797 Colonel Henry Fitzgerald, the son of the half brother of Caroline (née Fitzgerald), eloped with Robert King's sister Mary Elizabeth. In October of that year, Robert King killed Colonel Fitzgerald with a pistol shot at that same Kilworth inn where Tomás óg na bhForadh was set upon by the soldiers in 1772. It led to a famous murder trial in May 1798 where Robert King was tried before his peers in the Irish House of Lords in Dublin. Prosecution witnesses were called, but none appeared. Robert King could not be convicted without evidence and, therefore, he was acquitted.¹⁹

There is a further incident reported in an article in the *Celt* (Dublin), which also took place in 1797. Tomás óg na bhForadh (no longer a young man) is said to have horsewhipped Robert King from the land he had leased from Lady Caroline in consequence of an insulting remark.²⁰ The seeds of friction between the O'Mahonys and the Kings had begun with this Robert King.

From the establishment of the Mitchelstown Independent Light Dragoons in 1774, Robert King was its commanding colonel; in 1793 he founded the North Cork Militia. Robert King's eldest son, George, later became its colonel, and under his command the Militia carried out widespread floggings in South Tipperary and Wexford in 1798. Their brand of punishment was the pitch-cap and George seemed to derive perverse pleasure from its horrifying effects. Perhaps because of his cruel and perverse nature, George's mother Caroline had no time for him and refused him access to the Mitchelstown estate. Caroline held absolute ownership of the estate during her lifetime much to the annoyance of her son. She was known as the 'Good Countess' among her tenants because of her generous nature and charitable works. The bond of affection between Caroline and the O'Mahonys survived throughout her lifetime. This adds further weight to the theory that a strong accord had existed for generations between the O'Mahonys and the Fitzgeralds. Caroline and the O'Mahony's friendship may have been based on shared political opinions as well as

¹⁸ Letter from John O'Mahony, dated 1 June 1858, to the editor of the *Irish News* (New York), 19 June 1858.

¹⁹ Power, *White knights, dark earls*, pp.41-6.

on mutual sympathy. Her eldest daughter, Margaret, openly described herself as a 'United Irishwoman and a Republican' and was a friend of Lord Edward Fitzgerald.²¹

In his letter to the *Irish News* (New York) already quoted, John O'Mahony wrote:

Thomas O'Mahony's differences with the person so designated in the tale, but whose title was *Kingsborough*, did not commence until a few years previous to the breaking out of the Irish rebellion [1798], and no act of open hostility²² occurred between them until the year immediately preceding that event, though it had been long evident that the Saxon lord hated O'Mahony and all his kin. He feared their influence with the surrounding peasantry – an influence which nothing but personal worth and community of blood can secure among the Gael – and it galled him that Thomas O'Mahony received a tribute of respect and love from his immediate neighbours, which neither rent-roll nor new fangled titles could ever secure for any person of the name of King: while it was so he could not consider himself more than *half* lord over his numerous tenantry and countless acres. This hurt his pride, and it is also said, that he even hated O'Mahony for his fine breed of horses – nay, even for his stalwart and commanding figure – nature should not have formed such men as O'Mahony and his sons from Celtic mould; neither should Catholic Celts own fine horses and ride them well – alas, for the Penal Laws! Why had they ever been repealed! More than all was he offended with his unyielding independence of spirit that would never cower before any foreign lordling. In addition to these he coveted the extensive tracts of the estate he called his own, which the unbending O'Mahonies held at rents that were then little more than nominal. The leases of these tracts depended upon the lives of the obnoxious Thomas himself and of his two eldest sons, so that he could make money as well as gratify his vengeance and offended self-consequence by putting them out of his way. For these reasons he determined, from the

²⁰ Referred to in James Maher (ed.), *The valley near Slievenamon: a Kickham anthology* (Mullinahone, 1942), p.309; John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (New York, 1929), p.266. (Hereafter cited as Devoy, *Recollections*).

²¹ Power, *White knights, dark earls.*, pp.51- 61; Thomas Pakenham, *The year of liberty: the story of the great Irish rebellion of 1798* (London, 1982), p. 218 (Hereafter cited as Pakenham, *The year of liberty*).

²² This is probably a reference to the incident, told in the *Celt* (Dublin) in 1857, in which Tomás óg na bhForadh is said to have horsewhipped Robert King.

commencement of the United Irish movement, to pursue the whole three to the gallows. For this end he spared no means, however nefarious; but death overtook him in his course, and he died suddenly in his carriage on the square of Mitchelstown, as he was about to escort John O'Mahony (the second of the sons) to a court martial in Cork.²³

O'Mahony does not mention what became of his uncle, John the elder, after the death of Robert King on 17 April 1799. There is an unsubstantiated story, related by Dr Campion, that John the elder was rescued by his followers from Cork gaol and hurried off to France.²⁴ We do know that his nephew and namesake, John O'Mahony, stayed with a relative in Paris for some months after the termination of his insurrection in 1848.²⁵ Another story reproduced in James Maher's *Anthology*, for which we do not know the source, records that John the elder was tried and sentenced to death for alleged treason, and was ordered to be hanged in the old square of Mitchelstown. According to this account, his reprieve arrived in time and he was not executed, although the gallows had been fitted up for his hanging. The response of the North Cork Militia was to bring the O'Mahony's furniture into Mitchelstown Square and to publicly burn it.²⁶ There may be a possible confusion in this description with the plundering of the O'Mahonys' home as recorded in John O'Mahony's narrative below:

In the beginning of '98 Thomas O'Mahony resided in the town of Mitchelstown. There he dwelt, fearless of arrest, until the Shoneen²⁷ yeomanry of the vicinity became reinforced by a regiment of Orange militia. Upon the approach of the latter he retired to the country with his youngest son, then a boy, leaving his wife and daughters after him in town. He thought an arrest possible, and wished to give the strangers a wide berth for a few days. He soon, however, learned that his house had been given up to pillage in his

²³ Letter from John O'Mahony, dated 1 June 1858, to the editor of the *Irish News* (New York), 19 June 1858.

²⁴ Campion, 'Vengeance and grace' in the *Celt* (Dublin), 10 Oct. 1857, pp.179-83.

²⁵ Letter from James Stephens to his father, 27 Jan. 1850 (T.C.D., Davitt addendum 9659d/8).

²⁶ 'John Mandeville: Patriot of the Land War', by a personal friend, reproduced without source given in James Maher (ed.), *Chief of the Comeraghs: a John O'Mahony anthology* (Mullinahone, 1957), p.127.

²⁷ Anglicisation of *seoinín* meaning flunkey or toady.

absence, and his furniture burned in a pile on the market square – that his wife and daughters were forced to betake themselves for refuge to remote farmhouses that both himself and his sons were proclaimed outlaws, and that a price was set upon their heads. ...Still he was never very actively engaged in the United Irish organization. He knew of their designs, however, and it appears from the report of the trial of Colonel Roche²⁸, that an important meeting of Munster delegates had been held at his house. But, as before stated, he was then considerably advanced in years, and, moreover, he was the father of a large family. Those of that family that were then able to bear arms (his sons Daniel and John) he had freely given to his country. And *they* were active organizers – the former in the district round Rathkeale, in the county of Limerick, where he then resided, and the other in those parts of Cork, Limerick and Tipperary, that border on the Gaulties. He was also a man of great worldly prudence and some affluence, and he, not too selfishly, wished to save his property for the rest of his family, by remaining passive for a while. This, however, did not avail him. His household was scattered, himself hunted into the wilds, his farms plundered of their flocks and herds. So that when after the death of his personal enemy, he finally came in under Lord [Charles] Cornwallis's proclamation, he found himself robbed of all his moveable property, consisting chiefly in the stock of his farms, and he had, in a manner, to commence life anew.²⁹

On 28 March 1798 it was reported to the authorities that a thousand United Irishmen, dressed in blue and scarlet uniforms, had surrounded the town of Cahir, County Tipperary, and searched every house for arms.³⁰ This large turnout indicates how well prepared the United Irishmen were for revolutionary insurrection in South Tipperary, where John the elder was active. John the elder or his brother Daniel may have been the 'Mr. Mahony' who was to command the United Irishmen in the barony

²⁸ This may have been the insurgent leader, Edward Roche, of Garrylough (just north of Castlebridge) County Wexford: See Daniel Gahan, *The people's rising - Wexford, 1798* (Dublin, 1995), pp.8-9.

²⁹ Letter from John O'Mahony, dated 1 June 1858, to the editor of the *Irish News* (New York), 19 June 1858. In mid-August 1798, Lord Cornwallis, the new viceroy and commander-in-chief of the British forces, offered an amnesty to the insurgents: Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty*, p.333.

³⁰ Letter to Lord Portland, dated 28 Mar. 1798 (P.R.O. London, Home Office Section) already cited by Patrick C. Power, *The Courts martial of 1798-9* (Kilkenny, 1997), p.38.

of Glenahieri in West Waterford in the abortive rising of September 1799.³¹ If this was the case, then it may be the origin of the title ‘Chief of the Comeraghs.’ In his novel *The O’Mahony*, Conyngham relates that a warrant was issued for the arrest of Tomás óg na bhForadh, but that:

He was kept so well posted by the peasantry for miles around of the movements of the Earl of Kingston and his satellites that they found it impossible to arrest him; besides, they were afraid to go in pursuit of him except with a large body of men, which rendered their movements the more public.³²

The actions of the peasantry in 1798, as related by Conyngham, are in exact parallel with that of their descendants in protecting John O’Mahony in 1848, as recorded in contemporary magistrate/police reports.³³ The events of the summer of that year, when South Tipperary was in turmoil, brought John O’Mahony into a position of leadership. In his subsequent account of his involvement in these activities, Michael Doheny makes the following assessment:

John O’Mahony was their chief, and John Savage his principal counsellor and comrade. The former, although not compromised by any act previous to the arrest of Mr. [William Smith] O’Brien, evaded the vigilance of the detectives, and continued moving about from place to place, being generally guarded while he slept by a large number of faithful followers. No man was ever followed with truer devotion or served with more unwavering fidelity. He might have continued in the same district with perfect safety up to the present hour.³⁴

³¹ Court Martial of Edmond Power (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/6/70/29) already cited by Brendan Kiely, *The Waterford rebels of 1849*, (Dublin, 1999), p.104.

³² Conyngham, *The O’Mahony*, p.210.

³³ Reports of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, of 21 and 23 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1616 and 27/1629 respectively).

³⁴ Michael Doheny, *The Felon’s track* (New York, 1849), p.284.

John O'Mahony was aware that in the Gailte Mhór area his family could always count on '2000 men in a quarrel.'³⁵ In the *Irish People* (New York) of 18 July 1868, he wrote, about the level of support for his family, that:

The influence to which I allude had been obnoxious to the local oppressors of the people of my locality long before my time. The name of which I happen to be the inheritor had been a rallying cry for patriotism, worth and manhood in my native place. This was well-known to the British government; so that from my earliest years I was as watched and marked a man by my country's tyrants as any of my progenitors.³⁶

The O'Mahonys were certainly a family of strong material resources and substance. However, their leadership role in the community cannot be attributed to their economic status because it persisted after they fell on hard times. The O'Mahonys' moveable assets were totally plundered in 1798 as a direct result of their political activities. The lease held by the O'Mahonys for three lives from Lady Caroline was not renewed two generations later and it is not difficult to conjecture that the Kings' motives were at least partly influenced by events in 1798/9.

The O'Mahonys of Kilbeheny possessed the qualities that distinguished the 'Gaelic chief' – the ability to provide leadership and retain the loyalty of their followers. This is the only circumstance that can account for the popular support they consistently received throughout the Galtees from Cromwellian times up to 1798 and beyond.

BIRTH OF JOHN O'MAHONY, 1815

Daniel O'Mahony, of Clonkilla, County Cork, married Mary O'Ryan³⁷, of Ballycurkeen, near Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary.³⁸ Daniel and Mary's first son, Thomas Daniel, was born on Saturday, 7 November 1812. Their second son, John,

³⁵ 'Personal narrative of my connection with the attempted rising of 1848' by John O'Mahony (N.L.I., MS 868), pp. 1, 17; Devoy, *Recollections*, p.266.

³⁶ John O'Mahony, 'Fenianism – an exposition' in *Irish People* (New York), 18 July 1868.

³⁷ Mary's paternal family were originally of Bansha Castle, County Tipperary: Information on O'Mahony genealogy given by the late Mary Hanrahan (great grand-niece of John O'Mahony) to Dr Diarmuid Ó Mathúna.

³⁸ I have been unable so far to ascertain the date of Daniel and Mary's marriage.

was born on Thursday, 12 January 1815; their only daughter, Jane Maria, was born on Wednesday, 16 March 1817.³⁹ Two townlands have been claimed as John's birthplace; Clonkilla, near Mitchelstown, County Cork, and Loughananna, about a mile east of Kilbeheny, in the south-eastern corner of County Limerick.

The ancient name for Gailte Mhór, located directly north of Loughananna, was Sliabh Grott. John O'Mahony used the old name for the birthplace he gave himself at the end of his translation of Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn* (1857).⁴⁰ In his *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs* John Savage wrote that:

O'Mahony was born at Clonkilla, a lovely spot on the south bank of the Funcheon, as it flows out of the Mitchelstown demesne, and reared at Kilbenny [sic], with which the pleasantest associations of his early life are connected. With it also are connected memories, which are deeply and intensely reflected in his political career.⁴¹

In the absence of evidence it cannot be determined with certainty whether John was born in the townland of Loughananna or Clonkilla. The Kilbeheny baptismal registers only go back to 1825, but the registers at Mitchelstown - Clonkilla is in the modern day parish where Mitchelstown is situated - date from 1792.⁴² It is not evident that all births are recorded for a number of years of the Mitchelstown register. A search of this register reveals that neither the births of John or Jane Maria are followed by a baptism in Mitchelstown. This suggests, perhaps, that Kilbeheny is the more likely parish of birth for John, Jane Maria, and maybe even Thomas Daniel.

Born near the foot of Gailte Mhór, John, with his elder brother, Thomas Daniel, and his sister, Jane Maria, grew up in a family renowned for its capacity and readiness to provide leadership to the community. Charles Joseph Kickham, Thomas Clarke Luby and John O'Leary all make reference to O'Mahony's great physical

³⁹ A record of the births of Thomas Daniel, John and Jane Maria O'Mahony in the handwriting of their father Daniel, reproduced in Mainchin Seoighe, 'The O'Mahonys of the Galtees' in *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna*. (1978), p. 23.

⁴⁰ *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn.... the History of Ireland, from the earliest period to the English invasion, by the Reverend Geoffrey Keating, D.D.* Translated from the original Gaelic and annotated by John O'Mahony (New York, 1857), p.739 (Hereafter cited as O'Mahony, *History of Ireland*).

⁴¹ Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, p.301.

⁴² John Grenham, *Tracing your Irish Ancestors* (Dublin, 1999) pp. 297, 238.

strength and fine physique in their recollections.⁴³ He stood six feet two inches high.⁴⁴ As a young man John O'Mahony was noted for his physical prowess. One story recounts a dangerous encounter O'Mahony had as a youth of sixteen years of age. Cornered by a furious bull, O'Mahony is said to have leaped onto its back, gripped the horns and held on while the beast charged around the field until exhausted.⁴⁵ This improbable incident is symbolic of his his experience in 1865 when he found himself at the head of a movement that he could not control.

CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

Although Catholic Relief Acts between 1778 and 1793 removed most of the Penal Laws, Catholics were still excluded from all the more important offices in the state. The establishment in 1823 of the Catholic Association began a new phase in the campaign for emancipation. The Catholic clergy, ex-officio members of the local branches, played a vital role as local organizers, a circumstance which would have repercussions in 1848 (as will be seen in chapter two).⁴⁶

The campaign for the general election of 1826 was fought on the issue of Catholic Emancipation. Large numbers of forty-shilling freeholders supported pro-emancipation candidates; this exercise of their democratic right required a defiance of their landlord in the open ballot, which could cost them their livelihood. The results of the 1826 election confirmed the collapse of landlord control over Catholic voters and marked the emergence of a new political leadership.⁴⁷ In Waterford Henry Villiers Stuart, of Dromona⁴⁸ (the liberal Protestant landlord candidate of Catholic Emancipation) defeated Lord George Thomas Beresford (the candidate of the great

⁴³ Charles J. Kickham 'Apologia pro amico suo' printed in the *Tipperary Advocate*, 10 May 1862; Thomas Clarke Luby, 'The father of Fenianism: Personal reminiscences of Colonel John O'Mahony' in *Irish World* (New York), 10 Mar. 1877 (hereafter cited as Luby, 'Personal reminiscences'); John O'Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, Volume 1* (Dublin, 1896), pp.102-4 (hereafter cited as O'Leary, *Recollections*).

⁴⁴ *Irish World* (New York), 17 Mar. 1877.

⁴⁵ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.266; 'Early recollections of John O'Mahony' by J.M.C. (N.L.I., Lalor Papers MS 102). The author of these recollections was very likely the *Nation* (Dublin) writer, Michael Joseph McGann, who used the pseudonym of the initials mentioned.

⁴⁶ *Oxford companion to Irish history*, p.75.

⁴⁷ S.J. Connolly, 'Mass politics and sectarian conflict, 1823-30' in *A new history of Ireland: Ireland under the union 1801-1870* (Oxford, 1989), pp.98-100 (Hereafter cited as Connolly, 'Mass politics and sectarian conflict, 1823-30').

⁴⁸ Villiers Stuart, heir of the FitzGerald of the Decies, was created Lord Stuart de Decies on 10 May 1839.

magnate, the Marquis of Waterford), and was returned as M.P. for the county. He received 1357 votes against Beresford's 527.⁴⁹

In June 1829 Villiers Stuart resigned unexpectedly from his parliamentary seat. Ironically, Beresford took it. Villiers Stuart's tendered his resignation because the Catholic Emancipation Act had resulted in the disenfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders to whom he owed his election.⁵⁰ In spite of the fact that Villiers Stuart held the office of Lord Lieutenant of County Waterford, he managed to preserve his reputation as an honest broker on the popular side.⁵¹ It is very likely that the O'Mahonys became acquainted with Villiers Stuart during the campaign for Catholic Emancipation. They would have seen him as an ideal leader who epitomised what the majority of his class were not. John O'Mahony would later use the horse of William Villiers Stuart, Henry's brother (probably with his permission) during the insurrection of September 1848. William Villiers Stuart, of Castletown, County Kilkenny, was the Deputy Lieutenant for the county in 1848.

I have been unable so far to find corroborative evidence of open, or active, participation by the O'Mahonys in the campaigns for Catholic Emancipation or Repeal. Thomas Daniel was only 17 years of age when Catholic Emancipation was granted. John was too young to have been personally involved in this campaign. A subsequent account states that Daniel O'Mahony and his eldest son, Thomas Daniel, were at the church of Killachluig organising for a 'monster meeting' to be held by Daniel O'Connell in Mitchelstown.⁵² This was most likely during the first phase of the campaign for the repeal of the Act of Union (1833-34) because Daniel O'Mahony died on 15 November 1835.⁵³ Thomas Daniel could conceivably have exerted his influence in the Repeal Association up to the time of his untimely death on Monday, 24 April 1843.⁵⁴

In a letter to Fr Patrick Lavelle, of Partry, County Mayo, published in August 1862, John O'Mahony wrote that:

⁴⁹ *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922*, edited by Brian M. Walker (Dublin, 1978), p.39 (Hereafter cited as Walker, *Parliamentary election results*); Connolly, 'Mass politics and sectarian conflict, 1823-30', pp.98-100.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.39; Eugene Broderick 'Lord George Beresford and three Waterford Elections, 1830, 1831' in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society*, No. 57, (2001), p.75.

⁵¹ Brendan Kiely, *The Connerys: the making of a Waterford legend* (Dublin, 1994), pp.11-12 (Hereafter cited as Kiely, *The Connerys*).

⁵² 'Early recollections of John O'Mahony' by J.M.C. (N.L.I., Lalor Papers, MS 102).

⁵³ Memorial of a settlement on the marriage of James Mandeville with Jane Maria O'Mahony, 25 Nov. 1838 (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 1838/22/111).

Guided and directed by my late father and brother, I laboured actively and zealously under the leadership of O'Connell during his wasting war of constitutional agitation. Few men in Munster did more, dared more, or, in proportion to my means, sacrificed more in sustaining the brunt of that harassing and tedious struggle than did the members of the family, which I represent. Though far from wealthy, few were able to bring to it more popular support; for they were trusted and esteemed by the Irish – the true Irish⁵⁵ – in those counties where they were known – Limerick, Tipperary and Cork.'⁵⁶

The O'Mahonys had considerable influence in the above mentioned counties. It is perhaps no coincidence that it was in Munster, particularly in the counties of Tipperary, Cork and Limerick, that the Catholic Association enjoyed its greatest support in the 1820s and also that O'Connell's Repeal Association later established a solid base during the early 1840s.⁵⁷

O'MAHONY LANDHOLDINGS, 1830-2

On 3 January 1812, shortly before his death, Tomás óg na bhForadh assigned his Clonkilla landholding to his eldest son Daniel.⁵⁸ Clonkilla is the only O'Mahony landholding for which there are records of leases at the Registry of Deeds. There is also an entry for Clonkilla in the tithe applotment book for the year 1825, where Daniel is recorded as holding 121 acres, 1 rood and 11 perches (Irish plantation measure). The soil is described as arable and the quality of the land as good. The total value of the property is estimated as being £211 15s.⁵⁹

A record of the extensive properties of the other sons of Tomás óg na bhForadh can be found in the tithe applotment book, compiled for use in the year

⁵⁴ *Tipperary Free Press* (Clonmel), 29 Apr. 1843.

⁵⁵ In his *History of Ireland* (1857) O'Mahony defined the 'true Irish' of his own day as being 'the oppressed natives of Ireland of whatsoever name, creed or blood'. This was the same as what his friend John Mitchel meant.

⁵⁶ Letter from John O'Mahony to Fr Patrick Lavelle, printed in the *Irishman* (Dublin), 16 Aug. 1862.

⁵⁷ Gary Owens, 'Popular mobilisation and the rising of 1848: the clubs of the Irish Confederation' in *Rebellion and remembrance in modern Ireland*, edited by Laurence M. Geary (Dublin, 2001) p.58.

⁵⁸ Memorial of an indenture between John O'Mahony and James Mandeville, 5 Sept. 1848 (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 1848/17/211).

⁵⁹ Tithe Applotment Book for the parish of Kilgullane, County Cork, 1825 (NAI, Book No. 6/12).

1832. The tithe-paying O'Mahonys in the parish of Kilbeheny, County Limerick, at this time – with the size of their holdings and the descriptions of the quality of their lands – were as follows. Thomas the elder held a total of 112 acres in the townland of Brackbaun, 48 of which are described as good dairy, and the remainder as bad pasture and heath: he held a further 115 acres, in the townland of Lower Brackbaun, described as dairy and tillage. In total, Thomas the elder held 243 acres and 2 roods. The total value of his lands was £313 15s.⁶⁰

John the elder is recorded as having held 57 acres, 1 rood and 20 perches in the townland of Loughananna, described as good dairy and tillage, and a remaining 4 acres described as wet. He held 84 acres in the townland of Lower Brackbaun, described as dairy and tillage, and a further 60 acres and 1 rood in the townland of Manadarra described as wet and boggy. In total, John the elder held 205 acres, 3 roods and 30 perches. The total value of his lands was £273 3d.⁶¹

From at least 1830 onwards and possibly earlier, Daniel and his family lived with John the elder at the O'Mahony homestead in the townland of Loughananna, parish of Kilbeheny, in a house that still stands. This family home had been built by Tomás óg na bhForadh in 1800.⁶² On 18 February 1830, Daniel O'Mahony sub-leased the Clonkilla landholding to George, third Earl of Kingston,⁶³ for the lives of his sons Edward, Robert Henry and James King, renewable at 2/6 a life and at an annual rent of £379 17s. 10d., on condition that George was to pay the tithes on Clonkilla to the vicar of Glanworth: he could deduct £15 13s. 1d. from the rent, making the net rent £364 4s. 9d. If tithes were to cease, then the full rent would be reduced to the net rent.⁶⁴ In a deed of covenant dated 18 February 1830 (between the same parties as the preceding deed), it was stated that George was not liable for any encumbrances or charges that might arise out of the Clonkilla property. Should anything like this happen, all he had to do was withhold it from the rent.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Tithe Applotment Book for the parish of Kilbeheny, County Limerick, 1825 (NAI, Book No. 17/130).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Letter from John O'Mahony, dated 1 June 1858, to the *Irish News* (New York), 19 June 1858.

⁶³ As mentioned earlier this Clonkilla landholding had been leased by Francis Drew, of Drewsborough, County Clare, to Tomás óg na bhForadh on 11 May 1782.

⁶⁴ Memorial of an indenture between Daniel O'Mahony and George, Earl of Kingston, 18 Feb. 1830 (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 856/196/571696).

⁶⁵ Memorial of an indenture between Daniel O'Mahony and George, Earl of Kingston, 18 Feb. 1830 (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 864/252/575752).

By a deed of the same date (18 February 1830), Daniel mortgaged Clonkilla to George for £500 sterling, for the lives mentioned in that deed, and the rent therein stated. However, searches had been made and several court judgements had been found against Tomás óg na bhForadh and his son Daniel who had declared that all of these had been paid off. But there was one demand that Daniel had not paid off. To clear the whole matter up – paid or unpaid etc. - the three O'Mahony brothers, Daniel and John the elder, both of Loughananna, and Thomas the elder, of Brackbawn, entered into a bond with Thomas Montgomery, of Jocelyn Lodge, County Cork (George, Earl of Kingston,'s trustee) indemnifying the Earl against any possible charges that might arise out of the Clonkilla property. Arthur Montgomery, of Killee House, near Mitchelstown⁶⁶, and the attorney Jonathan Wigmore Sherlock, of Mitchelstown, acted as witnesses to this deed.⁶⁷

George, third Earl of Kingston, had strong political influence through the patronage of parliamentary seats. In the Limerick by-election of 2 February 1830, James Hewett Massey Dawson, the candidate backed by the Earl, was expected to win the seat. In the event, Daniel O'Connell's candidate, Lieutenant Colonel Standish O'Grady, polled 902 votes against Massey Dawson's 687 votes. George's Limerick tenants had voted overwhelmingly for Standish O'Grady.⁶⁸

On 9 April 1830, Dr Eugene O'Neill, who had known the Earl for at least seventeen years, was first called to treat George for lunacy. The Earl was placed in an asylum and the management of his estate was placed in the hands of the Lord Chancellor who decided to give an allowance of £6,000 a year to George's eldest son, Edward, Viscount Kingsborough, to run the estate. Edward died on 27 February 1837. When George died, on 18 October 1839, Robert Henry, George's eldest surviving son, inherited his father's estates and became the fourth Earl of Kingston.⁶⁹

On 30 October 1830, Daniel mortgaged his landholding at Clonkilla to William, Thomas and Francis Wise, Distillers, of Cork City, for £400. Neither the repayment time nor the interest rates are quoted in the memorial.⁷⁰ It can be

⁶⁶ Since 1725, the Montgomerys, originally from County Down, had been a significant landowning family in County Cork: Bill Power, *Mitchelstown through seven centuries* (Cork, 1987), pp.24-5.

⁶⁷ Memorial of an indenture between Thomas Montgomery, George, Earl of Kingston and Daniel, John and Thomas O'Mahony, 18 Feb. 1830 (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 864/265/575765).

⁶⁸ Walker, *Parliamentary election results*, p.40; Power, *White knights, dark earls*, pp.87-8.

⁶⁹ Power, *White knights, dark earls*, pp.88-98.

⁷⁰ Memorial of an indenture between Daniel O'Mahony and William, Thomas and Francis Wise, 30 Oct. 1830 (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 864/311/575811).

concluded that either the deed of 18 February 1830 (in which Daniel had mortgaged Clonkilla to the Earl of Kingston for £500) did not go through, or that this first mortgage was bought back before 30 October 1830.

In the years following the termination of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, Ireland experienced an economic depression resulting from a drastic decline in the prices of Irish provisions.⁷¹ This general economic downturn may have been a factor in causing the O'Mahonys to mortgage their farm at Conkilla in order to pay off debts. However, the demands of their political involvement which took their attention and resources from farming, were probably a more significant contributory factor to their financial difficulties at this time.

In his will dated 7 June 1832, Daniel O'Mahony left the Clonkilla landholding in trust to Frs Richard Seymour, curate in Glanworth, County Cork,⁷² Patrick Kirby, parish priest of Kilbeheny, County Limerick, John Madden, later parish priest of Kilbeheny⁷³ and Dominick Ronayne⁷⁴, of Youghal. These trustees were to pay the rent for the property, and upon Daniel's death, provide his widow, Mary, with an annuity of £40. Further provisions were made in Daniel's will for his daughter, Jane Maria, and for his sons Thomas Daniel and John.⁷⁵

THE O'MAHONYS OF KILBEHENY AND THE TITHE WAR

The long agitation against tithes known as the tithe-war had its origins in a combination of economic and political factors. Agrarian unrest in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had generally coincided with troughs in agricultural prices, and recession was again evident in 1830 when the price of both corn and livestock slumped simultaneously. The Irish Tithe Commission Acts of 1823 and 1824, by abolishing the virtual exemption from tithes which pasture had enjoyed since

⁷¹ Donnelly, *The land and the people of nineteenth-century Cork*, pp.40-51.

⁷² *Catholic Directory* (1836), p.136. The *Catholic Directory*, which lists the name of priests and parishes in which they served, begins in 1836.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.120.

⁷⁴ This would appear to be the barrister and Repeal candidate who won a seat in the Clonmel constituency, on 15 December 1832, in the general election of that year. He was part of the new 'emancipation' political leadership that included liberal protestants such as Henry Villiers Stuart: Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland*, p.51; Kiely, *The Connerys*, pp.11, 118.

⁷⁵ Memorial of an indenture between John O'Mahony and James Mandeville, 5 Sept. 1848 (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 1848/17/211).

1735, increased the amount of tithes paid by larger farmers and graziers.⁷⁶ According to the Tithe Applotment Book for 1825, Daniel O'Mahony had to pay £16 19s. 1d. in tithes per year for his landholding in Clonkilla of over 121 acres.⁷⁷ Daniel's brothers, John and Thomas, were also required to pay tithes for the land that they leased in the parish of Kilbeheny, county Limerick.⁷⁸

The tithe problem, which in the previous decade had been played down by most Catholics so as not to delay the prospect of emancipation, now in the 1830s became a live issue.⁷⁹ The protracted campaign of the Catholic Association, culminating in the enactment of Catholic Emancipation in 1829, raised both the political consciousness and the expectations of Catholics. It created political structures that were mobilised in the new campaign, initially for a reduction and ultimately for a total abolition of the tithes paid to the established church in Ireland. The organised opposition to the payment of tithes, beginning in October 1830 at Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny, rapidly spread through counties Carlow, Queen's county, Wexford and parts of Tipperary. Resentment of the tithe was not confined to the poorer class of farmers. Joseph Green, a magistrate in Kilkenny, stated that the substantial farmers of the county were its 'advisors and leaders'.⁸⁰ The O'Mahonys of Kilbeheny, substantial leaseholders along the borderlands of Limerick and Cork, officiated at meetings of the anti-tithe movement in this region during the 1830s.

An anti-tithe meeting of the inhabitants of the barony of Coshlea was held in the village of Ballylanders, in the county of Limerick, on 25 June 1832. According to a report in the *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, this meeting was attended by upwards of 150,000 people.⁸¹ Daniel O'Mahony seconded the proposal of Fr Lee, parish priest of Effin, County Limerick, that 'As well as the anti-tithe committee for the Barony of Coshlea having three individuals from each parish selected by the parishioners, the clergymen of each parish should be honorary

⁷⁶ Michael O'Hanrahan, 'The Tithe War in County Kilkenny 1830-1834' in *Kilkenny: History and Society*, edited by William Nolan and Kevin Whelan (Dublin, 1990), p.481 (Hereafter cited as O'Hanrahan, 'The Tithe War in County Kilkenny 1830-1834').

⁷⁷ Tithe Applotment Book for the parish of Kilgullane, County Cork, 1825, (NAI, Book No. 6/12); Memorial of a lease, dated 18 Feb. 1830, Daniel O'Mahony to George, Earl of Kingston (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 856/196/571696).

⁷⁸ Tithe Applotment Book for the parish of Kilbeheny, County Limerick, 1825, (NAI, Book No. 17/130).

⁷⁹ Thomas G. McGrath, 'Interdenominational relations in pre-famine Tipperary' in *Tipperary History and Society*, edited by William Nolan (Dublin, 1985), p.268.

⁸⁰ O'Hanrahan, 'The Tithe War in County Kilkenny 1830-1834,' pp.481-4.

⁸¹ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier* (Cork), 12 July 1832.

members of the Committee'.⁸² The Catholic clergy frequently took prominent positions in the campaign against the payment of tithes; Fr Patrick Kirby, parish priest of Kilbeheny and a trustee to Daniel O'Mahony's will,⁸³ acted as chairman at the meeting in Ballylanders. Thomas Daniel, the elder brother of John O'Mahony, a student at Trinity College Dublin at this time, acted as secretary.

Of the fifteen proposals unanimously agreed to, Daniel O'Mahony proposed three and his brothers, John and Thomas, each proposed a resolution. Thomas O'Mahony (the elder) proposed the resolution that 'We call upon our fellow countrymen of all religious persuasions, to co-operate with us in this glorious struggle'.⁸⁴ The O'Mahonys strongly supported the idea that the recruitment of Protestants was vital to the success of any national movement in Ireland. At the meeting in Ballylanders, John O'Mahony (the elder) stated that:

The tithe system in Ireland is unjust in its principle and tyrannical and ruinous in its operation – a catholic population, the poorest in existence, being compelled to give the tenth of their capital, their labour and their industry, to support in wealth, protestant ministers from whom they receive nothing in return but contumely and insult.⁸⁵

This particular resolution summed up the cause of their grievances. The constitutional nature of the movement, as well as the non-violent stance taken at this time, is in evidence in the resolution moved by Daniel, that:

We pledge ourselves to use every legal and constitutional means in our power, to abolish forever that spoliating and iniquitous impost; and while we abhor the cruel and anti-christian means resorted to in order to prop and uphold the Church Establishment, we declare our readiness to suppress our indignant feelings, and we shall suffer the base and degraded driver to take our cattle to auction without offering the least violence or resistance, and should the tithe owners seek the recovery of tithes by the arrest of our persons, we declare, in

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Memorial of an assignment dated 5 Sept. 1848. Parties: John O'Mahony and John Mandeville (Registry of Deeds, 1848/17/211).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

the face of our country, that we will not, to obtain a release from confinement, pay their demands in cash.⁸⁶

In this resolution it is reflected that resentment of the tithe was not confined to the poorer class of farmers but felt by more substantial leaseholders, like the O'Mahonys, and in fact this class provided the leadership. A Mr Howell of Galbally, who may have been a maternal relative of the O'Mahonys, seconded the resolution quoted above. The maiden name of John O'Mahony's great-grandmother was Howell.⁸⁷

At this same meeting in Ballylanders, Thomas O'Mahony (the elder) moved a resolution that they would refuse all connection with anyone involved in the collection of tithes:

We will not, either directly or indirectly, have any dealing or intercourse with any person who may be concerned or employed in any capacity in the recovery of Tithes or Church Rates – or who may bid for, or buy, or give any accommodation to cattle or goods that may be seized and put up for sale for Tithes or Church Rates.⁸⁸

Thus, it is evident that the tactics of boycotting (before this term came into use) were being utilised in the anti-tithe campaign.

Two generations earlier, Fr Nicholas Sheehy had been active in the agitation against the payment of tithes. He was a constant thorn in the side of the local tithe proctors by encouraging his parishioners to withhold church rates and tithes. In 1766 Sheehy was convicted of murder, on highly suspect evidence, and hanged in Clonmel.⁸⁹ Sheehy was parish priest of Shanrahan, Ballyheenan and Templetenny⁹⁰, so in terms of distance he would not have been far from Kilbeheny. In his novel, *The*

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Information on O'Mahony genealogy given by the late Mary Hanrahan (great grand-niece of John O'Mahony) to Dr Diarmuid Ó Mathúna, Dublin.

⁸⁸ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier* (Cork), 12 July 1832.

⁸⁹ John Begley, *Diocese of Limerick from 1691 to the present time* (Dublin, 1938), pp. 71-3; Maria Luddy, 'Whiteboy support in Co. Tipperary: 1761-1789' in *Tipperary Historical Journal* 1989, pp.71-3; *Oxford companion to Irish history*, p.510; Thomas P. Power, *Land, politics and society in eighteenth century Tipperary* (Oxford, 1993), pp.60-6.

⁹⁰ Modern parish of Clogheen and Ballyporeen in South Tipperary.

O'Mahony, David Power Conyngham relates that Sheehy was a friend of Tomás óg na bhForadh.⁹¹

Unlike Sheehy, Fr John Kiely, parish priest of Mitchelstown until 1833, was *persona grata* at Mitchelstown castle. Kiely, seemingly, wasn't at all sympathetic to his parishioners' opposition to the payment of tithes, and accusations of 'castle hack' were levelled against him.⁹² According to the account of a William Quinlan, of Mitchelstown, Kiely objected to the O'Mahonys' strong opposition to the tithes and censured them for misleading his flock in this regard. Quinlan relates that Thomas Daniel resented this rebuke so much so that he stood up in his place in the chapel on the following Sunday, and addressing Kiely openly said to him 'You are more the servant of the lord of the soil than of your lord in heaven'.⁹³ Dr James O'Brien, of Mitchelstown, in order to avenge this insult of his friend, Kiely, challenged Thomas Daniel to a duel by pistols. This is the last known duel in North-East Cork.⁹⁴

A detailed account of the sequence of events leading to the duel appeared in the *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier* on 12 July 1832. This article, written in Kilbeheny on 8 July by a James M. Ryan (who may have been a relative of the O'Mahonys), was entitled 'Affair of honour'. According to Ryan's account, on 28 June 1832 Thomas Daniel had applied to several of the catholic and protestant inhabitants of Mitchelstown to affix their signatures to a requisition calling an anti-tithe meeting for Saturday, 7 July, in Mitchelstown.⁹⁵ In a speech at this same meeting, Daniel O'Mahony recalled that on the 28 June a certain person (probably Dr O'Brien) had said to Thomas Daniel that 'The requisition, which was signed by many influential and respectable Protestant gentlemen, had not signatures of respectable persons – he dared to say that they were irresponsible citizens whose names were to it'.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Conyngham, *The O'Mahony*, p.59.

⁹² Michael Barry, *An affair of honour* (Cork, 1981), pp.92-4 (Hereafter cited as Barry, *An affair of honour*)

⁹³ Canon Courtenay Moore, 'Some account of the duel between Dr O'Brian and "Councillor" O'Mahony, at Castle Hyde, alleged to be the last duel fought in the County Cork' in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* (1899), pp.262-3 (Hereafter cited as Moore, 'Some account of the duel').

⁹⁴ *Ibid*; Barry, *An affair of honour*, pp.92-4. This account of the duel was orally given to Rev. Courtenay Moore, rector of Mitchelstown from 1883 to 1917, by William Quinlan of Mitchelstown. Quinlan often heard the duel described by his father who was present at it.

⁹⁵ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier* (Cork), 12 July 1832.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14 July 1832.

Ryan's article relates that in the course of that day, 28 June 1832, Thomas Daniel met Fr Kiely, who remonstrated with him that:

“There had been enough already of the business” or words to that effect. He stated, moreover, that personal danger, great and imminent, impended over Mr. O'Mahony [Thomas Daniel] should he persevere in agitating the Parish. what this danger was Mr. Kiely would not disclose.⁹⁷

This was a clear threat by Kiely. On the following night, as Thomas Daniel was passing through Mitchelstown on his return from Charleville, he discovered that an alternative requisition, under the auspices of Kiely, had been conjured up during his absence.⁹⁸ A declaration was made later by a number of people, whose names were listed in the *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, of 7 July 1832, claiming that they had been persuaded to affix their signatures to the second requisition ‘not knowing its insidious tendency to create disunion among the people’.⁹⁹ Others claimed that their signatures had, in fact, been attached to this second requisition without their consent.¹⁰⁰ The second requisition compromised the previous one inasmuch as it called another meeting for Thursday 5 July - two days prior to the date already announced by Thomas Daniel.

Thomas Daniel, indignant at this, attended at every mass that was celebrated on Sunday, 1 July, in Mitchelstown, and spoke at length on the conduct of those who had been active in getting up the second requisition. He dwelt particularly on a Mr Edward O'Brien (brother of Dr James O'Brien), of the Beamish and Crawford porter store in Mitchelstown. On this occasion Thomas Daniel also remarked that ‘We could expect but little good from any of them, for we all know *honest Jemmy*’.¹⁰¹ It would appear that this reference to ‘Jemmy’ was to the father of Dr O'Brien, as the latter demanded an apology for this remark on the grounds that it questioned his father's honesty.

No apology, however, was forthcoming and the two men fought a duel in the demesne of Castlehyde, near Fermoy, about six o'clock in the afternoon of Thursday,

⁹⁷ Ibid., 12 July 1832.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 7 July 1832.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 12 July 1832.

5 July 1832. After an exchange of shots, Thomas Daniel fell with a gunshot wound in the abdomen. Drs O'Neill of Fermoy and Drew of Mocollop, who were on the spot for any eventuality, attended him and extracted the bullet.¹⁰² It would appear that the intention of his enemies was, at the very least, to wound Thomas Daniel and thus remove him from political activity. This is consistent with Fr Kiely's threat to Thomas Daniel during the previous week. The second or 'rump' meeting, which was to have been held on the same day as the duel, does not appear to have taken place.

According to Quinlan's account an angry group of Thomas Daniel's supporters seeing their hero lying wounded chased Dr O'Brien and his second, Mr. Ogle, from the scene.¹⁰³ At all events, Dr O'Brien escaped injury and Thomas Daniel recovered from his wound, which does not appear to have been very serious. Kiely retired from pastoral duties a year later, having found Mitchelstown was no longer a congenial place for him.¹⁰⁴ Some years later, John O'Mahony, wrote that 'A name does much in Ireland, and along the Galtees none could compete with mine. My father, and brother had tried its strength with the priests there some years before in political contests and put them down. I could do it too'.¹⁰⁵ The 'political contests' to which John refers here certainly include his family's involvement in the anti-tithe campaign and the incidents recounted above. In 1848, John did stand up to the clergy 'whose *esprit du corps* was too strong for their feelings as patriots, and their duty as honest and consistent men'.¹⁰⁶

Two days after the duel, on the 7 July 1832, the anti-tithe meeting, which Thomas Daniel had helped organise, was held in the square, Mitchelstown. Thomas Daniel, still recovering from his wound, was not present on this day. In the *Southern reporter and Cork commercial courier*, of 14 July 1832, it was reported that John O'Mahony (the elder) who acted as chairman of the meeting 'recommended above all, peace and harmony – by means of which Irishmen must get their rights'.¹⁰⁷ Three days earlier, at a meeting at Tallow, county Waterford, 'He [John O'Mahony (the elder)] announced, (amidst vehement cheering) the fact of an English captain having

¹⁰² Ibid., 8 July 1832.

¹⁰³ Barry, *An affair of honour*, pp.92-4.

¹⁰⁴ Moore, 'Some account of the duel', pp.261-3.

¹⁰⁵ *Personal narrative of my connection with the attempted rising of 1848 by John O'Mahony*, p.11 (N.L.I., MS 868).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.11.

¹⁰⁷ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier* (Cork), 14 July 1832.

lately refused to convey tithe cattle from Youghal to England'.¹⁰⁸ This indicates that the policy of passive resistance was working.

Resentment of tithes was a common grievance that frequently constituted a bond uniting rather than dividing landlord and tenant. In addressing the meeting at Mitchelstown Daniel O'Mahony drew the contrast that '*They receive their farms and properties as fair equivalents for Rent*, while bloodshed and civil discord are all they have ever obtained in exchange for Tithes'.¹⁰⁹

At the anti-tithe meeting in Tallow, of 4 July, (already mentioned), John O'Mahony (the elder) had stated that 'We deprecate the idea of being influenced by any hostility to the religion of our protestant fellow countrymen, still less to the persons of its ministers, our sole object being to get rid of an intolerable burden'.¹¹⁰ Catholic-Protestant relations in the Mitchelstown area were quite good at this time and the anti-tithe meeting held in that town on 7 July was attended by a number of protestant gentlemen, such as James Hodnett, of Sallybrook, who also proposed a resolution. Daniel Gearon, of Rushmount, secretary to the Mitchelstown meeting, stated that:

We are following the example of the honest Quakers (cheers). Tho' we have not the broad hat or trim cut coat of the Quaker, yet as regards the tithes, we have his heart. We oppose no law - we give no offence - we act peaceably and constitutionally - and while we do so, we feel that we are doing as we are bound to do.¹¹¹

This exemplifies the constitutional nature of the anti-tithe movement, at this time, which entailed respect for property. Although catholics were bitterly opposed to the laws compelling them to pay tithes for the support of the church, resentment of tithe was not in essence sectarian but was complained of by landholders of all denominations.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 12 July 1832.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 14 July 1832.

¹¹² O'Hanrahan, 'The Tithe War in county Kilkenny', p.482.

The anti-tithe movement probably gave John O'Mahony, who was 17 years of age at this time, his first introduction to politics when he attended the Mitchelstown meeting on 7 July 1832. In the *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, it is recorded that John seconded the resolution proposed by Dominick Ronayne¹¹³, of Youghal, that 'Any man who accepts the office of church warden to gratify the rapacity of vestry-folk, comes next akin to the proctors, and deserves the marked condemnation of the public at large'.¹¹⁴ The tactics advocated by O'Mahony took a stronger form in the Land War days under the name of boycotting. John entered Trinity College, the following year, on 1 July 1833.¹¹⁵ He would certainly have included his family's leadership role in the anti-tithe campaign when writing many years later about:

My personal experience of Irish political agitations and of Ireland's opportunities for more than a quarter of a century – events in which, both as a boy and man, I was an active, observant, and not ineffective, though a silent participator, and in every one of which, some practical pledge of my fealty and devotion to Irish freedom was left behind.¹¹⁶

In addressing the meeting at Mitchelstown, Daniel O'Mahony treated the issue of tithes as a common grievance, and one of national significance, and advised those attending:

Respect the laws! Do not injure either person or property! Be neither *Shanavests* nor *Caravats*, *Whitefeet* or *Blackfeet*, *Three-Years-Old*, or *Two-Years-Old*, and you shall find that ere long we must gain our rights and our liberties [loud cheering]. This Day omens well for Ireland! On this day she has shown her moral strength – she must eventually take her stand among the nations.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Ronayne was the barrister and Repeal candidate who won a seat in the Clonmel constituency, on 15 December 1832. He was part of the new 'emancipation' political leadership that included liberal protestants such as Henry Villiers Stuart of Dromona.

¹¹⁴ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier* (Cork), 12 July 1832.

¹¹⁵ *Alumni Dublinenses*, edited by George Dames Burtchaeli (Dublin, 1935), p.638 (Hereafter cited as *Alumni Dublinenses*); Trinity College Records, MUN/V/23/5.

¹¹⁶ *Phoenix* (New York), 24 Mar. 1860.

¹¹⁷ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier* (Cork), 14 July 1832.

All the speakers at the meeting shared these sentiments of respecting the laws in the anti-tithe campaign. Daniel O'Mahony proposed that Daniel O'Connell be requested to support their petition and that it should be given to Robert Henry King (later the fourth Earl of Kingston) for presentation in parliament.¹¹⁸ Relations between the O'Mahonys and the Earls of Kingston had evidently improved since the time when Tomás óg na bhForadh was said to have horsewhipped Robert King.¹¹⁹

At the close of the meeting Dominick Ronayne stated that thanks should be given to the O'Mahonys of Kilbeheny, for their 'long-trying, zealous and uncompromising conduct in the cause of Ireland'.¹²⁰ Daniel O'Mahony's will, drawn up in the same year, had Dominick Ronayne as a trustee.¹²¹ The tithe war continued intermittently through most of the southern part of the country until 1838, when the Tithe Rent Charge Act converted the tithe, reduced by one-quarter, into a rent charge payable by landlords, who added it to the tenant's rent.¹²²

THE EDUCATION OF JOHN O'MAHONY

In his 'Early recollections of John O'Mahony', the native of the Mitchelstown area already noted wrote 'Of the early days of O'Mahony there is but little to say, that we know of. His juvenile tuition was somehow private and evidently controlled by his mother'.¹²³ Irish language and literature as well as the classics, were still considered an important part of the upbringing of educated young men during O'Mahony's early years. Private education available to the families of prosperous farmers of John's generation who cherished the native tradition (such as the Ó Néill of Lisronagh in South Tipperary) involved instruction in reading and writing of both Irish and English, as well as the classical languages, such as Greek and Latin and Hebrew, and often included French.¹²⁴ It is likely that the O'Mahonys received such

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.266.

¹²⁰ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier* (Cork), 14 July 1832.

¹²¹ Memorial of an assignment dated 5 Sept. 1848. Parties: John O'Mahony and John Mandeville (Registry of Deeds, 1848/17/211).

¹²² O'Hanrahan, 'The Tithe War in county Kilkenny 1830-1834,' pp.481-4; *Oxford companion to Irish history*, p.543.

¹²³ 'Early recollections of John O'Mahony' by J.M.C. (N.L.I., Lalor Papers, MS 102).

¹²⁴ This is indicated in the comprehensive book by Eoghan Ó Néill on the Ó Néill family: *The golden vale of Ivowen* (Dublin, 2002), p.512 (Hereafter cited as O'Neill, *The golden vale of Ivowen*).

an education. In this system of education teachers or tutors conducted small classes, attended by children of the household in which they were employed, and children of neighbouring families generally joined in.¹²⁵ In his novel, *The O'Mahony*, David Power Conyngham remarks that the O'Mahonys had a young tutor in their household.¹²⁶

There were four schools in the parish of Kilbeheny in 1826, one of which is recorded as having 39 students and had a John O'Mahony as headmaster. It is possible, even likely, that this person was John the elder.¹²⁷ At a certain point Thomas Daniel enrolled in Hamblin's classical school in Midleton, County Cork and was later followed by John.¹²⁸ Due to the distance from home, they probably stayed in Midleton during the school terms, perhaps with relatives or in a local farmer's house. At Hamblin's Thomas Daniel and John received a deeper knowledge of Greek and Latin than at home under a tutor's instruction.

No records of Hamblin's school survive. However, there is certain evidence, from an entry in the *Alumni Dublinenses*, that this school was in existence from at least 1815.¹²⁹ There were several large classical schools, kept by private individuals, in the neighbourhood of Midleton at this time.¹³⁰ In the section of *Pigot and Co.'s Commercial Directory* (1824) dealing with Midleton, it is stated that 'At the public free-school, which has been suffered to fall into decay, some of the greatest characters in the kingdom have received the first rudiments of their education, among others, the celebrated Curran'.¹³¹ This was the Limerick born lawyer John Philpot Curran (1750-1817) who acted as defence counsel for leading United Irishmen, including Wolfe Tone, and whose daughter, Sarah, was Robert Emmet's fiancée. In the 1760s Curran had attended a Mr Cary's public free school at Midleton; he went on to become a

¹²⁵ Ibid; The atmosphere in such a school is perfectly delineated in Eilís Dillon's historical novel – *Across the Bitter Sea* (1973) – a story based on fact.

¹²⁶ Conyngham, *The O'Mahony*, p.62.

¹²⁷ *Commissioners of Irish education inquiry*, second report 1826-7, Vol XII, p.1092.

¹²⁸ *Dictionary of national biography* (London, 1895), p.157; *Dictionary of American biography* (New York, 1934), XIV, p.36.

¹²⁹ *Alumni Dublinenses*, p.675.

¹³⁰ *Commissioners of Irish education inquiry*, second report 1826-7, Vol XII, p.956; Sean O'Coindealbain, 'Ui Mac Caille: Its Anglo-Irish and English schools', in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* Vol.5 (1945), p.131.

¹³¹ *Pigot and Co.'s commercial directory* (1824), p.238.

classical scholar at Trinity College.¹³² Cary very likely passed on the ethics of the school to his successors which may have included Hamblin.

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN, 1833-5

Thomas Daniel and John both went on from Hamblin's classical school in Midleton, County Cork, to Trinity College Dublin. Thomas Daniel went first, on 18 October 1830, and then John, who was admitted on 1 July 1833. The college records describe their father, Daniel O'Mahony's social status as 'private gentleman'.¹³³ At this time about 30 per cent of the students described their fathers as 'gentlemen'; 40 per cent were the sons of clergy, professional men or army officers, 18 percent of tradesmen, 8 per cent of farmers, and 4 per cent of minor civil servants.¹³⁴ The students at Trinity College were graded into the categories of noblemen, fellow-commoners¹³⁵, pensioners (ordinary students) and sizars.¹³⁶ Thomas Daniel and John were admitted as pensioners - they paid a fixed annual fee for their education, which at this time was £15.¹³⁷ In the junior bursar's books, John is recorded as having paid £7.10. on 30 May 1834, and again the same amount on 7 November 1834.¹³⁸ These payments would appear to have been the pensioner's yearly fee in two instalments.

Admittance to Trinity College in 1830 was gained by passing an examination on classical texts (which Thomas Daniel and John would have studied at Hamblin's school). Up to 1833 there were four terms in the academic year at Trinity College: Hilary, Easter, Trinity and Michaelmas. From 1834 onwards there were three terms: Hilary, Trinity and Michaelmas. Students were divided for academic purposes into annual undergraduate classes of junior and senior freshmen, (first and second year),

¹³² Trevor West, *Midleton college 1696-1996, a tercentenary history* (Cork, 1996), p.55 (Hereafter cited as West, *Midleton college*); *Dictionary of national biography Vol.XIII*, edited by Leslie Stephen (London, 1888), pp.332-3.

¹³³ *Alumni Dublinenses*, p.638; Trinity College records, MUN/V/23/5; *Dictionary of national biography* (London, 1895), p.157; *Dictionary of American biography* (New York, 1934), XIV, p.36.

¹³⁴ R.B. McDowell and D.A. Webb, *Trinity College Dublin 1592-1952: An academic history* (Cambridge, 1982), p.114. (Hereafter cited as McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College Dublin*).

¹³⁵ The rank of fellow-commoner was open to anyone who cared to pay for it and included some sons of social climbers. In exchange for double the pensioner's fee, the fellow-commoners dined at the fellows' table and were allowed to take their degrees after a stay shorter than the pensioners.

¹³⁶ The sizars (which had, in the previous century, included John Philpot Curran) were students of limited means.

¹³⁷ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College Dublin*, p. 527.

¹³⁸ Trinity College records, MUN/V/53/3.

and junior and senior sophisters, (third and fourth year).¹³⁹ In the lecture attendance book for the Hilary term of 1832 Thomas Daniel is accounted as being remarkably diligent for having attended more than three fourths of the lectures.¹⁴⁰

The choice of tutor lay either with the parents or the former schoolmaster of the pupil. Thomas Daniel's tutor was Dr Richard McDonnell, at that time a Junior Fellow; McDonnell was appointed provost in 1852. As provost, he pointed out that 'A tutor's success in attracting pupils depended on the extent of his acquaintance with schoolmasters throughout the country, and, in times of political excitement, his conspicuousness and forwardness in taking a part in political movements'.¹⁴¹ Perhaps McDonnell was acquainted with the O'Mahony family who were recognised local leaders in the Mitchelstown area. It is recorded in the college books that John's tutor was a Mr Smith.¹⁴² This person was almost certainly George Sidney Smith who later became Professor of Biblical Greek in the college.¹⁴³ At Trinity, John's natural bent showed in his inclination to the classical languages – his subjects included Greek, Latin and Hebrew. The study of modern languages, such as French, would have been optional extras in the college at this time.

The progress of undergraduates at Trinity College was determined by means of examinations at the end of each term in the classics and science. The results of the examinations took the form of 'judgements' pronounced separately by each of the two examiners. These ranged from *optime* through *valde bene*, *bene*, *satis bene*, *mediocriter*, *vix mediocriter* and *male* to *pessime*.¹⁴⁴ In order to proceed to a B.A. degree, it was necessary to pass at least eleven quarterly examinations.¹⁴⁵ In the examination returns for Hilary (first) term of 1834, John obtained the results of *bene*, *valde bene* and *bene*.¹⁴⁶ No results appear for him in the examination for the Trinity (second) term, of 1834. In the Michaelmas (third) term of 1834, John, obtained the results of *mediocriter*, *bene* and *valde bene*. The last examination that John took was in the Hilary term of 1835, where he received the results of *mediocriter*, *mediocriter*, *bene*, *mediocriter*, *bene*.¹⁴⁷ In summary, John took and passed three examinations.

¹³⁹ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College Dublin* p.114.

¹⁴⁰ Trinity College records, MUN/V/35/6.

¹⁴¹ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College Dublin*, p.175.

¹⁴² *The Dublin university calendar* (Dublin, 1833-).

¹⁴³ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College Dublin*, p.208.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.120-31.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.127.

¹⁴⁶ The individual subjects for which these results were awarded are not given in the college records.

¹⁴⁷ Trinity College records, MUN/V/27/7-8.

In 1830 about one student in five lived in Trinity College, though the proportion who held rooms at one time or another in their student career was nearer one in three.¹⁴⁸ There is certain evidence that Thomas Daniel resided in accommodation in Trinity College during his time as a registered student. In the chamber registers for the college, it is recorded that he paid a deposit of £5 in his first year, and £8 in his second year, for a room in the college.¹⁴⁹ In the chamber rent books there are entries for Thomas Daniel having paid rent of 10 shillings on 2 December 1831, 2 March 1832 and 2 March 1833.¹⁵⁰ There are also a number of entries for him in the commons receipt books between 1831 and 1833.¹⁵¹ No such records survive for John. It would appear that he lived either with relatives, or in lodgings, in the city of Dublin.

It was not uncommon at this time for students to leave without taking a degree. Both John and Thomas Daniel terminated their studies at Trinity College following completion of third year of the four-year undergraduate course.¹⁵² Thomas Daniel's tutor, Dr Richard McDonnell, had a few years' practice at the bar and may have guided Thomas Daniel in this direction. Thomas Daniel entered the King's Inns, Dublin, in the Michaelmas term of 1833 and entered Gray's Inns, London, in 1840. It was customary at this time for all Irish born law students to spend a number of terms at one of the London Inns. Thomas Daniel was called to the Irish bar on 11 January 1843.¹⁵³

In a letter to his nephew Francis Mandeville, dated 30 March 1869, John O'Mahony wrote that:

A sober and attentive student could live well at Trinity College, as pensioner, for about £60 per annum. A special or private tutor is rarely needed, except by a student who is either too stupid, too backward, or too lazy, to read up himself – that is if he attend his public lectures regularly.

The expense of meals, college rooms, &c. can be avoided by not living in Dublin for it is, or at least it was, only necessary to appear at and pass the

¹⁴⁸ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College Dublin*, p.115-17.

¹⁴⁹ Trinity College records, MUN/V/86/3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, MUN/V/87/1.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*,MUN/V/92/2.

¹⁵² *Alumni Dublinenses*, p.638; Trinity College Records, MUN/V/23/5.

¹⁵³ *King's Inns admission papers 1607-1867*, edited by E. Keane et al (Dublin, 1982) p.383; King's Inns archives.

regular examinations four times a year.¹⁵⁴ It would not be very instructive, or very edifying to recount my personal experience in that institution, for I was not one of the studious kind, nor were my expenses confined to those that are strictly necessary. But I don't think they exceeded the sum I mentioned.

Trinity College, however, is a very dangerous place for a youth of a flighty spirit or ardent temperament. The students have too much liberty, and any of them that are naturally gifted with good abilities can too easily pass their examinations with a very imperfect knowledge of their studies - by *pass* I mean put in their terms, so as to have them count in their time. But without severe study it is impossible to win *honours*.¹⁵⁵

The fact that O'Mahony did not believe that his expenses while at Trinity exceeded £60 per year strongly suggests that he was resident in Dublin during his time as a registered student in the college. O'Mahony's statement that he did not confine his expenses at Trinity to those that were 'strictly necessary' probably means that his studies extended beyond those merely required to pass exams and, perhaps, that he lived it up a little.

Dublin born James Henthorn Todd was responsible for the launching of the University Calendar in 1833 – the year that O'Mahony began his studies as an undergraduate at Trinity.¹⁵⁶ Todd edited several Irish manuscripts (collected in Ireland, France and Germany) himself, and found assistants, including the Gaelic scholar John O'Donovan, to catalogue these manuscripts.¹⁵⁷ As the decline in the public value of the Irish language continued, at the same time the study of the language and its literature was generating interest among scholars. The first professor of Irish in the college, Reverend Thomas Coneys, was appointed in 1840 – four years after O'Mahony had terminated his studies there.¹⁵⁸

Todd is listed in the Trinity College examination records as having examined the junior freshmen (John O'Mahony's class) in the classics in the Trinity term of

¹⁵⁴ Trinity College was at this time different from its British counterparts in permitting a student to qualify for a degree merely by passing periodical examinations without having to attend lectures and tutorials, or even to reside in the city: McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College Dublin*, pp.115-17.

¹⁵⁵ Letter from John O'Mahony to Francis Mandeville, Esq., 30 Mar. 1869 printed in Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*, pp.113-14.

¹⁵⁶ *Alumni Dublinenses*, p.815; McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College Dublin*, pp.276-8.

¹⁵⁷ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College Dublin*, p.277; Patricia Boyne, *John O'Donovan (1806 – 1861) a biography* (Kilkenny, 1987).

¹⁵⁸ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College Dublin*, pp.189-91, 232-3.

1834. O'Mahony certainly made Todd's acquaintance in Trinity and may have assisted him in his his Gaelic scholarship at this time. Perhaps this is what Charles Gavan Duffy meant when he wrote that 'In addition to the studies necessary for a degree O'Mahony had made himself a noted Celtic scholar'.¹⁵⁹ As will be explained later in this chapter, John began his Gaelic scholarship before he entered Trinity College.

The death of his father, Daniel O'Mahony, on 5 November 1835, may have resulted in a change of plan for John: he terminated his studies, in his third year at Trinity College, to return to the management of the family farm at Loughananna.¹⁶⁰ In the college records, John's name is crossed off under the list of senior freshmen on 30 May 1835.¹⁶¹

THE O'MAHONYS' MOVE FROM KILBEHENY TO MULLOUGH, 1840

The class of gentleman farmer, with its rich blend of Gaelic and Anglo Norman names, were intimately connected by many alliances. Fitting this pattern was the union by marriage, on 25 November 1838, between John O'Mahony's sister, Jane Maria, and James Mandeville, of Ballidine Castle. In the twelfth century, James Mandeville's ancestor, Sir Philip de Mandeville, had acquired large tracts of land around Ballydine extending from Carrick-on-Suir to Clonmel.¹⁶²

On her marriage with James Mandeville, Jane Maria was provided with a dowry of £1,250 out of the O'Mahony property at Clonkilla by virtue of her father's will. This was a considerable sum of money in 1838, indicating the wealth and status of the O'Mahonys. It was stipulated in the marriage settlement that should Jane Maria outlive her husband, she was to receive £100 a year as jointure. The trustees to the settlement were Fr Richard Seymour, curate in the parish of Glanworth, County Cork, and the attorney Edmond Thomas Power of Butlerstown, County Waterford, who may have been a relative of the O'Mahonys.¹⁶³ After their marriage, Jane Maria and her husband, James, leased Ballycurkeen House, Ballyneale, near Carrick-on-Suir, which had been the home of O'Mahony's maternal relatives the O'Ryans. In

¹⁵⁹ Charles Gavan Duffy, *Four Years of Irish History 1845-1849* (London, 1883), p.649.

¹⁶⁰ Irish Will Register 1836, Vol. 15 (N.A.I., Dublin).

¹⁶¹ Ibid., MUN/V/31/8.

¹⁶² O'Mahony, *History of Ireland*, p.xv.

Griffith's Valuation (1851) it is recorded that a James F. O'Ryan leased 309 acres, 0 roods and 37 perches, at Ballycurkeen, to James Mandeville; the valuation was £325 7s.¹⁶⁴

On 28 September 1839 Mary O'Mahony and her two sons, Thomas Daniel and John, entrusted the management of their landholding at Clonkilla to James Mandeville in order to save the lands from being sold to pay debts. After six years (1845), if Mandeville had managed to clear these debts, Clonkilla was to be re-assigned to Mary. It can be inferred from later deeds that this took place.¹⁶⁵

Unfortunately no indentures of life-leases between the Kings and the O'Mahonys survive for the landholding at Loughananna. In his *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs* (1868), John Savage wrote:

They held it [Loughananna] of the Earls of Kingston; who in turn held Clonkilla from the O'Mahony's. Their families were hereditary and bitter enemies, and on the death of John O'Mahony's father, who had been a powerful Nationalist, and with whom the lease of Kilbenny expired, the fiat went forth that the O'Mahony's should be exterminated, as there could not be "two lords" in that neighborhood. To be thus compelled to leave the hearth, which had become sacred by family associations, at the will of an upstart Saxon lord, was like tearing out the heart of O'Mahony. It was in 1840, while pacing for the last time the deserted rooms of the old house, which still stands over the weird town Loch-na-Anna (sic), that John O'Mahony first conceived those ideas on the Irish Land question, which he has since brooded over and advocated until they have become a distinguishing characteristic of Fenianism. He learned to feel for the other victims of the Irish Land law by the poignancy of his own grief and indignation.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Memorial of a settlement, dated 25 Nov. 1838, on the marriage of James Mandeville with Jane Maria O'Mahony (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 1838/22/11).

¹⁶⁴ Griffith's Valuation 1851 (N.L.I. Fiche 4A6).

¹⁶⁵ Memorial of an assignment dated 28 Sept. 1839. Parties: 1) Thomas Daniel and John O'Mahony, 2) Mary their mother, 3) Richard Seymour and John Madden, 4) James Mandeville (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 1839/18/161); Memorial of an assignment dated 5 Sept. 1848. Parties: John O'Mahony and John Mandeville (Registry of Deeds, 1848/17/211).

¹⁶⁶ Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, pp.301-2.

The loss of Loughananna was a bitter experience for, and a formative influence on, John O'Mahony. It personalised for him the effects of British domination, which combined family wrong with national misfortune.

Thomas the elder (John's uncle) died on 14 June 1835, leaving his lands to his eldest brother, Daniel, who himself died a few months later, on 5 November 1835.¹⁶⁷ So far I have not been able to ascertain the year of the demise of John the elder (John's uncle). Perhaps he died in 1840 – the year that Savage states that John O'Mahony was forced to leave his home at Loughananna.

In a letter to his friend Fr Patrick Lavelle, of Partry, County Mayo, of 16 August 1862, O'Mahony confided that 'The fire had been quenched upon my paternal hearth, on the Gaulties, in consequence of the extreme Irishry of my family during the Emancipation, Reform and Repeal agitations'.¹⁶⁸ This probably refers to the non-renewal of the O'Mahony's lease of Loughananna by Robert Henry, fourth Earl of Kingston.

From at least 1840 onwards, John O'Mahony lived at a maternal holding in the townland of Mullough, near Ballyneale, about three miles from Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary. This landholding was in the possession of John's aunt, Jane O'Ryan, with whom he now lived. In Griffith's Valuation (1851) it is recorded that a Carberry Scully leased this same landholding, consisting of 106 acres, 4 roods and 4 perches, to Jane O'Ryan. The net annual value of the land and buildings at this time was £105.18.¹⁶⁹

THE GAELIC SCHOLARSHIP OF JOHN O'MAHONY

John O'Mahony had Irish as his first language - it was the normal language of the household. All the countryside round about Mitchelstown was still Irish speaking in his time. Some of the hedge-schoolmasters of the Irish-speaking districts of the south and west of Ireland, boasted of having produced the most renowned Irish scholars in the country. The Gaelic scholar Standish O'Grady wrote in 1853 that 'It is a curious fact that almost every Irish scholar who has appeared at either side of the Comeragh Mountains for more than the last eighty years, has been a pupil of

¹⁶⁷ Irish Will Register 1836, Vol. 15 (N.A.I., Dublin).

¹⁶⁸ John O'Mahony to Fr. Patrick Lavelle, printed in the *Irishman* (Dublin), 16 Aug. 1862.

¹⁶⁹ Griffith's Valuation 1851 (N.L.I. Fiche 4A6).

Donnchadh Ruadh Mac Con Mara or one of those instructed by him'.¹⁷⁰ A hedge-school master who had been instructed by Donnchadh Ruadh Mac Con Mara (born at Cratloe, County Clare) may have taught John O'Mahony in his early years.¹⁷¹

The transcription of manuscripts was still widespread across Munster, well into the nineteenth century, where poets, scribes and teachers freely migrated within the region like the old Gaelic cast of scholars. Patronage from prosperous farming families was the outstanding feature in accounting for the survival of Munster's Gaelic culture.¹⁷² Gentlemen farmers such as the O'Mahonys were the strongest class in the cultivation of the Irish language and its literature. Transcribing and teaching went hand in hand while tutors were being maintained in their households. John O'Mahony grew up in a household with a rich store of Gaelic manuscripts and such a cultural milieu was the dominant influence in his early intellectual formation.

In the preface to his translation of Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (1857), O'Mahony (in speaking of himself in the third person) recalled that 'He [O'Mahony] had once taken a mournful pleasure in zealously studying the language and history of ancient Eri, amid the glens of his native Gaulties'.¹⁷³ In the *Tipperary Advocate* of 10 May 1862, Charles Joseph Kickham wrote about O'Mahony's early years - 'Young as he was, he earned the reputation of ranking among the foremost Gaelic scholars of his time'.¹⁷⁴

As explained in the previous section, John O'Mahony lived near Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary, in the 1840s. The whole Sliabh na mBan/Sliabh Dile region, astride the south Kilkenny/Tipperary border, had a very rich tradition of lore and song in the Irish language.¹⁷⁵ The poorer tenant farmers (for the most part monoglots) represented the strength of the living language. The poets were of the people and the subject matter was topical and local. Metres were generally the folk metres,

¹⁷⁰ Introduction to 'Adventures of Donnchadh Ruadh Mac Con Mara', p.4 quoted in P.J.Dowling, *The hedge schools of Ireland* (Cork, 1968), pp.58-61.

¹⁷¹ Ellen Crotty 'Donnaha Rua Mac Conmara' in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society*, No. 57, (2001), pp.147-56.

¹⁷² L.M. Cullen, 'Patrons, teachers and literacy in Irish: 1700-1850' in *The origins of popular literacy in Ireland*, edited by Mary Daly and David Dickson (Dublin, 1990), pp. 17-26, 32 (Hereafter cited as Cullen, 'Patrons, teachers and literacy in Irish: 1700-1850'); Nessa Ní Sheághdha, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the National library of Ireland Vol. 12* (Dublin, 1990), pp.18-33; Séamus Ó Casaide, 'Seán Ó Mathghamhna's Irish MSS' in *The Irish book lover*, May-June 1930, p.81.

¹⁷³ O'Mahony (transl.), *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, p.6.

¹⁷⁴ Charles J. Kickham, 'Apologia pro amico suo' in *Tipperary Advocate*, 10 May 1862.

¹⁷⁵ Máirín Nic Eoin, 'Irish language and literature in county Kilkenny in the nineteenth century' in *Kilkenny: history and society*, edited by William Nolan and Kevin Whelan (Dublin, 1990), p.471-7

particularly the *amhrán* (song).¹⁷⁶ O'Mahony, coming from the gentleman-farmer class, collected and very likely commissioned the transcription of Irish manuscripts. In a note written after an *Amhrán - Duine éigin ro chan* (composer unknown), O'Mahony wrote that 'The foregoing song was picked up from oral tradition in the neighbourhood of Carrick-on-Suir. It is extremely popular in the county of Waterford and in the south of Tipperary and Kilkenny'.¹⁷⁷ O'Mahony attached much credit to the Gaelic oral tradition, having absorbed Gaelic poems and songs recited around him from birth.¹⁷⁸

O'Mahony travelled the Irish countryside extensively in writing down the Gaelic oral tradition and collecting manuscripts. In a note following an untitled *Amhrán*, with the first line 'Éist-se Máire ná bíd craidte', O'Mahony wrote that 'The above is an imperfect version of a humorous song composed upon the loss of a spinning wheel. Its measure was adapted to the movement of the spinning wheel. The song was of Connaught. I had it from a man named MacDonagh'.¹⁷⁹

John O'Daly, born at Farnane, in the parish of Lickoran, County Waterford, in 1800, was educated at a hedge school. In 1829 he moved to Kilkenny City where he began his work of compiling the fund of poems which he had heard and learned at home. O'Daly had Irish as a first language and wished to preserve the old poetry, songs and folklore that he like so many others, including O'Mahony, feared might be irretrievably lost under the spread of Anglicisation. O'Daly moved to Dublin in 1845 and opened a bookshop at 9 Anglesea Street in the city centre. Here came poets such as James Clarence Mangan and Samuel Ferguson, who read his translations and listened to his great store of Irish poetry.¹⁸⁰

Given their common interests, neighbours and contemporaries, it was natural that O'Mahony and O'Daly came into contact with each other. O'Mahony became a member of the Celtic Society, founded in 1845 by O'Daly and Nicholas O'Kearney of Thomastown, County Louth. O'Daly was dependent on his network of correspondents for the information he included with the poems in his anthologies.

(hereafter cited as Nic Eoin, 'Irish language and literature in county Kilkenny in the nineteenth century'); Cullen, 'Patrons, teachers and literacy in Irish: 1700-1850,' pp. 33-5.

¹⁷⁶ Nic Eoin, 'Irish language and literature in county Kilkenny in the nineteenth century,' p.471.

¹⁷⁷ John O'Mahony's Irish MSS (N.L.I., MS G 641, pp.459-61).

¹⁷⁸ The description of the lifestyle of the Gaelic scholar Pádraig Ó Néill, in Eoghan Ó Néill's *The Golden Vale of Iwoven* typifies that of O'Mahony at this time.

¹⁷⁹ John O'Mahony Gaelic Manuscript of miscellaneous material (N.L.I., MS G 641, pp.471-2).

¹⁸⁰ Proinsias Ó Drisceoil, 'Duchas Sheáin Ui Dhálaigh', *An linn bhui*, uimhir 7, 2003, pp.87-99.

Few of these correspondents are mentioned by name, but O'Mahony is – 'John R. O'Mahony, Esq. Of Mullough' - in *The Poets and poetry of Munster* (1849). O'Mahony supplied O'Daly with a tune, 'The humours of Glynn' and some information on Glynn village.¹⁸¹ In a letter to O'Daly, dated 14 September 1845, O'Mahony expressed his conviction that:

We can never be a nation until our language, history and antiquities are studied and cherished by our fellow countrymen. I would feel happy to do anything in my power to forward the objects of the Irish Celtic Society as I am earnestly desirous of its thorough success.¹⁸²

O'Mahony was well versed in Gaelic lore and learning and had a thorough knowledge of the Irish language, and its ancient manuscripts and traditions. In the *Irish People* (New York) of 30 March 1869, he wrote the following note to accompany the song - 'The Maiden Widow':

It was taken down some thirty years since [1839] from oral repetition by a student of the Irish tongue, who heard it sung at a harvest gathering at Kilbeheny, by a peasant girl of the Gaultie side. He was immediately struck by its simple pathos. ... A copy of it was afterwards forwarded by him to Mr. John O'Daly of Dublin, who published it in the first edition of his "Munster Poets," with a translation by the late [James] Clarence Mangan. The present version is from the original copy; for some slight verbal differences which are found in O'Daly's do not appear to us to be improvements on the words as formerly and perhaps still, sung by the rural maidens along the banks of the Funcheon.¹⁸³

The 'student of the Irish tongue' mentioned above must have been O'Mahony himself. The manner in which the poem was taken down is reminiscent of the Limerick born Gaelic scholar Patrick Weston Joyce's account of the circumstances

¹⁸¹ John O'Daly, *The Poets and poetry of Munster* (Dublin, 1849), p.139.

¹⁸² O'Mahony to O'Daly, 14 Sept. 1845 (N.L.I., MS 8010).

¹⁸³ *Irish People* (New York), 30 Mar. 1869.

under which he first heard the Irish song *An Clár Bog Déil*.¹⁸⁴ Gaelic scholars such as Joyce and Clarence Mangan would have moved in the same circles as O'Mahony and would have been interested in the material that he was collecting, and therefore, it is likely that they were in contact with him in the 1830s/40s.

DEATH OF THOMAS DANIEL, 24 APRIL 1843

The untimely death of Thomas Daniel occurred on 24 April 1843 at Ballycurkeen, near Carrick-on-Suir, just a few months after his being called to the bar on 11 January 1843.¹⁸⁵ He was only 31 years of age. A poetic tribute to Thomas Daniel's memory was published in the *Cork Examiner* of 15 May 1843, entitled 'To the Memory of T.D. O'Mahony, Esq.' In verse two of the poem, the anonymous writer makes reference to Thomas Daniel's leadership role in the community stating that: 'No more can thy eloquent voice impart,/ Its meet to the right of thy country here'.¹⁸⁶ Thomas Daniel was commonly known as 'the Counsellor' in the Mitchelstown area. He undoubtedly acquired this name as a result of the confidence that the community place in his counsel and leadership abilities and, perhaps also, because of his legal expertise. In verse four the writer poses the question:

Why hath thy spirit not passed away
In the paths where thy boyhood lov'd to stray,
Where visions of dear and familiar things,
Would have hallow'd thy last imaginings.

The answer that we are given in verse five is that: 'A despot usurp'd thy father's home, and to other scenes did thy manhood roam'.¹⁸⁷ The 'despot' who forced Thomas to leave his home for 'other scenes' is an allusion to Robert Henry, fourth Earl of Kingston. In the second last verse, we learn that Mary O'Mahony survived her eldest son who had married shortly before his death:

¹⁸⁴ Patrick Weston Joyce, *Old Irish folk music and songs* (London and Dublin, 1909). Patrick's brother, Dr Robert Dwyer Joyce, was a contributor to the *Celt* (Dublin) in the late 1850s and later became a prominent Irish American revolutionary.

¹⁸⁵ *Tipperary Free Press* (Clonmel), 29 Apr. 1843; *King's Inns Admission Papers*, p.383; King's Inns archives.

¹⁸⁶ *Tipperary Free Press* (Clonmel), 29 Apr. 1843.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

In thy grave is thy widowed mother's pride –
In thy grave are the hopes of thy fair young bride;¹⁸⁸
Nor a brother's sigh, nor a sister's wail
To recall the lov'd and lost can avail.¹⁸⁹

In a letter to his nephew Francis Mandeville, dated 30 March 1869, John O'Mahony offers the following advice regarding the future career path of John Mandeville, Francis's brother 'The law is a good profession for John – if he take to it kindly and study hard; and an attorney's office is just the place to become master of its details. But mind, it needs labour and application to succeed at it'.¹⁹⁰ John Mandeville did not choose to become a lawyer. He lived the life of a gentleman farmer at the old O'Mahony home at Clonkilla, near Mitchelstown and played a prominent role as a local leader in the Land War of the 1880s.

John O'Mahony was familiar with what the study of the law entailed through Thomas Daniel's practice in that profession. John Mitchel, born near Dungiven, County Derry, was the son of a Unitarian minister who had also been a United Irishman. He registered at Trinity College in 1831, at 16 years of age, and it is quite likely that he made the acquaintance of O'Mahony's elder brother, Thomas Daniel, also a Trinity student at this time.¹⁹¹ Both Thomas Daniel (in 1833) and Mitchel (in 1836) went on to study law at King's Inns after finishing their studies at Trinity College.¹⁹² It is possible, even likely, that the friendship and implicit trust that John O'Mahony and John Mitchel felt for each other had been forged since their Trinity College days. They were the same age. Unfortunately neither of them has made any reference to this in their writings.

CONCLUSION

Thomas Daniel's death resulted in what remained of the O'Mahony landholdings passing to John, who settled down to the life of a gentleman farmer at

¹⁸⁸ So far I have not been able to identify whom Thomas Daniel married.

¹⁸⁹ *Tipperary Free Press* (Clonmel), 29 Apr. 1843.

¹⁹⁰ Letter from John O'Mahony to Francis Mandeville, Esq., 30 Mar. 1869 in Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*, pp.113-14.

¹⁹¹ *The Dublin University calendar* (Dublin, 1833-); Brendan Ó Cathaoir, *John Mitchel* (Dublin, 1978).

Mullough, while continuing to pursue his scholarly interests.¹⁹³ As pointed out by Eoghan Ó Néill in his *Golden vale of Ivowen* (2002), the instance of a prosperous landholder living simultaneously the life of a gentleman farmer and scholar was not a rarity in eighteenth/nineteenth century Ireland.¹⁹⁴ While the case of Pádraig Ó Néill is unique in some respects, one can gather from his story what would have been the lifestyle of John O'Mahony had not fate and political forces decreed otherwise

In spite of the family ties with his new homestead in Mullough, the loss of his family home at Loughananna lay heavily on John. This regret was rooted in many factors. O'Mahony's affection for the area was lifelong; he considered himself a Gailte Mhór man to the day he died. Also the loss of the patrimony, coinciding with his father's death would tend to sharpen his grief, and finally it must have resulted in a contraction in the family's resources already under pressure.

¹⁹² *King's Inns admission papers*, p.383.

¹⁹³ A copy of Charles O'Connor's *Dissertations on the Ancient History of Ireland* (1753), in the possession of Michael Coady, Carrick-on-Suir, contains O'Mahony's signature. It reads – 'Ex libris Johannis Mahonidi, Kilbeniensis [Kilbeheny] July 14 1836'. O'Connor's *Dissertations* challenged the prevailing negative stereotype of pre-Norman Gaelic Ireland by presenting it as an advanced civilization and a fit object of study in the age of the Enlightenment.

¹⁹⁴ O'Neill, *The golden vale of Ivowen*.

CHAPTER 2: ATTEMPTED RISING - JULY 1848

INTRODUCTION

In January 1847, William Smith O'Brien and the Young Irelanders founded a new organization known as the Irish Confederation, which established affiliated Confederate Clubs in different parts of the country. They had some success in Munster, particularly in Tipperary and Cork. It was here that the Catholic Association had enjoyed its greatest support in the 1820s and that the Repeal Association established a solid base during the early 1840s. Following the death of Daniel O'Connell at Genoa in May and the trauma of the third year of Famine, the country appeared cowed at the end of 1847, generally showing little enthusiasm for the mildly revolutionary Confederate Club programme.¹

The only definite policy adopted by the Irish Confederation was that any attempt made by the authorities to arrest its leaders would be resisted. This, it was hoped, would be the flash point to a rising.² The Confederate leader, William Smith O'Brien, came to Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary, on 24 July 1848, because he had been informed that this area was the best organized in the country. The authorities perceived that the Carrick area was like a powder keg ready to explode and consequently did not move for a whole week. A real opportunity for staging a revolutionary insurrection, with the potential for broad based support, existed in Carrick at this time; but O'Brien did not accept this opportunity and yielded to clerical pressure to leave. The attempted rising, centred around O'Brien, ended in fiasco at the Widow Mrs McCormack's house at Farrenrory, near Ballingarry, on Saturday, 29 July 1848.

¹ Robert Kee, *The green flag: A history of Irish nationalism* (London, 1973), pp. 267-8 (Hereafter cited as Kee, *The green flag*); Gary Owens, 'Popular mobilisation and the rising of 1848: the clubs of the Irish Confederation' in *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland*, edited by Laurence M. Geary (Dublin, 2001) p.58 (Hereafter cited as Owens, 'Popular mobilisation').

² Richard Davis, *Revolutionary Imperialist: William Smith O'Brien 1803-1864* (Dublin and Darlington, 1998), p.266 (Hereafter cited as Davis, *Revolutionary Imperialist*).

COUNCIL OF THREE HUNDRED, JANUARY 1848

In early January 1848 Monaghan born Charles Gavan Duffy presented his report on the future policy of the Irish Confederation to its council. Gavan Duffy's report directed that the Irish Confederation concentrate its efforts on winning Parliamentary seats and securing control of such elective institutions as the corporations and poor law boards of guardians. It was envisaged that when the Irish members stopped the entire business of Parliament, their forcible expulsion might ensue, in which they would combine with the delegates from the other institutions to form the Council of Three Hundred (the same number of members as had sat in the old Irish parliament). Gavan Duffy proposed that such a body would demand repeal and if refused would, as a last step, issue a unilateral declaration of Irish independence. Arthur Griffith's Sinn Féin employed this same policy many years later. In a series of votes during January 1848, a majority in the council of the Irish Confederation carried Gavan Duffy's report. Derry born John Mitchel opposed any constitutional policy and appealed for support for his physical force methods to the wider membership of the Irish Confederation. On 7 February 1848, Mitchel along with his brother-in law, John Martin, and Thomas Devin Reilly resigned from the Irish Confederation.³ Five days later Mitchel launched a new weekly, named the *United Irishman* (Dublin) from which he propounded the radical nationalist view.

On 5 April 1848, a James W. O' Cavanagh personally delivered a letter, written by him, to John O'Mahony's home at Mullough informing him that:

A Repeal⁴ Club has been formed in Carrick-on-Suir out of which it is expected a meeting will be called on tomorrow evening to take into consideration the propriety of electing two members for the council of three hundred. Most of the members being at a loss to find any person in the vicinity competent, I beg leave with your permission to propose you as a person fully competent if it

³ Charles Gavan Duffy, *Four years of Irish history, 1845-49* (London, 1883), pp. 173-80 (Hereafter cited as Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*); *My life in two hemispheres* vol. I (London, 1898, 2 vols.), pp. 248-56 (Hereafter cited as Duffy, *My life in two hemispheres*); Robert Sloan, *William Smith O'Brien and the Young Ireland rebellion of 1848* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 204-08 (Hereafter cited as Sloan, *William Smith O'Brien*)

⁴ Confederate Clubs are sometimes referred to as Repeal Clubs, in contemporary documents, which may point to an overlapping in membership and/or attempts at reconciliation as 'United Repealers' as in Kilkenny and Cork.

shall be consistent with your wishes. You will much oblige me if in either case you may drop me a line, negative or affirmative. I will not propose it until I am confident of having you fully supported.⁵

It is significant that the members of the Repeal (Confederate) Club in Carrick thought O'Mahony the most competent person in the area to represent them on the Council of Three Hundred. There is no surviving letter of response from O'Mahony to O'Cavanagh; neither does O'Mahony make reference to O'Cavanagh's invitation in his writings. We do not know if O'Mahony agreed to be nominated, or if he was nominated, to the Council of Three Hundred. The reasonable assumption at this point is that he declined because of his aversion to political affairs.

REVOLUTION IN PARIS, FEBRUARY 1848

In France the dissatisfaction with the government and against King Louis Philippe's principal minister, Francois Guizot, in particular, had been growing during 1847. Up to then it had largely been a campaign of middle-class politicians for electoral reform. On the 23 February 1848 it became the cause of the common people of Paris. Late that day a great throng of people made their way to the ministry of foreign affairs only to find their passage blocked by a troop of cavalry and infantry. A shot rang out, and in the panic that followed a whole volley was fired. At least forty people were killed. Louis Philippe abdicated the following afternoon, of 24 February, and a provisional government was set up. The new government would probably have decided in favour of Regency but the invasion of the chamber of deputies by a crowd of workers, on that same afternoon, pushed them towards a Republic. The workers demonstration also meant that the new provisional government was forced to include the socialists Louis Blanc and the printer Ferdinand Flocon, as well as a solitary but symbolic worker, Alexandre Martin Albert. The Second French Republic was proclaimed from the Hôtel de Ville in Paris. By March outbreaks had taken place in Berlin, Vienna, Prague and Budapest.⁶

⁵ Transcript of letter from James W. O'Cavanagh to John O'Mahony, 5 Apr. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1635)

⁶ Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican experiment 1848-1852* (Cambridge, 1983), p.108; Peter Jones, *The 1848 revolutions*, (Essex, 1981), pp.1-4 (Hereafter cited as Jones, *The 1848 revolutions*).

In Ireland the outbreaks in the European capitals provided the initial spark that ignited the forces lurking beneath the subdued appearance of the country and gave fresh impetus to the Irish Confederation. The comparatively peaceful popular revolution, which took place in Paris, and the subsequent inauguration of a French republic, electrified the political atmosphere in Dublin where the conviction grew that change was inevitable.⁷

In March 1848 John Mitchel, William Smith O'Brien and Thomas Francis Meagher⁸ were arrested but allowed out on bail. It was while out on bail that O'Brien and Meagher, together with Edward Hollywood, headed a delegation, sent from the Irish Confederation, to bring greetings to the new French republic. Hollywood was a Dublin silk-weaver chosen in the same democratic spirit, which placed Albert in the new provisional government. They left for France on 22 March.⁹ On 3 April, Alphonse de Lamartine formally received the Irish Confederation delegation led by O'Brien, at the Hôtel de Ville in Paris. Beyond enthusiasm they received no help from France.¹⁰

MITCHEL'S DEPORTATION, 27 MAY

Throughout the early months of 1848, the political temperature in Ireland generally, and particularly in Dublin, continued to rise with the arrest, conviction and deportation of Mitchel. O'Brien, Meagher and Mitchel all came up for trial in May. In the case of O'Brien and Meagher, on the 15 and 16 May respectively, the juries failed to agree. Both men were released in triumph. Mitchel would not be so fortunate. On 25 May, he was tried under a recent act creating the new offence of treason-felony, designed to make it easier to secure a conviction than for the more vigorously defined law on treason. On 26 May 1848, Mitchel was found guilty. The sentence given the following day was that he should be transported beyond the seas for a period of fourteen years. Though many in the Dublin Confederate Clubs wanted

⁷ Gavan Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*, pp.538-9.

⁸ Meagher's father, a wealthy Waterford merchant, was an M.P and a prominent supporter of Daniel O'Connell.

⁹ Sloan, *William Smith O'Brien*, pp.214-24; Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848* (Cork, 1949), p.13, 60 (Hereafter cited as Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*); Michael Doheny, *The Felon's track*, (New York, 1884) pp. 74-7 (Hereafter cited as Doheny, *Felon's track*)

¹⁰ Gavan Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*, pp.561-9; Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, p.167.

to make a rescue bid, Meagher, along with Dublin born Richard O’Gorman,¹¹ restrained them after O’Brien advised very strongly against making the attempt. At this time the government had 10,000 police and troops in Dublin City and 40,000 in the rest of Ireland.¹²

After Mitchel’s enforced departure from Ireland, on 27 May, representatives of the Irish Confederation met secretly to cope with this emergency and to determine on a course of action. John Martin, Thomas Devin Reilly and Fr John Kenyon (president of the Confederate Club in Templederry, County Tipperary) represented the extreme wing; Charles Gavan Duffy, John Blake Dillon and a third man, probably the barrister, John O’Hagan, represented the moderate wing. They planned to raise the country in insurrection, after the autumn’s harvest was brought in.¹³

O’MAHONY ESTABLISHES BALLYNEALE CONFEDERATE CLUB

John O’Mahony wrote a very detailed account of his role in the attempted rising of 1848. It is significant that O’Mahony begins his narrative with Mitchel’s trial; he felt that he had to explain the reason for his inactivity while Mitchel was being transported:

During the early months of 1848, I did not take part in the political movements that agitated Ireland. Before Mitchel’s trial I was slowly recovering from a severe illness, and could do little more than sympathize with the movements of the Young Ireland party, which I did with all my heart. Even after that event had roused the South, I kept away from any public adhesion to the party. I wished to wait until the time for action had come, when I made up my mind to take to the Gaulty Mountains and raise the old followers of my family along that range.¹⁴

¹¹ O’Gorman’s father, a wealthy Dublin merchant, had been a prominent supporter of O’Connell in the Catholic Association.

¹² Sloan, *William Smith O’Brien*, pp.228-32; Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, pp. 65, 193; Doheny, *Felon’s track*, pp. 129-30.

¹³ Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*, pp. 196-200, 608-9; Brendan Ó Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon, Young Irelander* (Dublin, 1990), p.74 (Hereafter cited as Ó Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon*)

¹⁴ *Personal narrative of my connection with the attempted rising of 1848* by John O’Mahony (N.L.I., MS 868), p.1 (Hereafter cited as O’Mahony’s narrative of 1848)

O'Mahony was keenly aware of what his community expected of him - and this can be described succinctly as that of the 'Gaelic chief', already set out in the role played by his forebears - grandfather, father and uncle - who were local leaders of the United Irishmen in 1798. Writing in terms of the level of support for his family, O'Mahony stated that 'The popular feeling in their [the O'Mahonys] regard became concentrated upon me about the time in question [summer of 1848], from the mere fact that the rest of my race in the direct line had died out'.¹⁵ This statement reflects the public perception of O'Mahony as well as the burden of responsibility that he himself felt.

Although the Gaelic system had long since collapsed, still in O'Mahony's time, the aura of the Gaelic chief persisted. As a phenomenon this was rare in the nineteenth (and already unique in the eighteenth) century. There had not been a rallying point for the Gaelic speaking population since the time of Patrick Sarsfield. As events would unfold, history would see the Gaelic chief in action leading his community, in the activities of John O'Mahony, in the ensuing months. In his recollections, Dublin born Thomas Clarke Luby¹⁶ wrote that:

O'Mahony in those days was found to possess a marvellous hold on the hearts and minds of the surrounding peasantry. In fact, his moral authority in South Tipperary, Waterford and parts of Cork and Limerick, was far more like that of the potent chieftain of a Celtic clan in the old patriarchal days of Irish or Scottish history, then it was like the mere ordinary local influence of a popular country gentlemen in modern days, especially one of somewhat fallen fortunes.¹⁷

Luby's statement reflects that O'Mahony was perceived as coming from a family with a tradition of providing leadership. People followed O'Mahony because of the magic that his name carried, which went back for generations.

O'Mahony, aware that in the Gailte Mhór area his family could always count on '2000 men in a quarrel', intended to bide his time and await the moment of action

¹⁵ John O'Mahony, 'Fenianism as it was' in *Irish People* (New York), 14 Dec. 1867

¹⁶ Luby, the son of an Anglican clergyman, was educated at Trinity College. He contributed to the *Nation* (Dublin) and became a prominent member of the Irish Confederation.

¹⁷ Thomas Clarke Luby, 'Personal reminiscences of Colonel John O'Mahony' in *Irish World* (New York), 3 Mar. 1877 (Hereafter cited as Luby, 'Personal reminiscences').

when he would move to that area.¹⁸ This was not to be. In his narrative of 1848, O'Mahony explained that:

From this purpose I was dissuaded by the Revd. Mr. Power, curate of the parish where I lived (Ballyneale) who wished to establish a club in his locality of which he would have me take the direction. I did so, and, with the Revd. Gentleman's help, I soon succeeded in establishing a rather respectable body of men, and their arming was going on with vigour. Out of this sprang other rural clubs, all in the same district, of which I had the management, and our ramifications were soon extending widely throughout the district of which Carrick was the centre.¹⁹

O'Mahony's leadership qualities are shown by the density of clubs that quickly formed in the area around Carrick and along the Tipperary-Kilkenny borderlands.²⁰ He clearly trusted Fr Patrick Power, the local curate at Ballyneale. In the weeks ahead this trust would prove to have been well placed. O'Mahony commented later that Power, unlike so many of his fellow clerics, was 'a true man'.²¹

ROLE OF CATHOLIC CLERGY

The catholic clergy had risen to a new position of political power in O'Connell's time. By the early summer of 1848 the younger priests in particular were becoming members of the local clubs of the Irish Confederation. In some places local clergymen took the lead in setting up clubs, recruiting members, and in some instances serving as club officers.²² O'Mahony recalled later that:

In Carrick there were several clubs established all under the patronage of the Revd. Mr. Byrne, C.C. of that town, who was the great originator and chief promoter of the movement in that quarter. Under his auspices, a Central Board composed of the Presidents of the various clubs was appointed to sit in

¹⁸ O'Mahony's narrative, pp. 1, 17.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.1

²⁰ William Nolan, 'The Irish Confederation in the County Tipperary' in *Tipperary Historical Journal* (1998), p.16 (Hereafter cited as Nolan, 'The Irish Confederation')

²¹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.14; *Catholic Directory* (Dublin, 1848), p.325.

Carrick of which Dr. A. O’Ryan of that town was elected Chairman. Of this “Board of Directors”, Fr. Byrne, through Dr. O’Ryan and others of its most influential members, held, though indirectly, the chief direction. I firmly believe that no serious measure was ever adopted by that body without his advice and sanction.²³

It is fair to assume that O’Mahony knew whereof he spoke. The club leadership in Carrick were comfortably situated, middle class typified by Dr Anthony O’Ryan, President of the central board of the Confederate Clubs in Carrick and O’Mahony’s cousin. Also prominent in the Carrick clubs was Joseph Rivers, of Tybroughney Castle, County Kilkenny, who belonged to a prosperous Waterford commercial and banking family.²⁴ Rivers was connected through the marriage of his sister, Anne, to Dr O’Ryan. Strong farmers such as the brothers James and William O’Donnell, of Ballyboe, managed the Kilsheelan Confederate Club.²⁵

Early in January 1848 there had been riots in Milan, which culminated in the famous ‘five days’ street fighting in March, during which the Italians succeeded in expelling the Austrian garrison.²⁶ In a letter printed in the *Nation* (Dublin), dated 21 April 1848, Fr Patrick Byrne, catholic curate at Carrick-on-Suir, affirmed that:

The priests of Ireland are determined to stand by and with the people, come what may; and should insane Whig policy drive them to the adoption of these means which the Milanese so successfully tried, like their sainted and glorious Archbishop, the Irish priest shall be found amid the fight invoking God’s blessing upon it. May God avert such a crisis! But should it come, may the wrongs of seven centuries nerve the arm of every Irishman! It is better to have the truth plainly told to the English government, that they may be wise in time, and grant that which alone can satisfy the Irish nation, and continue her one of the brightest gems in Victoria’s crown.²⁷

²² Owens, ‘Popular mobilisation’, p.58

²³ O’Mahony’s narrative of 1848, p.1.

²⁴ O’Mahony, Dr O’Ryan and Rivers shared common intellectual interests. All three became members of the Celtic Society shortly after its foundation in 1845: Celtic Society correspondence, 1845-54 (N.L.I., MS 8010)

²⁵ Nolan, ‘The Irish Confederation’, pp.8-16.

²⁶ Jones, *The 1848 revolutions*, p.3.

²⁷ Letter from Fr Patrick Byrne, dated 21 Apr. 1848, to the *Dublin Evening Post* reprinted in the *Nation* (Dublin), 29 Apr. 1848.

The conclusion that O'Mahony later drew from his experience of clerical involvement in 1848 was that it would have been better if 'they had never come into it'.²⁸ In his retrospective narrative, O'Mahony wrote that:

Thus, in South Tipperary at least, the originators of the movement were priests. They publicly told the people to form clubs, to make pikes and many a one proclaimed from the altar that he would be with the people and lead them on the day of action. *Thus they (the Young Ireland priests) acquired an importance in the movement that they otherwise could not possess.*

The older priests opposed the movement a little at first; but such was the impetus given to the revolutionary organization by Mitchel's deportation, that their opposition was soon silenced. They no longer denounced O'Brien, Mitchel and their friends as *paid spies*, sent out by the Castle to entrap the unwary; though some of them still whispered in secret that Mitchel's condemnation was all a sham, and that a good place and pension awaited his service in the Colonies. The wide and rapid extension of the club organization seemed to have stricken them dumb. They either saw the possibility of success, which they now deny, and waited to join the strong party; or they thought it more effectual to conspire in silence with the English Government for the defeat of a movement they could no longer openly resist. At all events, silent they were for a few weeks, and their younger and more sanguine brethren had a clear field for some weeks previous to the attempted rising. *Now* I think that the older and the more astute of the catholic clergy did allow this latitude of action to the young priests whose feelings of humanity were not entirely driven out by the *esprit du corps*, in order that they might become indispensable to the party, while they had a certain means of detaching them from it when the time for action had arrived.

For certainly, had not the Young Ireland leaders calculated upon the active support of the clerical revolutionists to motivate the people they never would have adopted the course of action that they did.²⁹

²⁸ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.2.

A truly remarkable feature of the attempted rising of July 1848 is the extent to which the leadership of the Irish Confederation placed its faith in the catholic clergy, relying on them to raise the population.

There was a second revolution in Paris at the end of June 1848. Archbishop Denis Auguste Affré was shot dead while crossing a barricade in an effort to negotiate a truce. According to Gavan Duffy this event influenced the fate of Ireland as decisively as the flight of Louis Philippe. When news of the Archbishop's death reached Ireland it caused the more sanguine members of the clergy and middle-class to seriously rethink their support for the Irish Confederation.³⁰

In early July the government made an attempt to silence agitation. Charles Gavan Duffy, John Martin and Kevin Izod O'Doherty, proprietors of the *Nation* (Dublin), *Felon* (Dublin) and *Tribune* (Dublin) respectively were arrested and charged with publishing treasonable articles. Thomas Francis Meagher, Thomas D'Arcy McGee³¹ and Michael Doheny (all leading members of the Irish Confederation) were also detained but granted bail.³² In his narrative of 1848, O'Mahony relates that:

Those [arrests] of Meagher in Waterford and Doheny in Cashel seemed to bring popular excitement to a climax. *Men asked how long were those arrests to be submitted to? When or where was resistance to commence?*

At this time it was resolved by the clubs of South Tipperary, (and I understood elsewhere) that no more arrests should be allowed to be made. That resistance was to be made *when and wherever such arrest was attempted.*³³

As will be seen, arrests did take place (or at least were attempted) in Carrick on 17 July.

MEETING ON SLIABH NA MBAN, 16 JULY

²⁹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.1.

³⁰ Gavan Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*, p.619.

³¹ D'Arcy McGee, born in Carlingford, County Louth, was a leader-writer in the *Nation* (Dublin).

³² Ó Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon*, pp.76-7.

³³ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.2.

Michael Doheny, born near Fethard, County Tipperary, had been called to the bar in 1838 and had gained experience and public reputation in Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association before associating himself with the *Nation* (Dublin).³⁴ On Sunday 9 July, Doheny visited Carrick in order to canvas support for a mass rally on Sliabh na mBan.³⁵ Coming from their strong Gaelic backgrounds, O'Mahony and Doheny were keenly aware of the symbolic significance of holding a rally on this mountain. In the notes to his translation of Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn* (1857) O'Mahony wrote that:

Finn [Mac Cumhail]'s seat upon this mountain [Sliabh na mBan], as well as upon the several mountain ranges in Ireland and Scotland, where places so called are found, probably received its name from the fact of that chief having being wont to make it his station, whilst his warriors were making their *battue* on the lowlands beneath.³⁶

The mass rally was held on Sliabh na mBan the following Sunday, 16 July. According to Doheny over 50,000 people attended it. Meagher and Doheny addressed the rally.³⁷ On this day the Confederate clubmen assembled in military array some miles from Carrick and the entire country around was in a state of excitement. After the rally, Meagher and Doheny led a group of their supporters to Carrick and pointedly held another meeting there.³⁸ Their ability to move freely within sight of the police barracks indicates a degree of timidity on the part of the constabulary in this area. Constable Patrick Coughlan, stationed at Kilcash barracks on this day, wrote that:

The people then in large crowds went to the mountain. I saw Thomas O'Mahony (I think his Christian name is Thomas but he lives with his aunt Miss Jane Ryan at Mullough) leading a large assemblage of people going to

³⁴ Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, p.13, 60; Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp. 74-7.

³⁵ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 1 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2613).

³⁶ *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn.... the History of Ireland, from the earliest period to the English invasion, by the Reverend Geoffrey Keating, D.D.* Translated from the original Gaelic and annotated by John O'Mahony (New York, 1857), p.344.

³⁷ Doheny, *Felon's track*, p.155.

³⁸ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, pp.2, 17.

the meeting at the mountain. This was in the morning of the 16th about 12 o'clock. In the evening when the people were returning from the meeting, I saw him marching in front on the right of a section of threes walking together – of a large assemblage and body of men. They were arranged in military array three deep. O'Mahony was stationed where any man in charge of a military party would be placed.³⁹

Constable Coughlan's account indicates that O'Mahony had a natural bent for military organization. John is mistaken for his elder brother Thomas Daniel (known as the 'Counsellor') who had died on 24 April 1843.⁴⁰ This suggests a resemblance between the brothers and also indicates that Thomas Daniel had made a strong impression as a public figure in the years before his death.

ARRESTS IN CARRICK, 17 JULY

Early on the morning of Monday 17 July, a messenger from Carrick roused O'Mahony from his bed, calling upon him to arm his men and enter the town, for the arrests of clubmen had commenced. Those arrested included a Mr Maher, secretary of one of the Carrick clubs.⁴¹ On this day an erroneous report spread that Fr Patrick Byrne had been arrested for sedition; the chapel-bell was set ringing and all the people of the town turned out, most of them with pikes.⁴² Byrne subsequently wrote a letter, dated 19 July 1848, to the *Dublin Evening Post* outlining his role in the Confederate Clubs in Carrick or rather how he now wished that role to be perceived:

I am *not* a member of a Confederate Club - I have not assisted at their formation - but deeply concerned at the incalculable benefit a priest's presence would be to them, I was and will be, except prevented by my bishop, in the habit of visiting their rooms, and of affording my counsel, together with my approbation; and I tell you the advice I used to give, and will give, is this, in

³⁹ Information of Constable Patrick Coughlan, 1 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I, Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary 27/2613).

⁴⁰ *Tipperary Free Press* (Clonmel), 29 Apr. 1843.

⁴¹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.2.

⁴² *Waterford Chronicle*, 17 July 1848; *Dublin Evening Post*, 18 July 1848; 'A personal narrative of 1848' by Thomas Francis Meagher, in *Meagher of the sword*, edited by Arthur Griffith (Dublin, 1916), pp.221 (Hereafter cited as Meagher 'A personal narrative of 1848').

the first place, to pray to Heaven to bring Ireland triumphant out of the ordeal through which she is now passing, and, in the second place, above all things, not to tarnish their exertions in her cause by the violation of the rights of property or person. Because this has been my conduct, and of which I do not expect your approval, I have succeeded in controlling the people when no other person would be attended to; and most respectfully I appeal to my brethren in the ministry throughout the country to take all this proceeding into their serious consideration, and to see how happily ventuated my interference with the clubs. Oh! Impossible to conceive the vast amount of good the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland can now achieve for their stricken country.⁴³

Byrne exercised real and effective control over the Carrick Confederate Clubs without being held accountable for his involvement therein. His behaviour can only be described as duplicitous.

The news of the arrests in Carrick spread through the surrounding districts. O'Mahony had his clubmen assembled and (presumably armed) they marched upon the town of Carrick. At its entrance they met Byrne, together with Richard O'Donnell, a solicitor, and James Feehan, a brewer.⁴⁴ While demonstrations were acceptable to Byrne and his henchmen an armed band in the town was quite another matter. O'Mahony and his followers were told that the necessity for fighting was over for that day, as the magistrates had yielded the prisoners, terrified at the determined muster of the clubs. According to O'Mahony, Byrne stated that:

No more arrests of clubmen would be submitted to without fighting, not even of the humblest member, witness that day's proceedings; that the time was coming fast, that he would be with them himself; and he ended by saying "*My heart, my heart is panting for the day*".... It was clearly understood amongst the clubmen, lay and clerical, that the signal for the rising should be the attempt of the government to make political arrests. That the fight was to commence when and wherever such attempt was to be made. Father Byrne's

⁴³ Letter from Fr Patrick Byrne, dated 19 July 1848 to the editor of the *Dublin Evening Post*, 20 July 1848.

⁴⁴ Feehan was a relative on O'Mahony's on his mother's side.

declaration to the assembling clubs, on the morning of the proposed rescue, left no doubt upon the people of South Tipperary's mind on this head.⁴⁵

O'Mahony's description of events shows the means by which Byrne and other priests contrived influential roles for themselves in the Irish Confederation.

SUSPENSION OF THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT, 25 JULY

On Thursday 20 July, Constable James Lawlor, stationed at Nine Mile House, observed that:

Upon that day I saw a large assemblage of people, about 100, at the chapel of Nine Mile House [i.e. Grangemockler].⁴⁶ At their head I observed a man named O'Mahony of Mullough, parish of Ballyneale. He unfurled a flag green white and orange. The crowd marched forward, then reformed and proceeded into a field. He was accompanied by Patrick Coghlan into the field. Pat Coghlan is President of a club having sedition and repeal principles at Grange Mockler.⁴⁷

This is the first public (outdoor) unfurling of the tricolour on record that I am aware of. At a dinner given in April by the Dublin Trades Committee to the members of the delegation of the Irish Confederation who had been formally received by Alphonse de Lamartine in Paris, Meagher presented his hosts with a green, white and orange flag which he brought back from France. He explained that the white signified a lasting truce between the 'Orange and the 'Green'.⁴⁸

On 20 July, the general assembling of deputies representing the Confederate Clubs appointed an executive council of five in Dublin, consisting of John Blake Dillon, Richard O'Gorman, Thomas Devin Reilly, Thomas Francis Meagher and Thomas D'Arcy McGee. At this time William Smith O'Brien was staying with an old friend, John Maher at Ballinkeele, near Enniscorthy, County Wexford, of which

⁴⁵ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.2.

⁴⁶ Constable Lawlor is referring to the chapel at Grangemockler as there is none in Nine Mile House (located within a mile of Grangemockler).

⁴⁷ Information of Constable James Lawlor, 1 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2613).

Maher was the Deputy Lieutenant.⁴⁹ The Irish Confederation was taken unawares, on 22 July, when the British Prime Minister, Lord John Russell introduced a bill to suspend *Habeas Corpus* in Ireland until March 1849. The bill was passed, almost undebated, and enacted, three days later, on 25 July. Individuals could now be retained without any need to resort to the court.⁵⁰

Some years later, O'Mahony outlined what he believed to have been the authorities plan of campaign in the summer of 1848:

Their tactics were therefore directed towards forcing us to unmask our batteries prematurely, and to expose our full strength to their view, so that, knowing the nature and extent of the threatened danger and seeing whence it comes, they may the more easily guard against it and baffle our plan of attack. The suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act enabled the British Government to attain this end, with full success, in the summer of 1848. It was a well timed and effective expedient; but it can scarcely be said to have been an able one; because it was so obvious and so trite, that it seems inexplicable, under the circumstances, how, no one either foresaw it, or, having foreseen it, took no measures to counteract its effects. After little more than a week's experience of that measure, it was discovered that no hidden danger whatever to Saxon domination lay concealed beneath the noisy and threatening surface of the Club organization. When the bulletins, as they may be called, which were sent forth weekly from the head-quarters of the Confederation through the public press, had been suddenly stopped, the whole Club organisation fell asunder, and all who looked to that body for counsel and guidance were left in gasping bewilderment, like stranded fishes, left high and dry by the receding tide.⁵¹

The 'leadership' of the Irish Confederation displayed an extraordinary lack of foresight as revolutionaries or even as popular leaders.

In his report, dated 22 July 1848, the High Sheriff of County Tipperary, Richard Pennefather, wrote that:

⁴⁸ Kee, *The Green flag*, p.265.

⁴⁹ Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*, pp.693-6; 'Patrick O'Donoghue's narrative of the 1848 rising' in *Tipperary Historical Journal* (1998), p.39.

⁵⁰ O Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon*, p.78.

Considerable excitement exists throughout the county in consequence of the establishment and organisation of Political Clubs in every parish of it under the direction of a body of demagogues having for their object, resistance to the authority of the Queen, the laws of the land, and the plunder of all descriptions of property.⁵²

From the outset O'Brien had favoured an alliance with landowners and stubbornly refused to requisition private property for food supplies as his companions urged him to do. In fact, it was Thomas Clarke Luby's opinion that 'They could have had a good fight in Tipperary but for some mismanagement and Smith O'Brien's over-scrupulousness and nicety of honour in refusing to seize provisions before he had regularly established a provisional government'.⁵³

On the evening of Saturday 22 July, Meagher and Dillon travelled from Dublin to meet O'Brien at Ballinkeele. Upon their arrival here, at 5 o'clock in the morning of Sunday 23 July, they informed O'Brien of the suspension of *Habeas Corpus*. He rejected both the idea of submitting to arrest and of flight. All three made their way by coach to Graiguenamanagh and thence to Kilkenny City, where they found the organization much weaker than they had been led to believe.⁵⁴

On Monday 24 July, the travels of O'Brien, Meagher and Dillon resumed; travelling via Callan, they crossed the King's River entering Munster with the intention of placing themselves at the disposal of the insurrectionary forces – to lead them and be protected by them. At Callan they proclaimed their intention to rise and a party of Royal Irish Hussars stood by and, in Meagher's view, gave every sign of sympathy. The O'Brien party next proceeded, via Nine Mile House (where they stopped for lunch), towards Carrick-on-Suir. O'Brien did so because he had been informed in Kilkenny that there were the structures to defend them in the area around Carrick, which was the best organised in the country.⁵⁵ This was a direct result of

⁵¹ 'To thirty – one very impatient correspondents - somewhere' by John O'Mahony in the *Phoenix* (New York), 10 Feb. 1860.

⁵² Report of Richard Pennefather, High Sheriff of County Tipperary, 22 July 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1289).

⁵³ Luby's Personal reminiscences in the *Irish World* (New York) 3 Mar. 1877.

⁵⁴ Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, pp. 243-5; Sloan, *William Smith O'Brien*, pp.246-54; Ó Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon*, pp.79-81

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

O'Mahony's phenomenal capacity for leadership and organization - a well-recognised tradition in his family, which went back to the time of his grandfather, Tomás óg na bhForadh, (and probably much further). He had the same standing in his district of Kilbeheny, County Limerick.

MEETING OF CONFEDERATE LEADERS WITH O'MAHONY, 24 JULY

In a letter to his friend Fr Patrick Lavelle, of Partry, County Mayo, in August 1862, O'Mahony explained that:

When our national phalanx became severed into the rival factions of Old and Young Ireland, I took no part with either until the summer of 1848. When the Chiefs of the Young Irelanders took the field in Tipperary, I was the first to join them for their cause seemed to me to be right and opportune in the then desperate condition of the Irish people. It was also the course of action that my household traditions of 1798⁵⁶ had taught me to long for and expect as the climax of that agitation in which I had been nurtured and had grown up to manhood.⁵⁷

It would appear, from the evidence available, that the pattern for O'Mahony's forebears was to be ready to supply leadership at any moment of crisis (such as in 1798 and the Tithe War) but to hold aloof from the daily fever of political agitation, which could be safely left to others.⁵⁸ O'Mahony followed this pattern until the transportation of Mitchel in late May 1848. In fact all indications are that he could have been happy indefinitely in his life of gentleman farmer with the leisure to pursue his scholarly interests. But the demands of the Famine had to be faced.

In his narrative of 1848 Meagher relates that within five miles of Carrick the O'Brien party pulled up at a crossroads⁵⁹ to talk to some men digging in a field. On hearing that a young catholic landholder (O'Mahony) who had done much to organize

⁵⁶ O'Mahony's father, Daniel, and uncle, John, were local leaders of the United Irishmen: the former in the district round Rathkeale, County Limerick, and the latter in those parts of Cork, Limerick and Tipperary that border on the Galtee Mountains.

⁵⁷ John O'Mahony to Fr Patrick Lavelle, printed in the *Irishman* (Dublin), 16 Aug. 1862.

⁵⁸ Diarmuid Ó Mathúna 'The vision and sacrifice of John O'Mahony' in *Íris Muintir Mhathghamhna* The O'Mahony Journal (1978), p.30.

⁵⁹ This would appear to be the junction of the road leading to Mullough and the Church at Ballyneale.

the local clubs, lived in the neighbourhood they asked to see him. One of the workers went to contact O'Mahony. Twenty minutes later the clatter of horses' hooves was heard. Meagher has left a memorable description of O'Mahony hastening to meet them:

On looking up the crossroads to our right, we saw a tall, robust, gallant-looking fellow, mounted on a strong black horse, coming at full speed, towards us. This was O'Mahony – one of the noblest young Irishmen it has been my pride to meet with during the course of my short public life. His square, broad frame, his frank, gay, fearless look; the warm forcible headlong earnestness of his manner; the quickness and elasticity of his movements; the rapid glances of his clear full eye; the proud bearing of his head; everything about him struck us with a brilliant and exciting effect, as he threw himself from his saddle and, tossing the bridle on his arm, hastened to meet and welcome us.

At a glance, we recognised in him a true leader for the generous, passionate, intrepid peasantry of the South. As we clasped his hand, the blood dashed in joy and triumph through our veins; for a moment, every sensation, approaching to disquietude or despondency, vanished from our minds; and in a dazzling trance of exultation, we became sensible, in his presence, of no emotions, save those of most joyous confidence.

Strange it is, the influence, which a man of a fine and soldiery appearance, flinging himself into a revolutionary movement, has upon the feelings of the most utter stranger. I had never seen O'Mahony previous to this interview; had heard of him but once before, and that in a very slight way indeed.⁶⁰

O'Mahony grasped the significance of the situation - an attempt by the authorities to arrest O'Brien would provide the opportunity on which to challenge the government. It was characteristic of O'Mahony's style to be ready for the moment of action when it came. In doing so he was naturally following the family role of providing leadership.

⁶⁰ Meagher, 'A personal narrative of 1848,' pp.224-5.

O'Mahony gave details of his preparations and the state of insurrectionary feeling in the neighbourhood to O'Brien and his companions. In his narrative of 1848, Meagher wrote that 'He [O'Mahony] represented to us that the country all about Carrick, on towards Clonmel, and along the Suir on the Tipperary side, was thoroughly alive, and ready to take the field at once'.⁶¹ As a natural field commander O'Mahony was in total control of the situation. While O'Brien recognised O'Mahony as exactly the one he needed to stage the insurrection, he declined to accept the armed escort, which O'Mahony offered to provide at short notice, before entering Carrick. Agreeing to summon him if a muster was needed, O'Brien proceeded to Carrick while O'Mahony went to complete his preparations.⁶² Had O'Brien accepted O'Mahony's offer, it would have set the stage and the pattern of subsequent events might have been quite different.

O'BRIEN'S ARRIVAL IN CARRICK

Impatient to know what was going on in Carrick, O'Mahony soon after rode into town where he relates that:

I found there the greatest excitement and enthusiasm. Some thousands of men thronged the streets, and among them all I saw no sign of going back on their former resolve. They were unarmed, however, not yet knowing what their leaders wished them to do.⁶³

O'Mahony's account is corroborated by Meagher who recollected later that the common people, who thronged the streets, received them with frenzied enthusiasm. In fact, Meagher acknowledged that 'It was the revolution if we had accepted it. Why it was not accepted, I fear I cannot with sufficient accuracy explain'.⁶⁴ There is no doubt that a real opportunity for staging a revolutionary insurrection existed in Carrick at this time. It was Gavan Duffy's opinion (and he was no incendiary) that:

⁶¹ Ibid., pp.226-7.

⁶² Ibid; O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.3.

⁶³ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.3.

⁶⁴ Meagher, 'A personal narrative of 1848,' p.228.

Here [in Carrick], and not at Waterford on the arrest of Meagher, or at Dublin on the arrest of Mitchel, the best opportunity of striking an effective blow presented itself. Had Carrick been seized, it is probable that three counties would have risen within forty-eight hours; and that preparations for a rising would have begun over three provinces.⁶⁵

It can be reasonably assumed that even a minor setback at this time for the government forces could have moved the insurgents of half a dozen counties to action.

Carrick was thronged with men waiting to be led, but panic seized the town worthies who now wished O'Brien and Meagher to leave. On being brought into the presence of the principal members of the Carrick Central Board, gathered together in the house of Dr John Purcell, O'Brien heard one man ask pointedly why it was that the leaders of the Irish Confederation should have come to Carrick of all places to start the rising. Was it because they had been rejected everywhere else? O'Brien told them that he came to Carrick, in preference to any other town, because the people there were better organised and armed than in most other places. He also explained that he did not wish to engage Carrick single-handedly against England, but asked from them six hundred men with guns, ammunition and means of self support to guard him and his companions while they raised the countryside.⁶⁶

Having forced a passage through the crowd to the house of Dr Purcell (where O'Brien and the other leaders had stopped) O'Mahony found assembled here the principal Confederate Club leaders in Carrick including; Drs Purcell and O'Ryan, Joseph Rivers, James O'Donnell and a man with the surname of Cavanagh.⁶⁷ As O'Brien was explaining his reason for coming, O'Mahony made his entrance and made clear his invitation to O'Brien to provide adequate protection for him and his companions before morning. O'Mahony recalled later that although there was great excitement among the thousands of men in the streets outside:

There appeared nothing but doubt and dismay amongst these men [Confederate Club leaders in Carrick]. They seemed confounded at the

⁶⁵ Gavan Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*, p. 653.

⁶⁶ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.3; Meagher 'A personal narrative of 1848', p. 229-31

magnitude of the step they were called on to take, and a very manifest desire to get Mr. O'Brien out of town appeared to sway the great majority of them.⁶⁸

All present at that meeting finally agreed that the O'Brien party should remain in town that night; the country clubs around should be summoned to arms and any hostile attempt from the garrison was to be resisted. O'Mahony believed that none present could have been ignorant of their agreeing that O'Brien and his companions were to remain in Carrick. O'Brien and Meagher then addressed the impatient crowd in the street, who, according to O'Mahony, enthusiastically promised to die in their defence if necessary.⁶⁹ In his report, dated 1 August 1848, Constable Patrick Coughlan wrote that:

Upon this day 24th July last, when Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Meagher made seditious and inflammatory speeches in Carrick-on-Suir, I saw him [O'Mahony] put his head out of the window of the house Mr. O'Brien spoke from. I have no doubt he was aiding and abetting and constantly encouraging Mr. Smith O'Brien and Meagher in their seditious movements. I believe he is the leader of the club movements at Ballyneale.⁷⁰

In his narrative of 1848, O'Mahony tells us that as he mounted his horse to depart, he heard the noisy discussion break out once more. O'Mahony dismounted and returned and was given assurance that there would be no change in plan; O'Brien would stay. This exercise was repeated twice - O'Mahony leaving and having to return on hearing the noisy outbreak.⁷¹ This incident more than anything else tells what a presence O'Mahony was: although the town worthies in Carrick later managed to persuade such seasoned public campaigners as O'Brien and Meagher to leave, they did not dare attempt to speak up in these terms in O'Mahony's presence. O'Mahony recalled later that:

⁶⁷ This is probably the same James O'Cavanagh who wrote the letter to O'Mahony, of 5 April 1848, quoted earlier.

⁶⁸ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.3.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Information of Patrick Coughlan, constable at Kilcash, 1 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2613).

⁷¹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.3

One thing struck me as remarkable at this meeting was that Fr. Byrne was not to be found. The day after which his heart panted had not come. It was, however, principally composed of his creatures, - professional men, comfortable farmers and shop-keepers who would do nothing without his reverend sanction. Of some of them I heard or saw no more until their miraculous escapes to France or America were proclaimed in the public press. Some of them I know to have left the meeting that evening after I departed and never draw bridle until they put the sea between themselves and the enemy.⁷²

Neither Dr Anthony O’Ryan, of Carrick, nor his brother James Francis, of Clonea Castle, County Waterford, attempted to flee the country at this time. These men, along with Dr John Purcell, of Carrick, and James O’Donnell, of Ballybo, would stand trial, at the Special Commission which opened in Clonmel, on 21 September 1848, accused of high treason.⁷³ In the *Tipperary Vindicator*, of 16 September 1848, it was reported that Joseph Rivers had safely arrived in France.⁷⁴

MUSTERING OF CLUBS IN SOUTH TIPPERARY

After leaving Carrick, with the assurance that the O’Brien party was there to stay, O’Mahony went off to muster the country clubs of South Tipperary. Later that evening O’Brien and his companions left Carrick, after feeling a less than enthusiastic welcome from the town’s club leaders, the majority of whom were of opinion that an attempt to hold Carrick would end in defeat. The O’Brien party headed for Cashel where they hoped they would get some encouragement from Michael Doheny.⁷⁵ A regiment, the 3rd Buffs, had been marched to Bessborough and Piltown, County Kilkenny, where three companies of infantry and two troops of dragoons, with a large party of police, were already stationed. Large reinforcements could be drawn from Waterford and Clonmel.⁷⁶

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 27 Sept. 1848; Report of Constable Harrington, Rathgormack, 12 Sept. 1848 (Outrage papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1898); Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M., Carrick-on-Suir, 13 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1898,).

⁷⁴ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 16 Sept. 1848.

⁷⁵ O’Mahony’s narrative of 1848, p.3; Doheny, *Felon’s track*, p.164-5.

⁷⁶ Gavan Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*, p.651.

At seven o'clock that evening, of 24 July, O'Mahony learned (via a messenger from Dr O'Ryan) of O'Brien's departure and that the clubmen were not to be brought into town. This placed O'Mahony in an embarrassing position (as he had already issued his muster call) not only with his own clubmen, but also with those distant clubs to whom he had sent messages. O'Mahony went to his own club notwithstanding, and found four hundred men assembled with about eighty guns, and a large number of pikes. The prior arrival of Fr Patrick Morrissey, parish priest of Ballyneale and Grangemockler, spared O'Mahony telling his clubmen the disheartening news. Morrissey sought to disperse them by promising that 'In a fortnight when the harvest is ripe, I shall then perhaps lead you myself and I can do more with my little finger than all your chiefs backed by all your pikes.'⁷⁷ As it turned out the 'perhaps' was the crucial part of this promise. O'Mahony's followers steadfastly refused to be dispersed by Morrissey, but steadily waited for O'Mahony. This shows that for the community O'Mahony was the leader whose word alone would be obeyed.

O'Mahony had ties with faction leaders in the mountain districts of South Tipperary, South Kilkenny and Waterford - still Irish speaking in O'Mahony's time. The faction leaders in this region assumed the leadership of rural Confederate Clubs whose membership probably overlapped with the factions themselves.⁷⁸ Apart from his leadership qualities, O'Mahony could speak Irish, as well as English, and so was in perfect communication with all of his followers. In his narrative of 1848, O'Mahony relates that on the evening of 24 July:

The Club leaders, or rather the Faction Chiefs, from the more distant parishes, came pouring in on me, asking why they had been called to arms, and why, having been so they were countermanded when already on their march? From the reports I then, and afterwards got, of the numbers collected on the different roads radiating round Carrick, and comparing them with what I saw myself of the two parishes mustered on the road that passed by my place, I have no

⁷⁷ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.4; *Catholic Directory* (Dublin, 1848), p. 325.

⁷⁸ Brendan Kiely, *The Waterford rebels of 1849* (Dublin, 1999), p.9 (Hereafter cited as Kiely, *Waterford Rebels of 1849*); Owens, 'Popular mobilisation', p.58.

doubt on my mind that between 7 and 8 o'clock on that night, there were 12,000 men (I made it at 15,000) on march for Carrick-on-Suir.⁷⁹

There was every prospect of a serious outbreak in Carrick at this time, which would have constituted an armed assault on British rule in Ireland. O'Mahony's mustering of the manhood of the district provided enough men surely to commence the insurrection with such short notice. But O'Mahony was obliged to send his followers home and await events. This was a great and, as subsequent events proved, a fatal setback received at the very outset. The lesson of that day burned deeply into O'Mahony who tells us, in his narrative of 1848, that:

Many influential farmers who came out on that day never moved afterwards; either interfered with by the priests, or doubting the capacity of the leaders. They appeared terrified at the step they had taken, and expected to see the hangings and floggings of '98 recommenced.⁸⁰

It was now half a century since 1798, but the imprint of the appalling brutalities that followed its failure were, no doubt, still vivid in people's minds.

The following morning, Tuesday 25 July, O'Mahony and Doheny, who had by this time joined him, made a circuit of some twenty miles in the area around Sliabh na mBan and found the preparations for insurrection still in progress and the men ready. O'Mahony tells us that 'Scarcely a house did we see that there was not a pike displayed, everywhere men were fitting them on handles or sharpening them on the door-flags'.⁸¹ O'Mahony appointed the chapel of Ballyneale as the place of rendezvous and determined to act according to the intelligence, which he would receive, from O'Brien. On their return to O'Mahony's home at Mullough, O'Mahony and Doheny met Meagher who informed them that he was going to Waterford City, to bring up his club – some thousand strong - to join with O'Brien in Cashel. This club was pledged to follow Meagher at a moment's notice. O'Mahony accompanied Meagher across the Suir, to the Waterford side, to meet the transportation that would take him to Waterford City as already arranged by O'Mahony. Before parting

⁷⁹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.4.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid; see also Doheny, *Felon's track*, p. 166.

O'Mahony promised to protect Meagher's clubmen in crossing the Suir with what forces he could collect. O'Mahony then re-crossed to the Tipperary side of the Suir and rode into Carrick. His return to Carrick was, he tells us, to see one or other of Fr Byrne or Dr O'Ryan.⁸²

After arriving in Carrick, O'Mahony learned from Dr O'Ryan, that all the local leaders in Carrick (including himself) were against the revolutionary movement as premature and 'That Byrne would have nothing to do with it. - That it should be put off at least a fortnight until the harvest ripened. - That O'Brien must be mad'.⁸³ After leaving Dr O'Ryan O'Mahony met many of the artisans in Carrick who promised to be prepared for the next call to action. They could by no means comprehend why it was that O'Brien left on the previous evening, and asked why did he not appeal directly to the people.⁸⁴ All had direct access to O'Mahony, who ensured that his followers always got listened to.⁸⁵

From now on O'Mahony was caught in the web of abused loyalties and the inept leadership of O'Brien. With the Confederate leadership now congregating in South Tipperary, their shortcomings came into clear focus: in fact, in the weeks and months that followed, it would become evident that the only word that counted was O'Mahony's – and his orders alone were obeyed.

TACTICS OF GOVERNMENT/CATHOLIC CHURCH

On Wednesday 26 July Meagher returned from Waterford City to arrive at O'Mahony's home in Mullough alone. Meagher related that on coming to Waterford City the previous night, he had sent for the chief men of his club, and one Fr Patrick Tracy. They came to him; Tracy did not. On Meagher's asking them to march, they said they could not do so without Tracy's advice and consent. But it was too late at night to look for Tracy or to muster the other clubmen.⁸⁶ In his narrative of 1848 O'Mahony wrote that:

⁸² O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.5-7; Michael Cavanagh, *Memoirs of Thomas Francis Meagher* (New York, 1892), p.278 (Hereafter cited as Cavanagh, *Memoirs*).

⁸³ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ This tradition, of the Gaelic chief, is clearly delineated in an tAthair Peadar Ó Laoghaire's *An Cleasaidhe* (1913).

⁸⁶ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.5; Cavanagh, *Memoirs*, pp.275-6.

This Tracy, I afterwards understood, was the “Byrne” of Waterford – *Primum Mobile* and chief advisor of the clubs, though not personally presiding over any club himself (Meagher does not seem to blame this man, I do, from the circumstance that his conduct on this first appeal to him was exactly the counter-part of Byrne’s.) I believe they had all received their instructions from headquarters shortly before. – Perhaps by the same post that brought the news of the suspension of the “Habeas Corpus,” Good tactics, if so, on the part of the government, and the heads of the Church, to break up the organization by means of those very men who had contributed much to spread it, and who in so doing had gained the entire confidence of the fighting portion of the people. Carrick men have told me, in excusing Fr. Byrne, that he had been forbidden by his superior, a few days previous, to meddle further in the matter. If so, he must also have got orders to allay the storm he had helped to raise. No man was in so good a position to do so.⁸⁷

Byrne’s willingness ‘to allay the storm he had helped to raise’ is evident in his letter, of 19 July 1848, quoted earlier.

O’Mahony left Meagher, at the house of a prosperous farmer named Coghlan, of South Lodge, whose son, Patrick, presided over the Grangemockler Club, composed of 1,000 men. O’Mahony next met some of these clubmen who told him that they no longer trusted Coghlan as their president and that he was no longer to be counted on in an emergency. O’Mahony made arrangements with the local leaders from Grangemockler, Carrick and his own Ballyneale Club to make up a party of 300 men in total (100 from each district) to be ready at any call to support O’Brien. After returning to Coghlan’s farm, O’Mahony and Meagher agreed that to forestall an impending clerical excommunication they should muster the whole country around O’Brien on Sliabh na mBan, commencing with the well-armed men of the Carrick district. They also agreed that a proclamation should be at once issued, declaring Ireland a Republic, and calling upon all Irishmen to fight in her defence. Meagher wrote a letter to O’Brien urging these several points upon him. At midnight O’Mahony set out for Ballingarry (where O’Brien now was) with this letter. Before

⁸⁷ O’Mahony’s narrative of 1848, p.5.

leaving, O'Mahony promised Meagher that he would be back at 8 o'clock the following morning.⁸⁸

O'MAHONY'S ARRIVAL IN BALLINGARRY

Following their departure from Carrick on the evening of Monday 24 July, O'Brien and Dillon had arrived in Cashel at two o'clock in the morning of Tuesday 25 July. They left Cashel with a new set of companions, Carlow born Patrick O'Donoghue, Dublin born James Cantwell and an employee of the Limerick and Waterford Railway Company from Kilkenny - James Stephens.⁸⁹ Later that day they travelled, via Killenaule, to Mullinahone. Fr Philip Fitzgerald, the parish priest of Ballingarry, wrote of one particular instance of O'Brien's over-scrupulousness in refusing to allow the insurgents to seize provisions at Mullinahone, on Tuesday 25 July:

Those who went to meet him [O'Brien] at Mullinahone remained the whole day in the streets without food or shelter. Some bread was distributed to them at his own expense, and they were told that in future they would have to procure provisions for themselves, as he had no means of doing so, and did not mean to offer violence to any one's person or property. This announcement gave a death-blow to the entire movement.⁹⁰

O'Brien was categorically not a revolutionary leader; he was a constitutional politician who had been forced to place himself at the head of the attempted rising. Those who at first had been enthusiastic, on seeing O'Brien's ineffectual performance naturally became more cautious and determined not to involve themselves with him. This is evident in a letter, dated 29 July, from John Luther, the Mayor of Clonmel, to Dublin Castle, where he wrote that:

From all that I can learn, the leaders of the movement were informed at Mullinahone that their conduct was condemned by every sensible thinking

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.7; Doheny, *Felon's track*, p.173.

⁸⁹ Father P. Fitzgerald, *Personal recollections of the Insurrection at Ballingarry* (Dublin, 1862), pp. 13-17 (Hereafter cited as Fitzgerald, *Personal recollections*); Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.96-7.

man of the country and that Mr. W. S. O'Brien, was evidently disappointed on finding he was not welcome, or sustained by the sense of the country. It is thought he censures Mr. Doheny for leading him to think differently.⁹¹

In a postscript to this same letter, Luther wrote that:

Notwithstanding this hope expressed in the foregoing, as to the present failure of Messrs. O'Brien, Meagher, Doheny, and their associates, in creating an outbreak in this district, I think that the most prompt and vigorous measures should be taken by the government for their arrest, and that to allow them to linger in this part of the country, would afford them a serious opportunity of propagating their unhappy doctrines, amongst the peasantry, and would most probably be misinterpreted to the latter, as the result of weakness on the part of the executive.⁹²

Events would prove that the authorities had nothing to fear from O'Brien or most of the other leading figures of the Irish Confederation.

On Wednesday 26 July, O'Brien and his companions departed from Mullinahone for their first visit to Ballingarry.⁹³ O'Mahony arrived in that town at half past two in the morning of Thursday 27 July and made the following observations regarding the preparations being made for insurrection in Ballingarry:

Countrymen came into town. They might number about 400 good men, among whom were a pretty fair scattering of guns. By the way – that district was pretty well provided with guns, and had been famed as one of the most lawless in Tipperary. But the absence of anything at all like a good pike showed me that the Young Ireland teachings had borne no fruit amongst them. In fact Mr. O'Brien could not have chosen a much worse place. Strangers up to that to the action and resolves of the party, they could not well understand what it was about, nor, I believe, did anyone else. Not one in the hundreds of those thousands assembled had ever seen O'Brien's face before, or that of any

⁹⁰ Fitzgerald, *Personal recollections*, pp.13-14.

⁹¹ Report of John Luther, mayor of Clonmel, 29 July 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, 27/1366)

⁹² Ibid.

one of the companions then with him.... Nothing was doing that ought to be done, and the great men that the country looked up to for light and guidance seemed themselves completely at fault, and stunned by the magnitude of their attempt. Destroying the country's hopes, and making a farce of its struggle by their – yes, it must come out – *absolute imbecility*.⁹⁴

It is clear from the above that O'Mahony placed far more blame upon the inept 'leadership' of the Irish Confederation than on the unpreparedness of the Ballingarry men. O'Mahony's account, of the unsuitability of Ballingarry as the place in which to commence the rising, is corroborated by the recollections of the parish priest of that town, Fr Philip Fitzgerald, who wrote that:

The people were too much occupied with farming business and the colleries, to have much time to devote to political subjects, in which they took less interest than others. Some, who read newspapers or visited the neighbouring towns, had some idea of the distracted state of the country; but the great body of the people seldom thought of it, and least of all did they imagine that the commencement of the outbreak would be amongst themselves.⁹⁵

It was on this visit to Ballingarry that O'Mahony first met the person who was to become the chief executive of the I.R.B. - James Stephens. On this occasion also O'Mahony met, another new arrival, the Liverpool-based Monaghan man - Terence Bellew McManus who had abandoned his position in a very successful shipping agency in Liverpool to join O'Brien's attempted rising. Before O'Mahony departed from Ballingarry for Nine Mile House, at three o'clock in the afternoon of Thursday 27 July, O'Brien agreed to his proposal - to muster the whole country around him (O'Brien) on Slievenamon. It was arranged that O'Mahony and Meagher would meet O'Brien that evening with 300 men as he entered the gorge of the mountains at Nine Mile House.⁹⁶

Upon arriving at Nine Mile House O'Mahony sent for the local leaders, of the Grangemockler club, who had promised to have a party of 100 men to protect

⁹³ Fitzgerald, *Personal recollections*, pp.13-17; Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.96-7.

⁹⁴ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.7.

⁹⁵ Fitzgerald, *Personal recollections*, p.15; *Catholic Directory* (Dublin, 1848), p. 314.

O'Brien, ready at his call. O'Mahony could only meet one of them (whom he does not name) who told him that the parish priest of Ballyneale, Fr Patrick Morrissey, and his curate Fr Richard Comerford, had been from house to house through the parish on that day and had told the people not to stir without their especial orders. When O'Mahony asked the local leader at once to get him the 100 men that had been promised the previous evening, he replied that he could not get a man without Morrissey's permission. Believing this to be a lie O'Mahony, clearly exasperated, told him that 'He and Morrissey might go to the devil; gave him a cut of my whip in the face as a souvenir and rode off'.⁹⁷ Like his grandfather, Tomás óg na bhForadh, before him, O'Mahony used the whip against those who would insult him (with a falsehood in John's case) whether it be an Earl of Kingston or a priest's agent.

O'Mahony next proceeded to Coghlan's farm, at South Lodge, and found that Meagher had left some hours before, accompanied by Patrick Coghlan and Maurice Richard Leyne⁹⁸ for Fr John Kenyon's residence at Templeberry far to the north of the county. In his narrative of 1848, O'Mahony wrote that:

The priest his [Coghlan's] brother told me that he [Meagher] fancied I had fallen into the enemy's hands from my long stay in Ballingarry. I suspect though, that old Coghlan and his wife did all they could to get rid of him and make him believe himself unsafe in their house. I don't know that the young men were very reliable either.⁹⁹

O'Mahony had been counting on the promise that there were 100 men, from the Grangemockler Club, whom he wished to send off immediately to meet O'Brien. This was the beginning of the undermining of O'Mahony's system of communication and couriers and, it would appear that, this undermining was effected by Coghlan. The latter's activities later in the summer would tend to confirm O'Mahony's judgement.

After leaving word at Mullough for his own clubmen to assemble, O'Mahony entered the outskirts of Carrick at about six o'clock in the evening of Thursday 27

⁹⁶ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.8.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Maurice Richard Leyne, from Tralee, County Kerry, was a relative of Daniel O'Connell and a contributor to the *Nation* (Dublin).

⁹⁹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.8.

July. One of the local leaders here, a Patrick O'Donnell (who had promised 100 men the day before) said that not a man could be had without Fr Patrick Byrne's permission. This was, O'Mahony believed, another lie, but he could not see the men personally as it was too late. Following this second disappointment, O'Mahony proceeded to his home at Mullough where he met Michael Doheny and Thomas Devin Reilly, another new arrival. After O'Mahony gave them the news of the proceedings at Ballingarry, Devin Reilly's words were that 'O'Brien ought to be shot!' All three agreed that O'Brien's course of action, or lack thereof, would have to be dealt with at whatever cost. They decided to go to meet O'Brien, who was due to have arrived at Nine Mile House by this time, as quickly as possible. Upon O'Mahony and the others' arrival at Nine Mile House, they found that O'Brien having come within a mile of the village, and not meeting anyone from O'Mahony, had sent for a car to return (as O'Mahony thought) to Ballingarry, some hours previously.¹⁰⁰ In fact the O'Brien party spent the night at Killenaule.¹⁰¹ O'Mahony's analysis of the consequence of these events was as follows:

Now, *O'Brien's not coming to meet us at all hazards – Meagher's departure from where I had left him [Coghlan's farm] – the several disappointments I had met with in my hasty calls upon the people, were all serious blows to our movement. I afterwards found out that had we met with O'Brien on Sliabh na mBan, a most respectable force could not have failed us next day, notwithstanding the countermanding of the priests. Had I time to devote myself to my own vicinity, and keep up the spirit of my personal adherents, no priest could have kept the mass of them away. Unfortunately, in my flying visits to the localities about Carrick, I was compelled to leave my directions with the most prominent men in each - the village "Buddochs" who, being the class from which the priests sprung, were most obnoxious to their influence. The mere *working men* were ready and always willing.*¹⁰²

O'Mahony was a genuine egalitarian. It is evident, throughout his writings, that he had a very high opinion of the 'working men'. In speaking of the 'village Buddochs',

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Fitzgerald, *Personal recollections*, pp.13-17; Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp. 174-5.

¹⁰² O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.9.

O'Mahony probably included the 'gombeen men'. From the late nineteenth century this term was used to describe shopkeepers and other traders who extended credit to local farmers.

The men of Grangemoekler guarded O'Mahony, Doheny and Devin Reilly at Nine Mile House during the night. Before sleeping O'Mahony entered into arrangements for mustering the parish and dispensing with the 'buck-farmers' and club leaders altogether whom he believed 'had shown themselves to be mere puppets in the hands of the priests'.¹⁰³ O'Mahony believed that:

Had, however, the priests directly told the people to give up the idea of fighting altogether, they would not be listened to, for many of them were the same men that had been the first to tell their flocks to arm and organize; and some had told them explicitly, and others had led them to believe, that they would themselves lead them. These latter pious trumpeters of revolution – when it was far off – now shrank from it when it was actually upon them. They hit upon an admirable device to avoid the performance of the duties they had assumed – “Leaders mad to begin so soon - The crops, growing so luxuriantly, not yet ripe.” Told the people to “wait a *fortnight* until they had come in, and then the fight under more able leaders!” Everywhere, this demand of a fortnight's delay met us in the trail of some priest, or priest's emissary.¹⁰⁴

The priests, unable to oppose the nationalist spirit directly, used the subtle tactic of claiming that the insurrection was premature – that it should be put off until the harvest had been brought in. When the time came to take the field, they either refused to assist or actively opposed the attempts to mobilize the people for action.

O'Mahony was far more aware of the capacity of the rural masses for revolutionary insurrection than was O'Brien, who had little contact with ordinary rural people and would not now entrust himself to them. In his narrative of 1848 O'Mahony came to the conclusion that:

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

O'Brien, ignorant, I believe, of the real nature of the Irish peasant, seemed to despair when forsaken by the clerical revolutionists. Had he felt himself strong in their support, and found a *monster meeting* of armed men around him, he might, possibly, have acted otherwise. Seemingly rejected by the majority of the country, he did not, perhaps, feel himself *authorized* to adopt any decided step. Acting entirely on the defensive, he lost precious time and committed the more ardent of his supporters by meaningless armed meetings, his drillings, from which they were nightly dismissed to their unguarded homes, liable to be led thence without being able to make any struggle, to the prison, the gibbet, or the whipping-post.¹⁰⁵

O'Brien very quickly had become a serious and unmanageable liability because he did not do anything that the situation demanded of him.

Early in the afternoon of Thursday 27 July, O'Brien and his companions travelled from Ballingarry, via Mullinahone, and (as already noted) came within one mile of Nine Mile House. They next proceeded to Killenaule where they spent the night at a hotel.¹⁰⁶ On the morning of Friday 28 July, a significant incident occurred at Killenaule. A party of dragoons was seen approaching the town. It was assumed that they had come to arrest O'Brien and barricades were thrown up in their path. The troop consisted of 45 cavalymen of the 8th Royal Irish Hussars, under a Captain Longmore. When they halted before the first barricade Stephens presented a rifle at Longmore, and Dillon asked if he had a warrant for O'Brien's arrest. On giving an assurance that he had no intention of trying to arrest O'Brien, the barricades were lifted and Longmore and his dragoons were allowed through and out of the town. After this incident, O'Brien and his companions took leave of Killenaule and proceeded to Ballingarry for the second time that week.¹⁰⁷ The decision not to fight at Killenaule may have been influenced by the friendly glances of the party of Royal Irish Hussars with the insurgents, three days before, in Callan, West Kilkenny.

In his narrative of 1848 O'Mahony commented on the lost opportunity at Killenaule:

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10.

¹⁰⁶ Fitzgerald, *Personal recollections*, pp.13-17; Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.174-6

This was the morning when the troop was stopped, when my friend Stephens so distinguished himself, and, perhaps, had the fate of the struggle at the end of his rifle, had he been allowed to fire. The insurgents would have been blooded at least, and ever after have, perhaps, better taste for like game.¹⁰⁸

Many years later, in December 1865, Stephens had the ‘fate of the struggle’ in his hands but failed to give the word for a rising.

CONFERENCE AT BOULAGH COMMON, 28 JULY

On Friday, 28 July, O’Mahony, Doheny and Devin Reilly left Nine Mile House for Killenaule in search of O’Brien. Upon reaching Killenaule they found that the O’Brien party had left some time before. O’Mahony and the others next made their way to Ballingarry where they finally found O’Brien and his companions.¹⁰⁹

Meagher soon arrived from Fr John Kenyon’s place in Templederry bringing discouraging accounts from that quarter. Kenyon, a leading member of the Irish Confederation, had promised to call out twenty parishes, but when the time for action arrived he was unwilling to lead his parishioners into, what he believed to be, a hopeless struggle. The bishop of Killaloe, Dr Patrick Kennedy, had suspended Kenyon in May. He was reinstated in June after promising to withdraw from the Irish Confederation.¹¹⁰ O’Mahony wrote later that:

Fr. Kenyon held the same opinion of our proceedings as his reverend confreres. I did not blame him, for I was disgusted myself, and so were most I spoke to. Father Kenyon though, should have known, nay, he must have known, that it was in his power to turn the scale in our favour. That he and his fellows keeping aloof from O’Brien, as if he had been plague-struck might have been *the cause* of our mistakes.... Meagher’s account of Kenyon was, if I remember rightly, most unfavourable to that gentleman, and *then* placed him,

¹⁰⁷ Doheny, *Felon’s track*, pp.175-6; Terence Bellew McManus’s narrative of 1848 printed in Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, p.312.

¹⁰⁸ O’Mahony’s narrative of 1848, p.10.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Donal A. Kerr, ‘*A nation of beggars?*’ *Priests, people and politics in Famine Ireland 1846-1852* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 14, 153; Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, pp. 115, 257-9; Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, (London, 1962), p.354.

in my opinion, in the same category with Byrne, Tracy and the numerous others whose *esprit du corps* was too strong for their feelings as patriots, and their duty as honest and consistent men.¹¹¹

O'Mahony met Kenyon for the first time, twelve years later, in Dublin.¹¹²

Shortly after his arrival at Ballingarry, Meagher, reflecting the views of all those involved, remonstrated with O'Brien upon the hopeless drift of his activity. O'Brien decided to hold a conference at once and hear all their opinions. They therewith proceeded towards Boulagh Common, two miles north of Ballingarry.¹¹³ This was the centre of a colliery district from which O'Brien hoped for support from the miners. Those present at this conference, along with O'Brien and O'Mahony, were the following; Michael Doheny (Fethard), Thomas Francis Meagher (Waterford), James Stephens (Kilkenny), John Blake Dillon (Ballaghaderin), Terence Bellew McManus (Monaghan), Patrick O'Donoghue (Carlow), Maurice Richard Leyne (Tralee), Thomas Devin Reilly (Monaghan), James Cantwell (Dublin), John Kavanagh (Dublin),¹¹⁴ J. D. Wright (Mullinahone)¹¹⁵ and David Power Conyngham (Crohane). Conyngham later became a journalist and author in New York¹¹⁶

O'Mahony was the person most suited to be the field-commander of the insurgents in 1848. He had consistently tried to salvage the situation after what he saw as the crucial mistake made by O'Brien in leaving Carrick the previous Monday of 24 July. The whole game plan was clear in O'Mahony's mind since that fateful day – to protect O'Brien and defy any attempt to arrest him - and he never deviated from it. O'Mahony still deferred to O'Brien, who was well known as a national figure - there was no questioning O'Brien's credentials as an elected representative and as the overall political leader. In his narrative of 1848, O'Mahony tells us that:

The fortnights delay, first mentioned by the Young Ireland priests, and now the unanimous cry of the people, was mentioned at our council [at Boulagh Common] and its practicability discussed under existing circumstances. Some

¹¹¹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.10.

¹¹² Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 14 Apr. 1877.

¹¹³ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.10.

¹¹⁴ Kavanagh was busy establishing himself in the coal trade in Harold's Cross, Dublin, in 1848.

¹¹⁵ Wright was at this time a Trinity College student and afterwards a lawyer in the United States.

¹¹⁶ Michael Fitzgerald 'From Ballingarry to Fredericksburg: David Power Conyngham (1825-1883)' in *Tipperary Historical Journal* 1988, pp.192-9.

suggested that O'Brien should go home [Cahirmoyle, County Limerick] and raise his own neighbourhood while we kept the spirit alive and the agitation hot in Tipperary. We offered to provide him with an escort and see him to his home through the mountains. Reilly, Doheny, myself and some others, considered that he was better anywhere than in that side of the country, where he was positively ruining, if he had not ruined, the cause, and where his reputation for capability was then completely used up. One week had sufficed for this.

I suggested, as this delay of a fortnight was generally believed in by the people, and as the people believed the priests who said they would be with them at that time, that we should accept that delay and conceal ourselves from arrest until then. That we should each take some district where we were well known, re-organize our adherents, hold nightly private meetings, and, by keeping the garrisons in their present dread of attack, prevent them from stirring from their quarters in their pursuit of us. This could be done by false alarms, fires on the hills, blowing of horns and ringing of chapel bells. That we should establish a secure mode of communication, and trusted envoys to pass from one man's district to that of another. There were at that time thousands of devoted men willing to join us if they knew where to find us. That, thirty miles off, people knew no more of our proceedings and whereabouts than if we had sunk into the earth. At Carrick even, but twenty odd miles distant, our friends were imposed on by all kinds of lies. Instead of remaining in my district to keep up the people's hope and courage, and counteract the machinations of the priests and *repentant club leaders*; (men who could not be so useful should have had my present duties) I was compelled to ride post from one quarter to another, carrying dispatches for leaders whom I could not find on my return to where I had left them.

O'Brien refused to leave where he was, said he trusted fully in the people of his present district, and was sufficiently well pleased with how they had protected him up to then. He would not leave them. That he would, and he thought he could hold that district for a fortnight, until the priests' stipulated time had elapsed. He approved of our taking separate districts, and establishing a wider organization and more certain communication with each other and with him.

At my desire, he [O'Brien] forthwith assigned me to the district south of the Gaultie Mountains, extending from Caher and Clogheen, in Tipperary, to Kilworth, Glanworth and Kildorery – including Mitchelstown – in Cork, Galbally and Kilfinnane in Limerick. In this district my family influence had once been very great. My own acts, though not much noised out of our mountains, had not tended to lessen it. My communications I had kept up with its most worthy men, though the hurry of the –48 agitation prevented me from extending the organization. A name does much in Ireland, and along the Gaulties none could compete with mine. My father, and brother had tried its strength with the priests there some years before in political contests and put them down. I could do it too.¹¹⁷

Meagher I thought most popular in Waterford and the vale of the Suir. I was to put him in communication with my trusted men round Carrick. Meagher was to keep up, through them, communication with his own men in Waterford, and his ardent admirers in County Kilkenny. The garrisons of Carrick or Waterford would not stir much while he hung threateningly around them, altering his quarters from the Commerach to Sliab na mBan, and making his headquarters at my house at Mullough. His position was directly south of O'Brien. Doheny was to take his position on the west side of Sliab-na-mBan, threaten the garrison of Clonmel, and get up communication with the men of Cashel, Fethard, and Caher, where he would touch on my district.

Dillon took for a choice to raise the country round Athlone, the garrison of which he had some hope of taking. Another gentleman, whose name I forget was assigned to the Thurles district. The other gentlemen present, having no local influence in the South, agreed to divide themselves between the leaders: Stephens and McManus chose to stay with O'Brien, Leyne and O'Donoghue went with Meagher – Devin Reilly with Doheny. The Council broke up. Several gentlemen – Dillon, Meagher and O'Brien, addressed the crowd of colliers outside – now pretty numerous, and we set off to our several destinations.

¹¹⁷ John O'Mahony would certainly have included his family's leadership role in the anti-tithe campaign of the 1830s in the 'political contests' mentioned above. See Brian J. Sayers, 'The O'Mahonys of Kilbeheny and the Tithe War' in *The O'Mahony Journal* (2002), pp. 3-16.

So ended that famous Council, on which I dwell rather minutely because I had so much to do in urging what turned out unfortunate in the end.¹¹⁸ It was then too late to carry it out, especially as O'Brien was obstinate in keeping the field openly, and persevering in his strange course of action.¹¹⁹

It is significant that O'Mahony was the only man present at the conference whose influence extended over three counties. O'Brien had no influence over the people. After so much delay already in bringing the issue to close quarters, the only hope of rallying the countryside lay in the news of an outstanding success. If O'Brien had taken O'Mahony's advice and gone home, the outcome may have been very different to that which transpired.

After the conference at Boulagh Common had finished, Meagher, Leyne and O'Donoghue travelled with O'Mahony, as he had to install them at their post in his home, at Mullough, before going to the Galtees. O'Mahony and his companions had travelled a short distance when they were met by some armed men, on their way to join O'Brien. Among these were two young gentlemen, Francis O'Ryan of Cashel (very likely a relation of O'Mahony) and O'Mahony's brother-in-law, James Mandeville of Ballycurkeen.¹²⁰ After parting from O'Mahony, O'Ryan and Mandeville continued in the direction of Ballingarry where it would appear that they met Doheny and accompanied him to his post on the western side of Slievenamon. O'Mahony brought Meagher, Leyne and O'Donoghue to the house of a farmer, Patrick O'Hanrahan of Tinklough, and then went home to institute a 'trust guard' for Meagher's protection, while he (O'Mahony) would organize the men of the Galtees and the barony of Condons and Clangibbon.¹²¹

The next day, Saturday 29 July, O'Mahony visited Carrick and all the neighbouring parishes; he found men everywhere willing to defend, obey and co-operate with Meagher and made arrangements to put them in communication with him the following day. That night O'Mahony met Meagher and his companions, at the table-land of Grangemockler; word came that O'Brien had gained a victory near Ballingarry. The account was not very clear and they decided to ascertain the truth

¹¹⁸ Throughout his writings O'Mahony never omits mentioning what he perceives as mistakes made on his part.

¹¹⁹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, pp. 11-12.

¹²⁰ John Mandeville, the fourth son of James Mandeville and Jane Maria (née O'Mahony), would play a prominent role as a local leader in the Land War of the 1880s.

immediately. Thereupon O'Mahony galloped off in the direction of Ballingarry at midnight. Upon reaching Mullinahone he found that most of the young men there had gone out to assist O'Brien. O'Mahony at once gave directions to erect barricades and destroy the neighbouring bridges. As a natural field commander, he knew that it was essential to impede the advance of the military and police to the scene of action. Having ascertained that O'Brien was safe for the present, with reinforcements arriving from all sides, O'Mahony left Mullinahone promising those he met there that his side of the country would be up in arms the next day, and that the enemy would not cross the hills against them unless they had first beaten his forces. Upon arriving home at Mullough the following morning, Sunday 30 July, O'Mahony was met by McManus who had disastrous news.¹²² After a week of drift following his evacuation of Carrick, O'Brien's attempted rising had ended with his defeat by a party of constabulary taking refuge at the Widow Mrs McCormack's house at Farrenrory. This sequence of events is amply covered in other accounts and will not be dealt with here.¹²³

From the first mistake made by O'Brien on the previous Monday, of 24 July, in leaving Carrick, O'Mahony had been in favour of taking a position on the easily defended plateau - the table-land of Grangemockler and Castle John (three miles across by six or seven long), where he could guarantee O'Brien's safety and have a rallying-point for the insurgents. By this means O'Mahony sought to put an end to the insurgents 'wandering, like scattered sheep, through the land' which was a consequence of O'Brien's behaviour.¹²⁴ O'Mahony was aware of the parallel between their situation (in late July 1848) and that of 23 July 1798, when the insurgents in Tipperary held their uprising at CarraigmoCLEAR (just above Grangemockler) on the north-eastern slopes of Sliabh na mBan. At the end of verse one of a contemporary poem, attributed to Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin (1766-1837) of Carraig na bhFear, County Cork, the plight of the leaderless '98 men is explained:

Níor tháinig ár Major i dtús an lae chughainn,

Is ní rabhamar féinig i gcóir ná i gceart,

¹²¹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848 pp.11-15.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹²³ See Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*; Davis, *Revolutionary Imperialist*; Sloan, *William Smith O'Brien*.

¹²⁴ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.13

Ach mar a sheolfaí tréada de bha gan aoire
Ar thaobh na gréine de Shliabh na mBan.¹²⁵

OPEN CONDEMNATION BY CATHOLIC CHURCH

In his narrative of 1848, O'Mahony recalled the events that occurred on the morning after the fiasco at Farrenrory:

It was on this day [Sunday 30 July] that the Catholic Clergy came out openly and strongly against us. Almost every chapel in the neighbourhood resounded with their denunciations of us. O'Brien was proclaimed a "Castle Agent!" in Moincoin, a village in the county Kilkenny, on the way from Carrick to Waterford. The Bishop of Kilkenny [Ossory] denounced him and his adherents and instructed all his priests to do so too. He was generally obeyed. *Having waited through the week and worked in silence against us* watching the turn of events, they now dared to strike at us openly, either boldly lying like the Moincoin man, or by sly insinuations of folly or incapacity, and recklessness of man's lives. The former course was generally adopted by our steadfast opponents, the latter by the men who had been our friends and inciters even till the time of action. It was then thought dangerous to take written notes or I would be more minute in giving individual instances and naming the men; but the fact is notorious and undeniable, that all along the Vale of the Suir – in the counties of Waterford, Tipperary and Kilkenny, and north to Sliabh-na-mBan and the Welsh Mountains, [South Kilkenny] Thurles and Kilkenny, we were put under the ban of the Church.¹²⁶

O'Brien and his lieutenants would place much of the blame for the failure of the attempted rising on clerical abstention and opposition.¹²⁷

At mass that morning, Sunday 30 July, in Ballyneale, O'Mahony heard Fr Morrissey caution the people against allowing any strangers into their houses:

¹²⁵ 'Our Major did not turn up as morning broke./And we were not ourselves properly prepared there./ As might be driven a flock of cattle, without shepherd,/ On the sunny side of Sliabh na mBan': Terry Moylan (ed.), *The age of revolution in the Irish song tradition 1776-1815* (Dublin, 2000), p.76.

¹²⁶ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.14.

¹²⁷ Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, p.234.

“They were spies and emissaries of the government. He would advise their being denounced to the authorities. They were seeking to entrap the people to their destruction”. This was said in so cautious a manner that it might be applicable either to O’Brien and his followers or to the detectives. I went round after mass. Told the people that Father Morrissey had advised them basely and falsely, and desired them to protect and entertain all strangers to the best of their ability, though there were numerous detectives out seeking for a prey. Still there were hundreds of club men from Dublin and other places who had come out looking for their chiefs, and who could not return because they had shown themselves there. It was better to run the chance of meeting the odd detective than of having one of these men delivered up to their enemies.¹²⁸

The clergy’s presence was the bane of the 1848 rising so much so that O’Mahony made sure that they would have no role in Fenianism.

At 10 o’clock that evening O’Mahony, accompanied by McManus, arrived at the farm of Patrick O’Hanrahan of Tinlough, where Meagher and his companions were. Michael Cavanagh¹²⁹ of Cappoquin, who had arrived in Carrick that day, joined them. He assisted O’Mahony in drawing the attention of suspected government agents away from Meagher, O’Donoghue, Leyne and McManus thus keeping them temporarily out of harm’s way. Before parting, Meagher and his companions promised to leave word with O’Hanrahan for O’Mahony, where to find them the next day.¹³⁰

In his narrative of 1848, Patrick O’Donoghue relates the details of their movements at this time:

Immediately after the arrival of McManus and Mahony, P [atrick] J [oseph] Barry¹³¹, Secretary of the Grattan Club and Grey [Philip Gray], Secretary of the Swift Club, arrived. We suspected these men to be spys [sic] and, having given them directions to return to Dublin to manage the clubs and informed them that we were going to Carrick-on-Suir, we parted [from] them and

¹²⁸ O’Mahony’s narrative of 1848, pp.13-14.

¹²⁹ Cavanagh would later become O’Mahony’s secretary in the Fenian Brotherhood.

¹³⁰ O’Mahony’s narrative of 1848, pp. 13-14.

doubled across the summit of the mountain [Sliabh na mBan] and arrived at the other side at 3 o'clock on Monday the 31st July. We spent this day on the south side of the mountain near Doheny but did not see him. On Monday night Meagher, Leyne, Manus and myself started for Keeper Mountain, a distance of about twenty miles. We travelled thro' Fethard, Holy Cross and arrived at Clonoulty on Tuesday the 1st August. We called here at Mr. Mahony's repeal warden¹³² who told us he had 200 men ready.¹³³

This O'Mahony family were probably of the same family as Kickham's mother and, in fact, according to family tradition, Kickham spent most of his early life at Laffina, in the parish of Clonoulty.

One week had now passed since that fateful day on which O'Brien and his companions had arrived in Carrick. On the morning of Monday 31 July, O'Mahony found a large crowd at his door:

Some were stupid and amazed at the pitiful termination of our hopes. Others - the greater number - enraged and indignant, longing to wipe out the disgrace [of Farrenrory]. To the latter, the most numerous party, who now thought themselves under the same ban as their leader, I promised to find out Meagher, to lead them, relying upon the last evening's agreement. I visited Carrick, the [Ahenny] Slate Quarries, and part of the counties of Waterford and Kilkenny, and found the same spirit still alive everywhere. The people demanded Meagher, Dillon and O'Gorman to lead them. I promised to find the former for them. *O'Brien's name I found completely useless.* It would no longer do to conjure with. Not one reliable man, however, believed the contest over.¹³⁴

Contemporary magistrates' reports, in early September, corroborate O'Mahony's assessment that considerable revolutionary spirit remained.¹³⁵ As already mentioned,

¹³¹ Barry, a Cork barrister, was later unmasked as a government informer.

¹³² In October 1842 Repeal wardens were recruited as O'Connell's police force in order to keep law and order at his mass meetings.

¹³³ 'Patrick O'Donoghue's narrative of the 1848 rising' in *Tipperary Historical Journal* 1998, p.41. (Hereafter cited as O'Donoghue's narrative of 1848).

¹³⁴ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.15.

¹³⁵ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 9 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1870); Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 11 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1863).

Meagher and his companions had promised to leave word with the farmer, Patrick O'Hanrahan, for O'Mahony, where to find them the next day. O'Mahony went to look for them but discovered that they were gone, no one knew whither.¹³⁶ O'Mahony and Meagher would not meet again until O'Mahony's arrival in New York City in January 1854.

On the evening of 31 August, O'Mahony received word from Carrick that the military were to visit him that night and consequently he left home after supper. O'Mahony had not gone more than 200 yards on the road when he met Doheny and Francis O'Ryan, of Cashel, coming to him from the western direction. O'Mahony brought them to the house of a farmer named Kiely, who lived near at hand, to spend the night and sent a messenger to his own home at Mullough to obtain some refreshments for them. The messenger not returning, O'Mahony sent another who did not return either. Unknown to O'Mahony his messengers had been arrested. O'Mahony deemed it necessary that someone, who was not a marked man, should be at his home in Mullough to receive those who might come with dispatches from Meagher and the other scattered leaders, so as to communicate them to him. O'Ryan volunteered to go and install himself in O'Mahony's home and was promptly arrested.¹³⁷

In his report, dated 1 August, R.D. Coulson, the resident magistrate at Carrick-on-Suir, relates what occurred at Mullough on that evening, of 31 July:

I proceeded at eleven o'clock with 100 of the 3rd Buffs 212 Dragoons (having about 40 constabulary a quarter of a mile in advance) to search the homes of O'Mahony, Jackson¹³⁸ and Coghlan. In the latter nothing was found. In the former (which in fact is a Miss Jane Ryan's, he [O'Mahony] being her nephew) we discovered a man with a wounded thumb evidently recently received and on examining his shot there was a perforation through both sides of it and similar to that of a bull.¹³⁹ He was arrested saying he had hurt his thumb with a stone. We then searched the house and found quantities of bullets, gunpowder, the apparent staff of a pike broken, caps which we seized. All were concealed under beds. As we were searching (I should mention

¹³⁶ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.14.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.15.

¹³⁸ No further information has surfaced about this person.

O'Mahony was absent) the police arrested a young man named Francis O'Ryan of Cashel. He was on the road close to the house stating that he lodged there and had come from Cashel. He had a dirk and two flasks of powder on his person and caps and had evidently just come from some club meeting. He gave so unsatisfactory an account of himself that I detained him and have remanded him for further questioning until Friday next. He had in his possession a licence for arms granted at Cashel in 1847. There is no doubt he is one of the most active and leading of them, and an intimate friend of Doheny with whom he was seen in close association upon the day when Doheny made an inflammatory speech in this town [Carrick].¹⁴⁰

O'Mahony and Doheny were not long asleep, at Kiely's house, when the maidservants roused them up and told them that O'Mahony's house at Mullough had been surrounded and the men in it arrested. This included both O'Ryan and the messengers who had been captured, having fallen into a trap by an ambushing party of constables placed around the house.¹⁴¹

The following morning, Tuesday 1 August, O'Mahony and Doheny breakfasted at a farmhouse owned by the Quinlan family in neighbouring Ballinderry.¹⁴² O'Mahony then sent Doheny across the Suir into the Comeragh Mountains, in County Waterford, under the guidance of a Carrick boatman, named Drohan, who left him in the care of a farmer, named Power, a faction leader styled 'Dick-na-Gowa' head of the famous 'Gows.' This faction leader was probably Power of Graigavalla, Rathgormack.¹⁴³ In his *Felon's track* (1849) Doheny has left an account of O'Mahony during this period:

Never lived a man of more sanguine hope or intense patriotism. All the vigour of his gigantic intellect, aided by the endurance of great physical strength was tasked to the uttermost in attempting to rouse the broken energies

¹³⁹ This would appear to be a reference to the hole made by the placing of a ring through a bull's nose.

¹⁴⁰ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 1 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, 27/2613). Doheny had made 'an inflammatory speech' in Carrick one week prior to the rally on Sliabh na mBan and again directly after it. Coulson could be referring above to either of these occasions.

¹⁴¹ Ibid; O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, pp.15-16.

¹⁴² Doheny, *Felon's track*, p.186

¹⁴³ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, pp.15-16; Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.201-2; Brendan Kiely, *Waterford rebels of 1849*, p.29.

of the country. He generally spent his nights in interviews with the chief men of the surrounding districts, while his duty by day was to communicate the result to us, and secure a place of safety for the ensuing night.¹⁴⁴

Doheny's reference to O'Mahony's 'great physical strength' is consistent with the description in the *Tipperary Vindicator*, of 16 September 1848, of O'Mahony as 'a very powerful young fellow – full of life and activity'.¹⁴⁵ He stood six feet two inches high.¹⁴⁶

That evening, Tuesday 1 August, O'Mahony found Stephens, at his home, in Mullough, sitting at tea with his aunts. Stephens had remained with O'Brien and McManus after the conference at Boulagh Common on 28 July. Expecting a visit from the authorities that night, O'Mahony and Stephens stayed at the house of O'Mahony's ploughman at Mullough – just a few fields from O'Mahony's home. The following morning, Wednesday 2 August, as they returned to O'Mahony's home for breakfast they saw the house – now within a few hundred yards - surrounded by police and military. O'Mahony and Stephens succeeded in evading their enemies and breakfasted at Quinlans in neighbouring Ballinderry – the same house where O'Mahony and Doheny had breakfasted the previous morning.¹⁴⁷

After breakfast O'Mahony, Stephens and young Quinlan¹⁴⁸ crossed the Suir into County Waterford and went in search of Doheny and, not finding him that day, they slept that night in a shooting lodge in the Comeragh Mountains. The following day, Thursday 3 August, they found Doheny. O'Mahony promised to meet Doheny and Stephens on the next day. With his mind made up to some course of decisive action; he then left them together on the Waterford side, and re-crossed the Suir into Tipperary. O'Mahony still hoped to hear from some of the scattered leaders of the Irish Confederation and tells us, in his narrative of 1848, that 'I determined to stay at home; defy but avoid, the authorities and await the course of events. I could not believe the rest of Ireland dead, and my quarter so full of life still'.¹⁴⁹ Within weeks

¹⁴⁴ Doheny, *Felon's track*, p.208.

¹⁴⁵ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 16 Sept. 1848.

¹⁴⁶ *Irish World* (New York), 17 Mar. 1877.

¹⁴⁷ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.16.

¹⁴⁸ This was probably Robert Quinlan, treasurer of the Kilcash Confederate club, or his brother, David, secretary of the club. They were nephews to Coghlan of South Lodge.

¹⁴⁹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.16.

of the fiasco at Farrenrory, a much more determined insurrection would take place under O'Mahony's leadership.

Some isolated manoeuvres had been carried out in various parts of Ireland, in July 1848, on the initiative of a few individuals who hoped for news from the South to give coherence to their movements. After the suspension of *Habeas Corpus*, Richard O'Gorman had gone to County Limerick where he established an insurgent encampment in the hills above Abbeyfeale.¹⁵⁰ He delayed making a serious effort in Limerick, until O'Brien's rising gave the lead; O'Gorman escaped to the United States soon after hearing of its collapse.¹⁵¹ Philip Gray, the secretary of the Swift Club in Dublin, together with Patrick James Smyth and Thomas Clarke Luby (both Dublin born) made an abortive attempt to spread the rising in Counties Meath and Dublin. Their plans came to nothing after the fiasco at Farrenrory.¹⁵² Thomas D'Arcy Magee established communications with the agrarian secret societies in Sligo and Leitrim (Ribbonmen and Molly Maguires) who promised 2,000 men if the South rose. In early September he escaped to the United States.¹⁵³

FINAL CONFERENCE, COOLNAMUCK WOOD (4-6 AUGUST)

O'Mahony met Doheny, Stephens, and some three or four Carrick men, for a three-day conference in Coolnamuck wood, County Waterford, which lasted from Friday 4 to Sunday 6 August.¹⁵⁴ The Carrick men wanted Meagher and would not follow Doheny whom O'Mahony offered as their leader. In his narrative of 1848, O'Mahony makes clear that at this conference:

I refused the leadership point-blank. I did not know the ramifications of the party, and I hated politics. My ambition was to act as a partisan. My name and person were too little known and would have not *retentissement* through

¹⁵⁰ This was the same region that John O'Mahony's uncle and namesake had organized the United Irishmen in 1798.

¹⁵¹ Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, p. 65; Kiely, *Waterford Rebels of 1849*, p.58; Sloan, *William Smith O'Brien*, pp.221, 267.

¹⁵² Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*, pp.667, 678.

¹⁵³ Thomas D'Arcy Magee's narrative of 1848 printed in Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.289-97.

¹⁵⁴ Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp. 208-9.

the country. Influential men, having a position to lose, would demand – “Who is this?”¹⁵⁵

O’Mahony was not a major public figure and, notwithstanding his influence in the counties of Munster, he was not known nationally – and as he said he ‘hated politics’. O’Mahony did not wish to have any role in political activity; he wanted to ‘act as a partisan’ – to engage in guerrilla warfare. In fact, O’Mahony would prove himself a capable field commander in such warfare before the summer was out.

O’Mahony was not made for politics just as O’Brien was not made to be a revolutionary. It was crucial for O’Mahony to retain the perception that he was not looking for high office in order to keep the trust that had been reposed in him. In a letter published in the *Irish People* (New York), dated 19 May 1861, O’Mahony explained that:

The popularity of our Young Ireland chiefs was of a different character [to O’Mahony’s]. It was far more extended. The reading public knew and admired them almost everywhere throughout Ireland. Their talents had gained them a wide renown; but they had not, as far as I could learn, any large number of the peasantry of any particular district who were personally attached to them by ties of blood and old association. On the other hand, no one knew me at any great distance from my native place.¹⁵⁶

O’Mahony had an inherited sense of responsibility for others who would get involved in the insurrection because he was in it. This remained a consistent feature of O’Mahony.

At the conference in Coolnamuck wood, Doheny wanted O’Mahony to go with him and try to escape. O’Mahony recalled later ‘No! I did not give up yet - was not yet apparently compromised - would keep the kettle of public excitement boiling, and wait for my chance to strike a decisive blow’.¹⁵⁷ O’Mahony showed determination and caution: he was the last to give up, but refused to commit his men to open revolt without a fighting chance of success. Doheny asked could O’Mahony

¹⁵⁵ O’Mahony’s narrative of 1848, p.17.

¹⁵⁶ Letter written by O’Mahony, dated 19 May 1861, printed in the *Irish People* (New York) 14 Dec. 1867.

keep himself and Stephens safe. O'Mahony did not recommend that they stay, as they were more compromised than he himself was but, if they chose to stay, he promised to watch over their safety like his own. They chose to go. Under these circumstances O'Mahony parted with Doheny and Stephens, at three o'clock on the afternoon of Sunday 13 August. O'Mahony regretted their parting soon afterwards and tells us, in his narrative of 1848, that 'I would that we had not [parted]. I felt their want many a long day afterwards. With me they would have remained safe in the same locality, and defied their enemies from guarded and well-watched retreats'.¹⁵⁸ Not one of those who placed themselves in O'Mahony's hands, including Doheny and Stephens – were ever captured.

AFTERMATH: ARRESTS OF CONFEDERATE LEADERS

Following the fiasco at Farrenrory, on 29 July 1848, Dillon made his way to County Galway, eluded the authorities on the island of Inishmaan, before escaping to New York.¹⁵⁹ Where O'Brien went is not known. He remained at large for a week and is said to have lived with the humblest folk. Finally, on 5 August, O'Brien was captured on the platform of Thurles railway station. He was heading for Cahirmoyle, County Limerick, to take leave of his family, with the intention of immediately afterwards surrendering to the government.¹⁶⁰ Meagher, O'Donoghue and Leyne were arrested, on the night of Saturday 12 August, by a party of five police constables on the road between Clonoulty and Holy Cross, County Tipperary. They had spent ten days wandering about this area sleeping in farmer's houses, haylofts and bogs.¹⁶¹ On 30 August, McManus (who had parted with Meagher and the others on Wednesday 2 August) was arrested on board an emigrant ship in Cork harbour bound for America.¹⁶²

In a letter published in the *Irish People* (New York), dated 19 May 1861, O'Mahony explained the underlying reasons why he believed that O'Brien's campaign ended the way that it did:

¹⁵⁷ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.17.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid; Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.208-9

¹⁵⁹ Ó Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon*, pp.92-9; John Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs* (New York, 1868), p.347.

¹⁶⁰ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 9 Aug. 1848; Davis, *Revolutionary Imperialist*, pp. 275-6.

¹⁶¹ O'Donoghue's narrative of 1848, p.42.

¹⁶² Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, p.270.

I have myself felt always convinced that it was only the leaders of the Irish people that were defeated on the occasion I have just mentioned [July 1848]. The people themselves I never considered as beaten; for, as I can prove, they were not fairly tested. This I hold to be true, not merely with reference to the whole Irish people, but also with reference to the peasantry around Ballingarry. Nowhere did they get even a chance of a stand up fight with their foes. There had been no previous organization amongst them, whereby they could have borne up for a day against the slightest reverse at their first uprising. No means of intercommunication had been provided for, except through the public press. When this failed, the whole club machinery became paralysed and utterly useless. At the first start of the insurrectionary movement in South Tipperary, enthusiasm and devotedness and a blind trust in their chiefs were all the people had in their favour, and of these feelings no proper use was made. Instead of leading the excited masses to some decided course of action, their patience was exhausted and their spirits were depressed by a series of defensive manoeuvres that would have been scarcely practicable with an army of veterans. Hence, I am one of those who have always protested against the assertion that the Irish people were defeated in 1848.... I am of opinion that if the leaders had come to me in the vale of the Suir, after the reverse in the first collision with the enemy, instead of fleeing to the four winds of heaven, I could then have placed them not alone in a position to resist any immediate attempt against their persons, but could have given them a force sufficient to retrieve their disasters, if made good use of. Instead of this I was left alone in the field, and, after having for many weeks, kept up the spirits of the men around me, I found that the cause had been given up as lost everywhere except in my immediate locality, and that I had to think and act for myself as best I could, amid an unorganized and impatient multitude.¹⁶³

Largely due to O'Mahony's family connections and his own personality a very real opportunity existed for an aristocratic led (consisting of aristocratic Young Irelanders, well to do upper middle class plus some liberal gentry) and proletariat driven

(consisting of farm labourers, small farmers and artisans) revolutionary insurrection in the late summer/early autumn of 1848: a combination perhaps unique in Ireland's history – or indeed of European history. If O'Brien had taken O'Mahony's advice at any time it would have salvaged the situation for the insurgents.

In his letter to Fr Patrick Lavelle, in August 1862, John O'Mahony wrote that:

Some may think it *insane* to love Ireland better than the advancement of any temporal interests. This, however, is a hereditary and inveterate malady of which I can never be cured. Perhaps the strongest instance of it that I exhibited in my lifetime was when I left my quiet home by the Suir in 1848, to join gentlemen with whom I had no previous acquaintance – of whose resources I was ignorant – in an attempted revolution. By that act I brought ruin and death upon those I loved dearest in the world. That, indeed, was – in the opinion of the world-wise, though not in mine – an act of insanity.¹⁶⁴

O'Mahony could not have predicted the arrival of O'Brien and his lieutenants in Carrick in July 1848 or assessed their lack of readiness for a rising or have had any sense of their incompetence for the job at hand. It typified O'Mahony's leadership and caution to have everything ready on his side before he turned out to meet O'Brien. What almost happened in Carrick at this time indicated that O'Mahony had prepared his ground well.

CONCLUSION

O'Mahony's perception of his role was to follow the family tradition of providing leadership in a time of crisis but the daily grind of political agitation did not attract him. In July 1848 O'Mahony gave up everything because of the burden of responsibility that he felt towards the community. The events of that hectic week (one of the most dramatic weeks in Irish history), beginning on Monday 24 July 1848, and the lessons learned therefrom were to burn deeply into O'Mahony and would mould much of his conviction regarding any future national movement; in particular,

¹⁶³ Letter written by O'Mahony, dated 19 May 1861, printed in the *Irish People* (New York) 14 Dec. 1867.

¹⁶⁴ Letter from John O'Mahony to Fr Patrick Lavelle, printed in the *Irishman* (Dublin), 16 Aug. 1862.

the necessity for the total exclusion of the catholic clergy from any influence. To ensure this it was necessary to break the machine that O'Connell had built up - of having priests embedded in every political organization. The complete separation of church and state would become a fundamental principle of the Fenian movement of which O'Mahony was the chief embodiment.

CHAPTER 3: INSURRECTION – SEPTEMBER 1848

INTRODUCTION

Within weeks of the fiasco at the Widow McCormack's house at Farrenrory, on 29 July 1848, a much more determined and longer lasting insurrection would take place under John O'Mahony's leadership. This was a completely separate and distinct outbreak from the Farrenrory affair and was triggered by different circumstances. Despite the emphasis by historians on the revolt which ended in late July 1848, and the Cappoquin rising of September 1849, the present work will argue that the O'Mahony-led insurrection of September 1848 was much more significant and potentially a far greater danger for the British administration. The government and police records show that the authorities perceived this particular outbreak as potentially a very serious threat, an apprehension they never felt during the period of William Smith O'Brien's perambulations in July 1848. O'Mahony, largely because of the extent and intensity of the loyalty to his family and name, was the only leader to pose any real danger or make serious headway against the government forces in 1848.

From 22 August to late September 1848, O'Mahony, along with John Savage and Philip Gray, both Dublin born, conducted a guerrilla campaign against the police barracks and smaller military posts along the valley of the Suir in the Tipperary-Waterford-Kilkenny border area. Their forces caused panic among the authorities and forced the police to withdraw from a number of barracks. However, eventually a series of reverses led to the termination of their guerrilla activities. Some weeks after the ending of active insurrection, O'Mahony escaped to France and Savage made his way to America. Of the triumvirate, Gray alone remained in Ireland and was to play a leading role in the Cappoquin rising of the following year.

CONTEXT OF INSURRECTION

By the autumn of 1848 the Famine had wrought havoc among the poorer sections of rural Irish society through death from hunger and associated diseases. The failure of the potato crop, for the fourth successive year, left millions facing

starvation.¹ In his *Personal Recollections of the Insurrection at Ballingarry*, the parish priest of Ballingarry, Fr Philip FitzGerald, wrote incisively that:

I thought that, if the government were as anxious to prevent the famine as to put down rebellion, the difficulty would not be greater in one case than in the other; and yet the people were left to die in thousands and tens of thousands, without any legal enactment for their relief, when the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act was only the work of twenty-four hours' legislation.²

While the Famine had certainly ravaged the Irish poor, there was still the potential for armed resistance. Those driven to the brink of economic annihilation, but who had not yet gone over, provided prime revolutionary material. A correspondent from Carrick reported that September in the *Tipperary Vindicator*:

Having been on the spot, I can say that the [insurgent] movement has been caused, not more by political discontent and disaffection than by the grinding social tyranny under which the vast bulk of the labouring population groan, and that it will be extremely difficult to put it down, unless by the employment of the destitute labouring classes and the termination of the system of wholesale eviction. ...There is a violent feeling against the export of corn, &c. and many are the rumours abroad with respect to the intentions of the insurgents regarding it.³

The spectacle of armed soldiers guarding convoys of grain out of the country from the starving poor, accompanied by the mass evictions carried out with government support, must have been intensely provoking for the insurgents.

THE REAPING OF MULLOUGH, 22 AUGUST 1848

In the *Tipperary Vindicator*, of 19 August 1848, it was reported that:

¹ Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the famine 1798-1848* (Dublin, 1990), pp.203-4; John Newsinger, *Fenianism in mid-Victorian Britain* (London, 1994), pp. 30-1.

² Father P. Fitzgerald, *Personal recollections of the insurrection at Ballingarry* (Dublin, 1862), p.6. (Hereafter cited as Fr Fitzgerald, *Personal recollections*).

³ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 20 Sept. 1848.

The *Hue and Cry*, of 17th instant contains descriptions of 9 individuals at Carrick-on-Suir who are “suspected of being engaged in treasonable practices,” and for whom arrest warrants are placed in the hands of the police of that town. The following are the names: Joseph Rivers,⁴ of Tybroughney Castle, Esq; John Purcell, apothecary; John O’Mahony, gentleman; the brothers Robert Quinlan, farmer; David Quinlan, farmer⁵; Patrick Hannigan,⁶ farmer; Patrick Coghlan, farmer; and in Carrickbeg, in the county Waterford, James Quan, victualler; and James Joy, tailor.⁷

O’Mahony’s description, in the *Hue and Cry*, as a gentleman indicates a higher social standing than that of the men described as farmers. With a warrant against him, O’Mahony could not attend to his harvest that August. In a report dated 21 August 1848, R.D. Coulson, R.M. at Carrick, wrote – ‘Everything quiet - the country people are now cutting the crops of those against whom warrants have been issued and saving them for them. They did so for Mr. O’Donnell⁸ and propose doing so tomorrow or [the] next day for Mr. O’Mahony’.⁹

The project that brought the people together in the launch of the new insurgent movement was the reaping of a large field of wheat belonging to O’Mahony in spite of attempts at intimidation by the military. This event is commemorated in the ballad ‘The Reaping of Mullough’, composed by John Savage who was in O’Mahony’s company on that day. On 28 July, Savage had left Dublin seeking to link up with O’Brien in the South. It was upon Savage’s arrival in the Carrick area, on that occasion, that he first met O’Mahony.¹⁰

⁴ In the *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), of 16 September 1848, it was reported that Joseph Rivers had safely arrived in France.

⁵ Before they had parted on their separate ways in early August, O’Mahony and Michael Doheny had breakfasted at the family home of the brothers Robert and David Quinlan in Ballinderry. See Michael Doheny, *The felon’s track* (New York, 1849), p. 186 (Hereafter cited as Doheny, *Felon’s track*).

⁶ Patrick Hannigan was president of the Kilcash Confederate club: Information of Constable Patrick Coughlan, 1 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary 27/2613).

⁷ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 19 Aug. 1848.

⁸ This was most likely James O’Donnell or his brother William both from Ballybo, County Tipperary. Curiously, neither appears in the *Hue and Cry* list of 17 August.

⁹ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 21 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1616).

¹⁰ John Savage, *’98 and ’48: The modern revolutionary history and literature of Ireland* (New York, 1860), pp.327-8 (Hereafter cited as Savage, *’98 and ’48*); Doheny, *Felon’s track*, pp.284-5.

We are told in Savage's poem that the reapers, on that day of 22 August, came 'from Comeraghs wild to Slievenamon, from Grange to Galteemore' and made their way to Mullough to help in the harvesting of O'Mahony's crops.¹¹ This is an extensive area encompassing parts of Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford and Kilkenny. As there were several hundred involved it is quite possible that Savage's sweep of country is not an exaggeration. In his report dated 23 August, Coulson wrote that:

It was reported to me that a large concourse of people had gone out to Mullough for the alleged purpose of cutting the crops of Mr. O'Mahony, and that a boast had been made by them and him that they would be prepared and he would be there and we could not take him. I also thought this cutting of crops might be an excuse for a meeting of another description.¹²

This 'meeting' was undoubtedly a muster for insurrection. It is not clear from Coulson's account how the vow was made that the authorities would not be able to take O'Mahony; but it would be shown that this was no hollow boast.

On that day, of 22 August, the reapers had scarcely begun working when the approach of a troop of horsemen was announced and O'Mahony and Savage, apparently according to a prearranged plan, decided to leave. The authorities had taken out a force of thirty constabulary with a support party of one hundred military and twenty cavalry following a short distance behind. In his subsequent report, Coulson wrote that:

Upon the constabulary reaching the field they discovered an immense assemblage cutting wheat who instantly began to hurrah and fling up their hats and then look above their heads and gathered into one corner of the field. The officer thought it prudent to load and retire until I came up with [the] military which I did in ten minutes and upon hearing his report I marched the whole column into the field and letting the troops proceed with police and searched every man's face through the crowds for O'Mahony, or any others against

¹¹ 'The Reaping of Mullough' is printed in John Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs* (Boston, 1868), pp.303-4 (Hereafter cited as Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*).

whom we had warrants, but found none. He had fled, - if he were there. We also searched three houses. The people instantly became as quiet as mice - not a word from them. They too had daggers but did not dare to use any.¹³

Despite the fact that a follow-up search was made in three houses nearby, no arrests were made and the work of the day went on without further disturbance.¹⁴ The saving of O'Mahony's harvest that day at Mullough was an open challenge to the authorities, but it also demonstrated the insurgents' strong degree of organization and their loyalty to O'Mahony. We have been unable to find anything in the record that occurred in the course of the following two weeks. It would appear that this was a period of intense preparation for what was to come. If O'Mahony had his way this period of preparation would have been prolonged to the eve of the opening of the State Trials.

GUERRILLA WARFARE

By the first week of September, O'Mahony was persuaded to give discipline and direction to the simmering insurrection in Tipperary, Waterford and Kilkenny. O'Mahony felt that he had no choice but to lead the '48 insurrection.

On the 5 September 1848, O'Mahony assigned his interest in the family farm at Clonkilla near Mitchelstown, to his brother in law, James Mandeville, of Ballycurkeen House, County Tipperary, for £225.¹⁵ In his report dated 7 September, Coulson is of the opinion that 'This "rising" if it occurs will be a paltry thing and local and I know there are no funds as O'Mahony is obliged to sell his house - apart from that I think him more dangerous as a leader of this kind of guerrilla warfare than any other'.¹⁶ O'Mahony's presence under the nose of the authorities in Clonmel, Carrick, South Kilkenny and Waterford, presented a serious threat to the government, and terrified local loyalists.

¹² Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 23 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1629).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.284-5.

¹⁵ Memorial of an assignment dated 5 Sept. 1848. Parties: John O'Mahony and John Mandeville (Registry of Deeds, 1848/17/211).

¹⁶ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 7 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1837).

From at least the 5 September, and continuing for several weeks, parties of police and military engaged in constant pursuit of O'Mahony and his comrades who baffled all efforts to capture them. As a leader with a thorough knowledge of the terrain, O'Mahony would have had the advantage over the authorities. He eluded the vigilance of the detectives from Dublin castle in the autumn of 1848 by continually moving about from place to place, and sleeping under a guard provided by his followers.¹⁷

On 5 September parties of constabulary searched an extensive district along the southern base of Slievenamon, in an attempt to trap O'Mahony and his companions; their efforts included an intensive search of Kilcash and Ballypatrick and along the north banks of the Suir. They failed to make any arrests. On the following night, the authorities searched on the Waterford side (where O'Mahony had drilled 300 men the previous night) but were equally unsuccessful. This indicates that O'Mahony's intelligence was extremely good. In that same report, dated 7 September 1848, Coulson admitted that 'I am greatly accursed at not being able to arrest O'Mahony. He is a most dangerous character and has been exciting the minds of the people lately for a rising in both counties [Tipperary and Waterford]. This week is still named for it.'¹⁸ In this same report, Coulson noted that 'All the information I get unhappily comes too late to prove useful.'¹⁹ This is a complaint which Coulson repeatedly throughout his reports during the autumn of 1848.

In his retrospective account published in the *Phoenix* (New York) of 25 February 1860, O'Mahony recalled that nearly two months after the attempted rising in July:

A somewhat similar, and no less imprudent and hap-hazard attempt, was made in the neighbourhood of Carrick-on-Suir. Of this I had the misfortune to be, myself, the ostensible mover. This undertaking was urged on by no immediate exhortations of the press. It was simply the result of the popular indignation of the men of that locality, at the disappointment of their hopes at Ballingarry. At first, as if spontaneously, this feeling took the place of a conspiracy. Without any pledge of secrecy to bind us, all our movements of any

¹⁷ Savage, '98 and '48, p.353; Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.284-7.

¹⁸ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 7 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1837).

importance were kept concealed from the enemy. The authorities of the foreign garrison knew, indeed, of our combination, and might easily guess at our ultimate designs; but they could neither form an estimate of our force nor learn when, where, or how, it was about to be brought to bear against them. This uncertainty, on their part, gave us a very great advantage over them. Night and day, during several weeks, they had parties of their myrmidons in almost constant pursuit of me and two or three fellow-outlaws²⁰, who joined their fortunes to mine – I suppose because they could find no one else then – but though I had no armed or well organized body of men around me, I baffled all their efforts at arresting either myself or my comrades. They never could succeed even in coming within sight of us; and, though we had often to sleep in the open air, and in caverns and woods, still we never lost a night's rest by their pursuit. My friends and adherents were so much more faithful than theirs, that I had better intelligence of their movements than they had of mine. I was nearly always made aware of their intended line of march before they had gone far beyond the precincts of their barracks, so that, by a slight detour, I could always avoid meeting them.

Meanwhile, as some of you may remember, the revolutionary spirit of the people, in and around Carrick-on-Suir, had again become red-hot. The Middle Classes, indeed, stood aloof from me; but the brave peasantry and mechanics flocked around me the more zealously, as if for this very reason. I held constant counsel with influential men among the latter, within the sound of the bugles of our enemies, and, more than once, held parley with their rebelliously disposed soldiers, almost within the lines of their encampments. By these means, I caused my pursuers to suffer many of the evils of an actual campaign, though no opposing force could be seen by them anywhere. Their soldiers and policemen were harassed and worn out by forced marches by night and day, and many of them, broken down by fatigue, had, as I have since learned, to be sent off sick to distant hospitals – but sent thither, privately and

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ O'Mahony is referring here to Savage and Gray.

by night, lest our party should have the satisfaction of knowing the effect of our manner of acting upon their ranks.²¹

O'Mahony's reference to 'popular indignation' in the Carrick area, after the fiasco at Farrenrory, is substantiated by William Ryan, R.M., Clonmel, who noted, in his report dated 2 September, that 'I have heard from a respectable person that the people are not satisfied at all with the way the war ended [at Farrenrory]'.²²

In his *Felon's track* (1849), Doheny specifically mentions the factor of a 'conspiracy' among Irishmen in the British army and notes that in early August 1848:

What had chiefly animated our hopes for the few days was the knowledge that disaffection and conspiracy existed in the ranks of the British army. But among other intelligence of evil omen that reached us was this, that the conspiracy had been discovered. Whether this were true or not, our means of communication were suspended; and, unable to learn what had occurred, we naturally concluded it was the worst.²³

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Irishmen in the British army would be sworn into the I.R.B during the early-mid 1860s. It is significant that the possibility of winning the soldiers over to the revolution had already suggested itself in 1848.²⁴

In his narrative of 1848, O'Mahony relates that he met with Michael Doheny for the last time in Ireland on Sunday, 13 August.²⁵ However, numerous references to Doheny assisting O'Mahony in his revolutionary efforts can be found in contemporary newspapers and in the government and police records.²⁶ It would appear that the authorities were deliberately misled by the reports that they received

²¹ Letter from O'Mahony 'To thirty-one very impatient correspondents – somewhere', dated 10 Feb. 1860, published in the *Phoenix* (New York), 25 Feb. 1860 (Hereafter cited as O'Mahony account in the *Phoenix* (New York), 25 Feb. 1860).

²² Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 2 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrage Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1948).

²³ Doheny, *Felon's track*, p.207.

²⁴ See also Michael Cavanagh, *Memoirs of Thomas Francis Meagher* (Worcester, Mass., 1892), pp.165-70.

²⁵ *Personal narrative of my connection with the attempted rising of 1848* by John O'Mahony (N.L.I., MS 868), p. 17 (Hereafter cited as O'Mahony's narrative of 1848); Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.208-9.

²⁶ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 2 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1948); *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 20 Sept. 1848.

of Doheny's movements at this time, which would have provided a smokescreen for his escape. In the *Clonmel Chronicle*, of Tuesday 12 September, it was noted that:

Doheny and O'Mahony have been hovering about this neighbourhood for the past week, the former is positively stated to have been here a few nights ago; one person who does not deny sympathy with his cause, told me that he saw him on Wednesday night, about half past nine o'clock; he was disguised very little, and had as an object for his visit to discover the movements of the soldiery, as well as communicate with clubbists, who are more numerous here than in any other place in Ireland, taking into account its size. ...Seven confederate leaders were said to have imitated the tactics of the military by getting up a 'flying column' whose quick and sudden movements are the subject of general surprise – one time at the hill of Carrickbeg, another at Lowry's bridge; in the evening encamped at Curraghmore Wood, and away at Kilmacthomas in the morning. Informers themselves are puzzled in giving secret information to the authorities as to the whereabouts of the rebels, their movements are so daring and uncertain.²⁷

The term 'flying column' was originally used to describe small mobile military units. Tipperary and Waterford, in September 1848, remained tense with constant reports of the insurgents' use of flying columns which were extremely difficult for the authorities to combat. O'Mahony's strategy at this time appears to have been to build on small-scale local successes until his forces were strong enough to pose a more substantial military threat. The guerrilla tactics adopted by O'Mahony in 1848 anticipated those used even more effectively by the I.R.A. units in the War of Independence (1919-21) to tie down the numerically superior and better armed British forces.

In his report dated 9 September, Coulson wrote that:

There is no doubt but there has been meetings on a pretty large scale within the last week, but all of rabble, at which most inciting speeches and threats were made by O'Mahony and others. Doheny attended them. Unfortunately

all my information comes the day after it could prove beneficial. I have been several times close upon their heels and on Monday night some of them were so closely pursued that they left their horses upon the road. The better description of farmers are now showing a distaste for any movement. A man named Moore of Clonea I think will give me information.²⁸ O'Mahony inspected and drilled 300 men there on Tuesday night. I was then unfortunately searching for him in Co. Tipperary and the next night when I was at Clonea he was at Coolnamuck also with a large body assembled. So I was particularly unlucky. It is a fact that the labourers refused to come to their work at Moore's on Tuesday morning saying they did not know the moment they might be called upon to fight! Any demonstration these men could get up would I think, be very contemptible, but might be most mischievous in their attacks on private property and persons. In the absence of all means of certain or reliable information, I can only give them as many sleepless nights and busy days as they give me by pursuing a constant system of harassing pursuit and search wearing them out or at least prevent their arms being sufficient.²⁹

In the event Coulson's prediction of 'attacks on private property and persons' did not come to pass. During the period of active insurrection there would be no wanton destruction of property or attacks on loyalists.

The political temperature appeared to be rising throughout early September, in south Tipperary.³⁰ In his report dated 11 September, William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, wrote that:

He [an informant] states that he was in company with several farmers from Ballyneale district and they told him that there is no knowing the moment the people will rise out. They are to muster 30,000 men to commence at Ballyneale, Carrick or Carrick by Glenbower and Nine-mile-House and if not

²⁷ Quoted from the *Clonmel Chronicle*, 12 Sept. 1848 and reproduced in the *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 16 Sept. 1848.

²⁸ There are two Cloneas in County Waterford – Clonea (Power) near Carrick and Clonea (Decies) near Dungarvan. Coulson is referring above to the former. Moore of Clonea (Power) may also be Ryan's informant, who signed his letters as Mr. M.

²⁹ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 9 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrage Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1870).

³⁰ Letter from Mr. M to William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 5 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1825).

they are to go through the country like [George] Washington and everyman who is against them [is] to be shot. O'Mahony, Doheny and a third man from Dublin³¹ is to lead them. O'Mahony has got a suit of war clothes made himself. Four or five men from the Co. Waterford and from Kilkenny, and letters from Co. Cork, were at Ballyneale on yesterday. He [the informant] strongly recommends the police to be brought into town, out of harm. The county was never so well armed with pikes and guns, but all carefully concealed. The Rev. Fr. Morrissey [parish priest of Ballyneale and Grangemockler] spoke to the people for a long time after mass recommending them to have nothing to do with any disturbances. The farmers are inclined for peace but the labourers and broken farmers are so badly off that they do not care what they do. O'Mahony is letting them wild, he is a most reckless man. The farmers that he alludes to sold a quantity of corn and vegetables and were afraid but to bring home gold from the town with those people getting the gold in the bank. He also tells me there is 3 kegs of powder hiding at Mollogh (sic) near Ballyneale.³²

The above account is a very accurate and well-informed report of the state of things at this time. The informant would appear to have been someone who had been taken into O'Mahony's confidence and was now betraying that trust or, just as likely, he was someone being used by O'Mahony to mislead the authorities. O'Mahony was a master tactician. The report also indicates that, in addition to the district around Ballyneale, in South Tipperary, O'Mahony could raise parts of three other counties (Cork, Waterford and Kilkenny) for his insurrection. Strong farmers, at least in the Ballyneale district, were prepared to take part.

O'Mahony is described above as being a 'most reckless man'. Recklessness was certainly not one of O'Mahony's characteristics. On the contrary, Doheny had rightly perceived during his days with O'Mahony, in July-August 1848, that caution was one of O'Mahony's leading characteristic.³³ It would have made it an easy task for the authorities to capture O'Mahony if he had been 'reckless'. The use of this

³¹ This was almost certainly John Savage.

³² Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 11 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1863).

³³ Doheny, *Felon's track*, p.269.

term may be an indirect reference to O'Mahony's excellent horsemanship or, perhaps, police terminology for a serious threat.

Notwithstanding the factors that appeared to be in his favour for staging an insurrection, O'Mahony wrote in his retrospective narrative:

But where was this system of operations to end? For my own part, I had no distinct plan of action on my mind when I assumed the leadership of my brother rebels in South Tipperary and the neighbouring districts of Waterford and Kilkenny. I did it at first, for the sole object of keeping up the war spirit of my immediate neighbours and friends, and of concentrating around me a remnant of the Club organization, and of thus retaining it together, until some more experienced and better known man, should be found to direct it; for I could not then believe it possible that, all our chiefs and leaders had fled from us, never to return, or even to look back at the pitfall into which their own improvidence had led us. I expected that, some one or other of them would turn up somewhere, when they should have heard that, *we were able and willing to shelter and protect them*, and, coming to take the guidance of myself and my comrades, that they would strive to remedy the disaster and shame that fell upon our country, renouncing the clamorous oratorical appeals and sensation articles of the Confederation, and falling into the footsteps of Tone, Fitzgerald and Emmet. To find them do this, would have afforded some satisfaction for the sad desolation which their first attempt had brought upon the homes of some of us. Alas! I laboured under that illusion over long. It was but of late years that it was thoroughly dispelled. With one or two exceptions, it would seem as if the prominent Young Irelanders were then fleeing, not alone from the consequences of the crude and rash enterprise in which they had been just foiled; but from the very cause itself, to which they had committed us all. Up to this day, their flight has been to us, like what is expressed to us by the Irish – *Imtheacht an fhiaigh on Airc; Imtheacht gan casadh choidhche*.³⁴ But this is, perhaps, the wiser course. It is at all events the easier, while the world esteems them heroes and martyrs, leaving to us the disgrace and ruin and grief.

³⁴ "The flight of the deer from the ark, a flight without ever looking back".

Besides this, I fancied that it could not be possible but that some more of their partisans were working in other rural districts, as I was in that of Carrick-on-Suir. Feeling my own personal safety, and feeling how easy it was to reorganize our party with intelligent helpers, I hoped to open a communication, and take counsel with any man that might be keeping the field, previous to taking any aggressive steps whatever. Before I knew my mistake, and learned that I was really alone, I found myself the centre and head of an ardent and zealous, but widely scattered and unorganised force of several thousand brave and faithful partisans.

How was I to bring together in large masses the dispersed, isolated, and undisciplined members of this force. I had scarcely any subordinate officers to divide the labour with me, and to participate in the burthens of command. Whenever I chanced to be personally present, my orders were obeyed; but when I was absent those orders, transmitted through others, were little heeded. In the dearth of assistants, I felt, in my own mind, that some excitement, coming from some outside quarter, should be present, in order to give impetus and direction to a general muster. I dreaded the result of summoning my men together at any preconcerted time and place, or by any command or signal, emanating directly from myself. It seemed otherwise to my most ardent companions and adherents. I now feel that I was right, and that they were wrong; and I shall evermore oppose and condemn any measure of the kind for the muster of undisciplined masses. With experienced and disciplined officers to superintend it and carry it through, in all its parts, the case might be quite different. However, notwithstanding my presentiments, I had then the misfortune to be swayed by other influences.³⁵

The large numbers of insurgents in South Tipperary, Waterford and Kilkenny, mentioned by O'Mahony above, are attested by police/magistrates' reports and contemporary newspapers.³⁶ O'Mahony's general problem as overall commander of the September insurrection was to maintain discipline and control the enthusiasm of

³⁵ O'Mahony account in the *Phoenix* (New York), 25 Feb. 1860.

³⁶ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 16 Sept. 1848; Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 12 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1882); Report of Edward Ashbury, Sub Inspector in Kilmacthomas, to R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 13 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1905).

his followers. O'Mahony had to do something with the thousands of men clamouring for action.

After William Smith O'Brien's arrest in Thurles on 6 August, O'Mahony had been consumed with the single thought of securing his release and that of Thomas Francis Meagher and Terence Bellew McManus. In his report dated 2 September, William Ryan, R.M., Clonmel, wrote that 'The general idea is that it is Doheny and O'Mahony that is stirring up the people, and that the meeting [of insurgents] is relative to the State Prisoners and their trials'.³⁷ O'Mahony recalled later that:

These trials were so likely to rivet the attention of all that remained hopeful and true of the National party upon the above-named town, that any movement, made by my party upon it at that crisis, would have been almost certain of wide support. While, if as was most probable, an attempt at rescuing the prisoners should be made by parties from elsewhere, my force would have been near to second and to complete it. Such were my thoughts. They were, perhaps, the thoughts of the enemy likewise. My presence, almost in their midst, and the large number of my friends, must have caused them great embarrassment and alarm. They were entirely ignorant of the extent of my power to attack them. All they knew was that they could not find me, and that in whatever locality I chanced to spend a day or night, there was always found, on the very spot, an improvised band of some fifty or a hundred men to watch over my safety and to guard me, if need be, while I staid [sic] with them. They were also ignorant of my designs and plans.

In this predicament, their obvious plan was to cause me to display my full strength openly, so that they might be able to crush it, before the State Prisoners should be brought to Clonmel – at least, I now think, that such was their intent. Having seen my hand, they could more easily defeat my plans. But no open force, that they could employ, was able to effect this end – I laughed at their force. How, then, was I to be forced to expose my resources to them. I verily believe that they effected that object, *by getting persons to act covertly upon the impatient and ardent tempers of many of the very truest and most earnest of my supporters.* The latter were insensibly impelled to a

headlong course by the spreading abroad of false rumours of risings, now here, now there, which had existence nowhere. One day a report reached us that the inhabitants of some town or district of Kilkenny was up in arms, and marching to join us. Another day, the rising was said to be in some part of Waterford, Cork or Limerick. At other times, men came running to tell me that, some barrack or other could be taken with some small number of men. It was reported to me more than once that a certain number of the soldiery, in one or other of the neighbouring garrisons, were ready to turn over to us on our first onset. I still steadily refused to take the open field, and soon found that those rumours were, for the most part, unfounded.

But the agents of our tyrants were not to be so readily defeated in their schemes. They seemed but to continue working still more incessantly upon the impatience of my adherents.

At last those adherents were, as I have reason to think, urged by those concealed agents, or, at least, by rumours disseminated by them, to ask me seriously - "Did I mean to let Mr. O'Brien and his fellow-prisoners be hanged before my face, without striking a blow for their deliverance?" To meet my excuse that, "these gentlemen had not been as yet sent down from Dublin to stand their trial," it was confidently reported that 6,000 British soldiers were ordered to march upon Clonmel, and to form an encampment in the immediate vicinity of that town, and thus render abortive, or impossible, any movement of mine. To this, also, I might have paid little heed, had not the rumour been spread at the same time that my only object in keeping up the excitement was for the purpose of effecting my own escape under its cover. I was openly taunted with this even by some well-meaning folk that should have known me better.

My feelings were irritated at so ungenerous a charge, and, in an evil hour, I yielded to the wishes of my companions, and named a time for a general rising of that part of the country. ...Having thus made up my mind for bringing matters to a final issue, I visited in person each locality within my reach, during the short interval left to me. I assigned special leaders and special duties to the men of each place, and pointed certain works to be done

³⁷ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 2 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrage Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary,

by them on the first night of the rising. Trusty messengers were despatched to such quarters as were too distant or too out of the way for a personal visit.³⁸

O'Mahony's account of the authorities use of *agents provocateurs* is consistent with contemporary reports. On Sunday, 10 September, the police at Fethard County Tipperary (Doheny's hometown), discovered notices posted in various parts of the town, which were headed 'Voice from the prison, Liberty, liberty, liberty' and proclaimed:

Brave young men of Tipperary, you are called on to come forward in the cause of your country, as these gentlemen are about to be put on their trials, who forfeited their lives and properties to free you from English tyrants. Will you stand silent, to see those men dragged to the gallows, or the transport ships. No never, men of Tipperary, Cork, Clare, Kilkenny, Limerick (W. S. O'Brien), Kerry, Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow, Dublin, Carlow, Meath and Galway, all Ireland will be with you; come, hold your meetings and free yourselves.³⁹

The *Tipperary Vindicator* recorded the appearance of certain notices in other parts of Tipperary on the same day, and commented:

With whom these notices have originated, it is impossible, of course, that we can conjecture, except from circumstances; and these circumstances amply warrant us in arriving at the conclusion that the notices have not come from parties who may be supposed friendly to the political prisoners to be tried at the Special Commission, which opens tomorrow (Thursday); for that they are calculated to harm rather than serve the political prisoners, is unquestionable. The inference is plain, therefore, that these notices are the handywork of spies and informers, who are just now prowling about all parts of the country.⁴⁰

27/1948).

³⁸ O'Mahony's account in the *Phoenix* (New York), 25 Feb. 1860.

³⁹ Copy of a notice taken down in Fethard, Tipperary by the police on Sunday, 10 Sept. (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1863).

⁴⁰ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 20 Sept. 1848.

Government agents may have posted these notices in order to precipitate the insurgents into premature action before the trials of the Irish Confederate leaders commenced on 21 September.

PREPARATIONS FOR INSURRECTION

In his *Felon's track* (1849), Doheny wrote that Savage acted as O'Mahony's principal counsellor and comrade during the insurrection of September 1848. Together they visited the disaffected districts of Tipperary and Waterford in organising the insurrection.⁴¹ The next most prominent man in the revolutionary movement after Savage was Philip Gray. In late July, Gray had collected over a hundred men in Carrick and had marched them towards Ballingarry to support O'Brien. By the time he arrived, it was already too late. After his discovery of the fiasco at Farrenrory, Gray led his contingent back to Carrick where he was arrested after being found with a case of pistols and ammunition.⁴² Following his release, a few weeks later, Gray got into communication with O'Mahony and succeeded in winning his confidence.⁴³

Thomas Hickey, who lived on a hill farm at Coolnamuck, a townland of Carrickbeg, about a half-mile from Carrick-on-Suir, was another of O'Mahony's lieutenants in September 1848.⁴⁴ John Savage wrote a poem later, entitled 'The Rebel Cot', after the Hickey family's hill-farm, which was a meeting place and a safe haven for O'Mahony, Savage and Gray.⁴⁵ Hickey would take part in the attack on Portlaw police barracks, on 12 September. Some years later, he became a local leader in the I.R.B.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Doheny, *Felon's track*, p. 284; Savage, '98 and '48, p.353.

⁴² Letter from Mr. M to William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 8 Dec.1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2647); Letter from Mr. M to William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 1 Dec. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2529).

⁴³ Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, p.328.

⁴⁴ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 30 Sept. 1849 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2674).

⁴⁵ Mella Cusack, 'Something about a cabbage patch – The Hickey's of Waterford, Thomas Francis Meagher and others' – copy of a paper presented to a Conference celebrating the 150th anniversary of 1848 at Hobart University in 1998; Micheál Briody, 'From Carrickbeg to Rome – the story of Fr. Michael O'Hickey' in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological Society No. 57* (2001), pp.143-4. Thomas Hickey's son, Michael, was appointed Professor of Irish at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth in 1896 and became one of the two vice-presidents of the Gaelic League in 1899.

⁴⁶ Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, *Rossa's recollections, 1838 to 1898* (New York, 1898), p.298.

A John Grant, who served later as an officer of artillery in the Mexican army, was also one of O'Mahony's lieutenants in September 1848.⁴⁷ Another was a man with the surname of Hannan who would appear to have been the same person whom the police discovered at O'Mahony's home at Mullough, on 31 July 1848, with part of his thumb shot off⁴⁸ Hannan would play a prominent role in the 1849 movement.⁴⁹

From at least the evening of 11 September, the insurgents in south Tipperary began to muster in a great camp established by O'Mahony on Carrigadoon Hill (about 5 miles north of Carrick) near the village of Aheny (also known as the Slate Quarries) on the borders of Counties Tipperary and Kilkenny. The division that met at the camp on Carrigadoon Hill was the main body under the command of O'Mahony but it also became the focal centre for the insurgents in the three bordering counties.

In his report dated 12 September, William Ryan, R. M. Clonmel wrote that about 200 men had left that town the night before and were seen going down the north bank of the river Suir, in parties of 15 or 20, to join the insurgents.⁵⁰ It was remarked subsequently in the *Kilkenny Moderator* that:

No doubt now remains of the fact of an insurgent force having assembled and shown a spirit of the utmost determination. The main body of the rebels, said to be 4,000 strong, is encamped on Aheny [Carrigadoon] Hill, in the county of Tipperary, but immediately adjoining the slate quarries, in this county. The position is an extremely strong one, and every possible measure appears to have been taken to add to its security. There is no doubt that leaders of some military experience are in the camp, and the peasantry are being regularly drilled. They are chiefly armed with pikes, but many have rifles. ...Another report asserts that yesterday morning 800 men armed with pikes marched through Coolnamuck wood, from the county of Waterford, to join the insurgents at Aheny Hill. It is also stated that a temporary encampment of

⁴⁷ Thomas Clarke Luby, 'Personal reminiscences of Colonel John O'Mahony' in *Irish World* (New York) 3 Mar. 1877 (Hereafter cited as Luby, 'Personal reminiscences').

⁴⁸ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 1 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2613); Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 30 Sept. 1849 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2674).

⁴⁹ Anthony M. Breen, *The Cappoquin rebellion 1849* (Suffolk, 1998), p.51.

⁵⁰ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 12 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1882).

insurgents was held last night at Lisnatieg in this county, and near Kilcash, in Tipperary.⁵¹

The *Clonmel Chronicle*, of Tuesday 12 September, noted that:

Not a labourer was to be seen between Carrick and Clonmel until he [the reporter] reached this town; all have joined the rebels on the hills, who are represented to number several thousands. ... Their commissariat is said to be most abundantly supplied at the expense of the neighbouring farm-houses.

In his recollections, Dublin born Thomas Clarke Luby also remarked that when he was in the Suir valley in 1849: 'Tom Hickey and other countrymen used to enjoy telling how the insurgents roasted oxen whole on iron gates dismounted and placed over a huge fire'.⁵² Although well fed for the moment, the insurgents would have needed to go further away from the camps to seek provisions after a time.

Meanwhile, John Savage took his station, along with Philip Gray, at a camp which had been formed on Cruachán Paorach, the hill dominating the town of Kilmacthomas in east Waterford.⁵³ In his *Felon's track* (1849) Doheny wrote that 'He [Savage] was entirely unknown to the people; and owed his influence over them to his singular resolution'.⁵⁴ Savage's leadership role is remarkable considering that he was only twenty years of age at this time and, coming from Dublin, was not known in Waterford.

The insurgents' plan of campaign was based on the understanding that one body from the north of the river Suir (under O'Mahony) and one from the south (under Savage/Gray) and a third consisting of an equal number of men promised from Kilkenny (leader unnamed) would march simultaneously on the town of Carrick and Lord Bessborough's estate at Piltown, county Kilkenny where five hundred British soldiers were encamped.⁵⁵ That plan required the insurgents to either capture or force the evacuation of all the police barracks along the valley of the Suir. Once this was

⁵¹ Report from the *Kilkenny Moderator* reproduced in the *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 16 Sept. 1848.

⁵² Luby, 'Personal reminiscences' in the *Irish world*, (New York) 3 Mar. 1877. Luby who would play a prominent role in organizing the 1849 rising and later still in the I.R.B.

⁵³ *Waterford Chronicle*, 16 Sept. 1848.

⁵⁴ Doheny, *Felon's track*, p. 285.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

was accomplished one arm of the government would be neutralised and the countryside would be in the hands of the insurgents. In order to delay the military from advancing quickly out of Waterford City it was necessary to destroy the bridge at Grannagh (east of Carrick) over the Suir and also to cut the city's road link with south Kilkenny. Similarly, to prevent any military advance along the south bank of the Suir, the insurgents needed to hold the town of Portlaw on the main road from Carrick to Waterford.⁵⁶ Some years later, O'Mahony recalled that:

I proceeded in due time to the point where I resolved to take up my own position. On my arrival there I found a large number of my friends assembled together without any order or discipline. It was useless to set subordinate officers over them, for no one seemed willing to obey any orders but my own, and the men appointed over small parties of their comrades, were disobeyed and deserted to follow myself, as soon as ever I left the position where I had stationed them. Thus they kept moving to and fro, like a crowd at a fair. But that was not all. I was disappointed in the attendance of that particular portion of my supporters, whose presence was indispensable to the execution of the special enterprise laid down for that division of our muster. At length day dawned upon us to show that *not one* of the works, which I had commanded to be executed previous to taking a single step in advance, had been anywhere performed – works, without which, I could not hope to hold the field for any time – and that several attempts which I had forbidden, as destructive, had been tried and had failed.⁵⁷

It is clear from the above that O'Mahony's magnetism frustrated his effective leadership. O'Mahony's followers would only obey orders that came directly from him. The serious deficiency in officer material made this inevitable. O'Mahony would make sure that this problem would not be repeated: in Fenian times spontaneous insurrection was to be replaced by a fully-fledged military organization with adequate officers to implement his revolutionary policies.

⁵⁶ Brendan Kiely, *The Waterford rebels of 1849* (Dublin, 1999), p.2 (Hereafter cited as Kiely, *Waterford rebels of 1849*).

⁵⁷ O'Mahony's account in the *Phoenix* (New York) 10 Feb. 1860.

From as early as 5 September, the authorities in Carrick had anticipated an outbreak and accordingly had taken precautions to meet any sudden attack on Carrick or upon the military encampment on the Bessborough estate.⁵⁸ The evidence would suggest that a concerted effort at insurrection had been planned for the evening of 11 September. In his report dated 12 September, William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, wrote that:

The chapel bells of Kilcash and Ballyneale were rung between nine and ten o'clock last night to collect the party to go into Carrick-on-Suir to take the town and rise [sic] the rebellion. There was a messenger came out from Carrick to tell them not to go in as there was [a] strange army in Carrick and that they were not strong enough. Almost every man has left the town of Carrick and is out at the Stony Rock, Co. Waterford, where there are a great number of the people and also more at Newtown mountain [which] borders [on] Co. Kilkenny. They lit sops [i.e. a piece of hay] after the bell rung at the top of Kilcash, Cephain [Seefin, County Waterford] and near Carrick. About an hour before the bell rung the men about Kilcash commenced getting the pikes ready, some of them came to Ballypatrick and then went to Kilcash. Doheny, the two Quinlans, O'Mahony, Coghlan and Pat Hannigan were about the mountain foot all day backwards and forwards. O'Mahony and Coghlan went into Carrick about twelve o'clock in the day. It was those that sent word out not to go into Carrick. They were planning about eight days ago to attack the police barrack and take their arms. James Murphy of Ballypatrick did all he could to make the people go into Carrick last night. Doheny is constantly going to and from the Co. Waterford across the Suir.⁵⁹

The attack on Carrick was not made. As well as being misled about Doheny, the authorities were also misinformed about Patrick Coghlan whose days as a club leader had ended on 27 July 1848. O'Mahony wrote later that 'Young Coghlan never came near us after. He was two months on his keeping, and availed himself of the very day

⁵⁸ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 5 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1825); *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 16 Sept. 1848.

⁵⁹ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 12 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1882).

of the rising I attempted to give himself up, and make his peace with the English authorities.⁶⁰

In an intelligence report, dated 7 September, Coulson noted that 'It was the [insurgents'] intention 'to attack Curraghmore last night and take their cannon, had [the Marquis of] Waterford been absent.'⁶¹ Savage may have planned an attack on Curraghmore House, the residence of Henry Beresford, the third Marquis of Waterford (about two miles west of Portlaw in County Waterford) perhaps with the assistance of O'Mahony's forces from north of the river Suir. A reporter for the *Tipperary Vindicator* ascertained that on the evening of Tuesday 11 September:

O'Mahony had a review of a large body of armed men, estimated at nearly 1,000, last night on a road leading from Slievenamon to Carrick, which they lined at either side for a considerable distance, and who are supposed to have gone on towards Curraghmore.⁶²

No attack was made on Curraghmore House which in fact had been strongly fortified.

KILKENNY AND WATERFORD INSURGENTS

In his '98 and '48, John Savage (the leader of the Waterford insurgents) relates that 'After some weeks of preparation, we finally "lit the fires" on the midnight of 12 September'. According to Savage, the Waterford insurgents were active at Portlaw, Rathgormuck and other places along the northern slopes of the Comeragh mountains.⁶³

Michael Doheny's account of the September insurrection, given in his *Felon's track* (1849), was definitely second hand. He got his information from O'Mahony, whom he may have met in Paris later that year (and with whom he remained in contact) and Savage, whom he met afterwards in New York. In his *Felon's track*, Doheny relates that the unnamed leader of the Kilkenny men went on to carry out his mission. This left O'Mahony and Savage at either side 'to contend with the

⁶⁰ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.8.

⁶¹ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 7 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1837).

⁶² *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 16 Sept. 1848.

⁶³ Savage, '98 and '48, pp.328-9.

impetuosity of their respective followers who demanded with violence to be led on.’⁶⁴ It would appear that the government’s efforts had the desired effect of precipitating the insurgents into premature action. The Kilkenny men were unable to take Kilmacow barracks in the south of the county. They attempted to make Grannagh bridge unusable but failed; it is a very sturdy structure built to last. Scouring parties from each rebel camp went through the country in search of weapons. While a raid for privately held arms was successful near Rathgormack, an attempt made to seize a Reverend William Hill’s arsenal near Mothel failed.⁶⁵

At five o’clock in the morning of Tuesday, 12 September 1848, a detachment of 300 insurgents, under Savage and Gray, surrounded the police barrack at Portlaw, and demanded a surrender of their arms. The eight policemen and a local magistrate who defended the barracks refused to comply; several shots were then fired on both sides. Although the police escaped uninjured, the insurgents sustained the loss of a young man named Wade, the son of a stocking vendor from Kerry. Two unnamed insurgents were also wounded. An attempt to burn the barracks failed and the attack soon petered out. Upon receiving word of the attack by express, Coulson left Carrick for Portlaw with a strong force, and pursued the insurgents, who dispersed. On the following morning the authorities discovered that the rebel force had evacuated their camp on Cruachán Paorach, and disappeared into various woods and mountain passes of the district.⁶⁶

One of the principal men arrested after the attack on Portlaw barracks was James Kenna, president of the Owen Roe Confederate Club in Carrickbeg. Kenna was a master smith who kept two forges. He was imprisoned in Waterford county gaol from 5 February 1849 to 4 December 1850. Patrick Hannigan, mentioned earlier in the *Hue and Cry*, was also arrested for taking part in the attack and was imprisoned in Waterford county gaol from 23 September 1848 to 29 September 1849.⁶⁷

In a letter dated 13 September 1848, Edward Ashbury, sub-inspector of police at Kilmacthomas, County Waterford, wrote to Coulson that:

⁶⁴ Doheny, *Felon’s track*, p.285.

⁶⁵ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 16 and 20 Sept. 1848.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*; Report of John Luther, mayor of Clonmel, 13 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1892); Report of Edward Ashbury, Sub Inspector in Kilmacthomas, to R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 13 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1905).

⁶⁷ Savage, *’98 and ’48*, pp.354-5; Information of Constable Patrick Coughlan, 1 Aug. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary 27/2613); Kiely, *Waterford rebels of 1849*, pp.112,119.

About 3 o'clock p.m. on yesterday the Rathgormack police received information that their barracks was to be attacked by 5,000 rebels, and at [the] same time police saw about 2,000 persons near the village, the most of whom were armed with pikes. ...The police on seeing so large an assemblage of armed men deemed it unsafe to remain there longer, and made their escape here [Kilmacthomas] through the fields.⁶⁸

The above is the first record we have of the forced evacuation of a police barracks by the authorities. This did not happen again for another seventy years when, in 1920, the beginning of the end of British rule was marked by the forced evacuation of the police barracks.

TIPPERARY INSURGENTS

According to Savage, the Tipperary insurgents, commanded by O'Mahony, carried out assaults on the barrack of Glenbower, Scough and the localities around Slievenamon.⁶⁹ At about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, of 12 September, a detachment from the camp of Ahenny, led by the brothers Michael and Richard Comerford of Newtown proceeded to the Ahenny barracks.⁷⁰ The police had left about twenty minutes earlier to take refuge at Piltown, in south Kilkenny. The insurgents, at some distance from the barracks, fired through the windows but, finding that there was no one within, soon took possession of the building and set it on fire.⁷¹ This is the first record we have of the burning of a police barracks.

At about seven o'clock that same evening, of 12 September, a group of one hundred men advanced down both sides of the glen from the north on the police barracks at Glenbower.⁷² This building was strategically located as it commanded the junction of the Carrick to Kilkenny road with the main Clonmel to Kilkenny road and the road from Kells, County Kilkenny. Felix O'Neill, of Lisronagh, in south

⁶⁸ Report of Edward Ashbury, Sub Inspector in Kilmacthomas, to R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 13 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1905).

⁶⁹ Savage, '98 and '48, pp.328-9.

⁷⁰ See letter from Michael Comerford to Thomas Clarke Luby, dated 8 Aug. 1860 printed in *Rossa's recollections*, pp.298-9.

⁷¹ Report of John Luther, mayor of Clonmel, 13 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1892); Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.284-7.

⁷² Report of John B. Graves, Magistrate in Carrick, 7 June 1849 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1946).

Tipperary, led the attack on Glenbower barracks.⁷³ The insurgents were armed with pikes, guns and pistols and some of them were dressed in '82 Club uniforms.⁷⁴ This indicates that at least some of those involved had prior political involvement. The brothers Michael and Richard Comerford (who had burned Ahenny barracks earlier that day) took a prominent part in the attack.⁷⁵ Michael would later become a local leader of the I.R.B. in the Carrick area

The Glenbower police, eight in number, had been ordered to fall back on Carrick. They had been placing their equipment upon carts, when they saw the insurgents approaching, and thereupon retreated to the barracks. The insurgents captured some of the equipment which the police had abandoned outside, and then demanded a surrender of their arms. The police, having in the meantime strengthened their defence, replied by firing a volley at the insurgents. The attack failed when eight policemen from Nine Mile House (also on retreat to Carrick) arrived while the assault on the barracks was in progress. Coming on the insurgents from the rear they opened fire which forced the insurgents to withdraw. It was a terrible oversight, on O'Neill's part, not to have posted scouts.⁷⁶ Patrick Keating of Rathclarish was shot dead during the course of the fight and O'Neill himself was badly wounded. William Kelly, a labourer from Ballyneale, was also wounded. Kelly was subsequently arrested and the following statement was obtained from him:

I was on Newtown Hill this day [12 September] together with several others amounting to about 300 or four hundred. John O'Mahony was there. He was going amongst them on horseback there. He was there all day there [sic]. The Glenbower barracks was to be attacked, and that the armed men were to do it. Nobody told me to do it but a man named John Bryan of Michael Quin's of Ballyneale, where I lived, had a gun but he was tired having been out last night. I offered to take the gun from him and did so. About 13 armed with

⁷³ Eoghan O'Neill, *The Golden Vale of Iowen* (Dublin, 2002), p.481 (Hereafter cited as O'Neill, *Golden Vale of Iowen*).

⁷⁴ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 16 Sept. 1848; Richard Davis, *The Young Ireland Movement* (Dublin, 1987), p.162.

⁷⁵ Report of John B. Graves, Magistrate in Carrick, 7 June 1849 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1946).

⁷⁶ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 16 Sept. 1848; O'Neill, *Golden Vale of Iowen*, p.481.

firearms were there, a priest, many pikemen but also many with only their two hands. The others stopped on the hill until we would return.⁷⁷

The priest mentioned above was obviously someone who carried influence and was probably Fr Patrick Power, the curate of Ballyneale and Grangemockler, who had asked O'Mahony to form a Confederate Club in his parish in the early summer of 1848.⁷⁸ In his report dated 13 September, Coulson wrote that 'It [William Kelly's statement] affords the only proof we have against O'Mahony of active participation'.⁷⁹ William Forbery, sub-inspector stationed at Clonmel, wrote later that:

I heard a man named Michael Donovan, (a stone mason of Kilsheelan), say that he had heard from a man of good authority and one who was at the camp, that O'Mahony was the man who encouraged the people to attack the police barracks at Glenbower and that they were so anxious to do it that they immediately jumped up and ran down the hill so fast that they left O'Mahony behind.⁸⁰

This suggests that O'Mahony was unable to hold his men back any longer. However, neither Forbery's testimony, a vague third-hand account, nor Kelly's deposition provide conclusive evidence that O'Mahony actually ordered the attack on Glenbower barracks. After their failure to overrun Glenbower barracks, the insurgents did not press on to Carrick. If the attack on Glenbower or Portlaw had met with success then the insurrection would probably have gained its own momentum.

AFTERMATH

⁷⁷ Information of William Kelly of Ballyneale, 12 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1898). Although Kelly pleaded guilty at the Tipperary Spring Assizes of 1849 for his part in the attack on Glenbower barracks, he was sentenced to ten years transportation to the colony of Bermuda where he died of dysentery. See Kiely, *Waterford rebels of 1849*, pp. 38-9

⁷⁸ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p.1.

⁷⁹ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 13 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1898).

⁸⁰ Information of William Forbery, sub-inspector stationed at Clonmel, given on 22 Sept. 1848. (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2083).

In a letter dated 13 September, John Luther, mayor of Clonmel, wrote to the under secretary that Carrick and the surrounding countryside was in a 'shocking state of disorder.'⁸¹ In fact, there was unrest in the entire Suir valley between Clonmel and Waterford at this time. Coulson also comments on this state of affairs in his report of the same date:

All around this country it is in a frightful state and the difficulty is most with us hunting from hill to hill after them in escaping and must prove most harassing to the troops. ...The rebel movements and the numerous points they come from renders our duties most difficult. The arms of the rebels are generally speaking most crude pikes. The fire arms are not good nor of ready means to ammunition as it was supposed, at least I think so, but they are rapidly increasing their store by taking them through the country. If we could manage a combined movement to hem them in would be the only means. Their tactics are so cunningly devised they don't afford us an opportunity of doing so. ...The organization and resources of the people are greater than I thought but still they are nothing more than a guerrilla banditti and their strength consists in their power of harassing and fatiguing us.⁸²

O'Mahony's strategy did not set the insurgents' objectives beyond their capabilities and allowed them to evade superior enemy forces. In spite of the insurgents' shortage of arms, their guerrilla strategy based upon flying columns presented the authorities with considerable problems. There had been two to three weeks of preparation leading to the outbreak on 12 September. All of the military operations took place within two days, after which time the camps dispersed. In his *Felon's track* (1849) Doheny wrote about the failure of the assaults on the barracks:

These repulses checked the ardour of the boldest, and gave rise to disunion and distrust. Meantime, the promised reinforcements from Kilkenny failed to redeem the pledge that was given in their name. A whole day and night passed, and no tidings of them arrived. Several of those who were loudest and

⁸¹ Letter of John Luther to Thomas Redington, the Under Secretary, 13 Sept. 1848. (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1892).

most urgent left the camp [on Carrigadoon]. A very large force, however, remained; but after delaying two days without hearing of the Kilkenny men, they determined to disperse. The party at Portlaw adopted the same resolution, and O'Mahony and Savage had to sift for themselves. ...The Kilkenny men arrived at Aheny on the morning after those under O'Mahony had dispersed and finding the place deserted, they immediately returned. This accident once more baffled all hope of a struggle.⁸³

At this time O'Mahony crossed the Suir into County Waterford where it would appear he still had men in the field. In his report dated 15 September, John Orr, Head Constable at Carrick, informed Coulson that the previous day he had received information at Clonea, County Waterford, that

The rebel leader O'Mahony passed that place some time previous from the mountains [Comeraghs, County Waterford] where the insurgents had collected, in company with [Fr Thomas] Burke catholic curate of that parish, who rode together in the direction of Rathgormack.⁸⁴

Fr Thomas Burke, mentioned above, was a curate to Fr John Condon, parish priest of Rathgormack and Clonea.⁸⁵ Coulson noted later that 'Burke seems clearly to have succoured O'Mahony.'⁸⁶

On the night of 15 September Coulson and his troops searched for O'Mahony in the Comeragh Mountains. In his subsequent report Coulson wrote that:

We discovered a band of rebels assembled around a fire, the latter having first attracted our attention. ...A man was seen on horseback in front flying with the rebels. Chase was given and so close was he pursued that he was obliged to abandon his horse and fly to the upper mountain. A mist came on and he

⁸² Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 13 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1898).

⁸³ Doheny, *Felon's track*, p.286.

⁸⁴ Report of John Orr, head constable at Carrick-on-Suir, to R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 15 September 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1998).

⁸⁵ *Catholic Directory*, 1849, pp.325-6.

⁸⁶ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 15 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1928).

was lost [from sight]. That man was we believe, and are almost certain, O'Mahony. The horse was caught and is [William] Villiers Stuarts of Castletown Estate [south Kilkenny], which was taken a few nights ago by the rebels from his servant.⁸⁷

The owner of the horse, William Villiers Stuart, was a liberal M.P. for County Waterford (1835-47). O'Mahony may have agreed with Villiers Stuart to take his horse in a manner that would not compromise him. Although Villiers Stuart held the office of Deputy Lieutenant for County Kilkenny in 1848, he would not appear to have been constrained by his ties with the government.⁸⁸ In fact, all indications are that some of the gentry's sympathies were with O'Mahony and that they were prepared to move with the insurrection if it took off. O'Mahony did not mention the support that he had received from such influential people so as not to put them in an embarrassing position. This was a consistent pattern with O'Mahony.

O'Mahony would appear to have been trying to determine whether further action was feasible, or advisable, at this time. In his report dated 16 September, Coulson noted that:

Letters are going from one county to the other (Waterford) from and to O'Mahony relative to this movement. What its particular object is I must say I know not. But many arms have been taken in the last week, which of course must strengthen them. It is in their weapons they were greatly deficient before. I do not think they will ever dare meet us in a body – so much the worse. I will not dignify the movement by calling it a rebellion. It is a predatory warfare.⁸⁹

Coulson further observed that the political consciousness of the insurgents north of the River Suir (under O'Mahony's leadership) was higher than on the Waterford side where, perhaps, the driving force was to regain the possession of lands. In a report

⁸⁷ Ibid. See also *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 20 Sept. 1848.

⁸⁸ William Villiers Stuart's brother, Henry, was the candidate backed by the Catholic Association in the famous Waterford County election of 1826. See Brendan Kiely, *The Connerys: the making of a Waterford legend* (Dublin, 1994), pp.11-12; *Thom's Irish almanac and official directory* (Dublin, 1848).

⁸⁹ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 16 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1935).

dated 18 September, written by a correspondent to the *Tipperary Vindicator*, it was remarked that:

The adjoining portions of the county Kilkenny and county Waterford have taken up the flame. Iverk, Mullinavat, Scough, and other portions of Kilkenny, the whole barony of Uppertthird in Waterford, with portions of Glенаheiry and Decies; Kilcash, Ballyneale, Newtown, Fethard and [the] country around Slievenamon, in this county [Tipperary] - in all this extensive district the feeling on the part of the population is intense; and it will be out of the question to think that the spirit by which they are animated can be put down unless [the] Government interferes with employment and food and stops the career of extermination which has pauperised and upset the entire country. ...The insurgents, no doubt, are said to have expresses running in all directions. It is said they do not mean to fight, but lead the military [on] long marches through the country until the force is sufficiently strong to enable them to make a stand; but this I hope they will have better sense than to do. This town [Carrick] was never so peaceable as it now is, and I hope most sincerely that it will continue so. There were about forty police last night [16 September] on the alert for Mr. O'Mahony about Ballyneale. They did not succeed in their object.⁹⁰

Further information relating to this attempt to capture O'Mahony at Ballyneale is given in report, dated 17 September, by a John Leech, of Carrick-on-Suir, who noted that:

Last night the police was [sic] in pursuit of O'Mahony the rebel leader and he was pushed so hard with them that he left his pistols and a pair of boots behind him and clothes and a good deal of ammunition in his own house where he was. The rebels has [sic] their camp still on the hills.⁹¹

⁹⁰ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 20 Sept. 1848.

⁹¹ Report of John Leech, Carrick-on-Suir, to a Magistrate Godly in Dublin, 17 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848. Co. Tipperary).

The evidence suggests that O'Mahony's trusted followers continued to guard and protect him as they had done in the weeks prior to the outbreak of insurrection on 12 September. Nevertheless, whatever hopes O'Mahony had for a successful outcome now began to fade and he was forced to give up the guerrilla tactics that he had followed up to that point. In his retrospective narrative, O'Mahony explained that:

The enemy soon learned of our disorder, and our consequent weakness and perplexity. They took their measures accordingly. They intercepted the communication between our several gatherings – sent out persons in peasant garb to disseminate false intelligence – incited certain villages to petty risings, one here one there, through means of their hidden emissaries, so as to be themselves first upon the appointed ground, to anticipate and prevent them from ever coming to a head. What wonder that I was forced to give up any further persistence in my attempt after the manner I had proposed. All order among my followers was destroyed. Their very signal fires were counterfeited by night upon the hill-tops, so that many straggling insurgents, attracted thereby, were shot at and had to flee affrighted, finding foes where they expected to meet none but friends. No trust could be placed anywhere.

Now, my Brothers, this defeat could not have been effected so easily, had I waited until the national excitement, produced by the State Trials, had reached its height. Knowing that I had the materials for insurrection at my command in its immediate neighborhood, the scattered remnants of the Young Ireland party might have concentrated from all quarters upon Clonmel. This would, in some degree, have supplied the kind of persons [with whom] I most wanted to divide and share my labours so as to utilize the willing masses, and I would have ceased to be alone. Every true heart in Ireland would have been on the alert. Thus, the slightest commotion might easily have been fanned into a revolutionary conflagration.

It was, therefore, all-important to the English authorities, that my partisans should be scattered and put down and myself disposed of in some way, before those trials. This would leave on their hands but one difficulty at a time.⁹²

⁹² O'Mahony's account in the *Phoenix* (New York), 10 Feb. 1860.

After the loss of two men not under his immediate command (one at Portlaw and one at Glenbower), O'Mahony probably realised that the proper training and arming of a guerrilla force of thousands of men would require more time than was available to him and decided to send his followers home.

In his report, dated 24 September, Coulson wrote that:

O'Mahony I hear is drinking very hard and reckless. He is not about Mullough but may be about his father's place.⁹³ If a reward were offered for him it might get him. People will now be more ready to avail themselves of it. When they see others becoming approvers – they will wish to be first in the field.⁹⁴

Coulson's information was probably received from an informer. His statement that 'O'Mahony is drinking very hard and reckless' is not consistent with his being impossible to capture. There is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that O'Mahony was ever anything but abstemious.

On 26 September 1848, Dublin Castle offered a reward of £100, which could be obtained by anyone who gave information leading to O'Mahony's arrest. Despite the offer of this reward and the concentrated searches conducted on the countryside around Carrick-on-Suir and across the Suir in Waterford, and although his whereabouts must have been known to hundreds or thousands over time, O'Mahony succeeded in eluding the authorities. In his report, dated 26 September 1848, Coulson remarked that:

There are very many contradictory reports about O'Mahony. He was seen a few days ago near Ballymahon [Bunmahon?], Co. Waterford but took to tale [sic]. I don't believe the half of the gossip about him. He is certainly stalking about endeavouring to make his escape from Waterford and crosses and recrosses the river from one county to the other, whenever pressed. I think we shall get him yet. ...This morning about two o'clock the constabulary patrol

⁹³ This would appear to be a reference to the O'Mahony family farm at Clonkilla, near Mitchelstown, Co. Cork.

stopped a car on which was John Killilea and Miss Ellen Mary Power – the latter the young person who lived in Miss Jane Ryan’s house at Mullough where O’Mahony resided and who was sitting on the balls and caps the night I arrested a Mr. O’Ryan⁹⁵ there. On both of these persons were found powder and balls and shot this morning, also a portmanteau, which belonged to O’Mahony. They were evidently on their way to aid his escape.⁹⁶

In the *Tipperary Vindicator* of the same date a correspondent from Carrick gave further details of this incident:

Mr. J. Killilea, proprietor of the *Waterford Chronicle* and a young lady, Miss [Ellen Mary] Power, were arrested by one of the patrols of police as they were entering the town [Carrick] from the Clonmel side. The car was driven into the yard of the police barracks, as it was said some suspicious articles were concealed in a trunk upon it. 12 police were dispatched to Mullough, the residence of Miss [Jane] Ryan to search the house and in a few hours returned with her under arrest. She was then accused of harbouring her outlawed nephew, and the magistrates allowed her to give bail in a large amount to answer the charge in Clonmel.⁹⁷

John Killilea, the owner and editor of the *Waterford Chronicle*, was charged with treasonable practices and aiding, abetting and succouring O’Mahony. Killilea was imprisoned in Clonmel gaol from 27 September 1848 to 10 February 1849. Ellen Mary Power (very likely a cousin of O’Mahony) was charged with having gunpowder, balls and shot in a proclaimed district and aiding and abetting O’Mahony. She was imprisoned in Clonmel gaol from 27 September 1848 to 4 October 1849.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 24 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2034).

⁹⁵ This was Francis O’Ryan of Cashel who was arrested near O’Mahony’s home at Mullough on 31 July 1848.

⁹⁶ Report of R.D. Coulson, R.M. Carrick-on-Suir, 26 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2075).

⁹⁷ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 30 Sept. 1848.

⁹⁸ Kiely, *Waterford rebels*, pp.120, 124.

DOHENY'S ESCAPE, 29 SEPTEMBER

A reporter for the *Tipperary Vindicator*, of 23 September, wrote that 'I am assured that Doheny has succeeded in effecting his escape from the country, and that it is now nearly a month since those most closely related to him have heard from him'.⁹⁹ This is at variance with Doheny's own account. In his *Felon's track* (1849) Doheny wrote that, on 28 September, after he had reached Cork City:

News arrived that Tipperary was again in arms, under the command of my friend, O'Mahony. The report added that I was associated with him in command. Hour after hour brought some story stranger than that which preceded it; but in each and all I found myself figuring in some character or other, all, of course, contrary to the truth. This fact led at once to a suspicion of the accuracy of the whole. But I was aware that caution was a leading characteristic of O'Mahony's genius, and I felt assured that he would not attempt any open movement without strong probabilities of success. The fabrications about myself I reconciled to the belief that he wished it to appear he had my sanction and support.¹⁰⁰

In view of what we know of O'Mahony's widespread following, it is hard to visualize what Doheny's 'approval' would have added to it. Doheny believed that the reports he received (most likely by mail) meant there was still a chance and delayed his departure for France. After confirmation that O'Mahony had terminated active insurrection, Doheny made his escape, in disguise as a drover, from Cove harbour on board the *Juverna*, on 29 September 1848, across the Irish Channel to Bristol and made his way to London the following day. He took a mail packet from that city to Boulogne, thence to Paris where arrived in early October 1848.¹⁰¹

STATE TRIALS, 21 SEPTEMBER – 23 OCTOBER

⁹⁹ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 23 Sept. 1848.

¹⁰⁰ Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.269-70.

¹⁰¹ Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, pp.270-82.

On the evening of Monday 18 September, William Smith O'Brien, Thomas Francis Meagher, Terence Bellew McManus, Maurice Richard Leyne and Patrick O'Donoghue were taken from Kilmainham gaol in Dublin to Clonmel. Their trials for high treason commenced in that town on 21 September 1848.¹⁰² In a letter dated 8 October 1848, the spy who signed his letters as Mr. M. reported to William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, that:

I am informed that Mahony did not yet go abroad but that he is in some place waiting to know what would become of the State Prisoners and still I can't make off where he is. There is many more besides him that did not yet go though people imagine they did. In the course of the next week we will have news in circulation. When it's known what is become of Mr. Smith O'Brien the minds of the people will be re-animated.¹⁰³

On 7 October, the thirteenth day of the trial, the jury pronounced O'Brien guilty of high treason and on 9 October he was sentenced to death. Meagher, McManus and O'Donoghue were also convicted of high treason and, on 23 October, were likewise sentenced. The prisoners were returned to Kilmainham on 16 November but moved to Richmond Bridewell after a few days. Here they would remain for eight months.¹⁰⁴

As mentioned in an earlier quotation, it had been O'Mahony's original intention to commence his insurrection during the trials of the leaders of the Irish Confederation in Clonmel. He had hoped that they would provide the 'external impulse' required to ignite the insurrection.¹⁰⁵ In his *'98 and '48* (1860) John Savage wrote that 'He [O'Mahony] was in Clonmel during the trial of O'Brien organizing a force to attack the Court House, when he was discovered, and saved himself by leaping from a back window.'¹⁰⁶ O'Mahony does not mention this incident in his own writings, but we have this account of his chief lieutenant John Savage for it.

¹⁰² *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 20 Sept. 1848.

¹⁰³ Letter from Mr.M to William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 8 Oct. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2148).

¹⁰⁴ Robert Sloan, *William Smith O'Brien and the Young Ireland rebellion of 1848* (Dublin, 2000), pp.291-301 (Hereafter cited as Sloan, *William Smith O'Brien*); John Mitchel, *Jail journal* (Dublin, 1910), p.300 (Hereafter cited as Mitchel, *Jail journal*).

¹⁰⁵ O'Mahony's account in the *Phoenix* (New York), 25 Feb. 1860.

¹⁰⁶ Savage, *'98 and '48*, pp.353; *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, p.304.

However, in Luby's recollections there is independent corroboration of the general outline of Savage's story:

In '49, when I was myself endeavouring, in connection with that able political writer, James Fintan Lalor, Joseph Brenan, [Philip] Gray, John O'Leary, John D. Hearn, and others to get up a fresh insurrection in the valley of the Suir, and other parts in the south of Ireland, I heard some of the Tipperary and Waterford peasantry speak of O'Mahony's athletic feats, and also of his hairbreadth escapes, during the months when he was a hunted fugitive with a price set on his head. There were stories then current of his having once baffled his pursuers by swimming his horse across the Suir. I heard too, how he lay concealed one day in a house in Clonmel while the trial of Smith O'Brien or some other of the state prisoners, was going on, within hearing [distance] of the din of the pleadings. The late Joe Brennan and I stood in the room and were shown the window from which he had to take A DESPERATE LEAP, clearing a high wall, in order to escape from the same town, while the police or soldiers were actually rushing up the stairs to capture him.¹⁰⁷

There are some differences in detail between the accounts of Savage and Luby, but there is no reason to question that O'Mahony was planning a rescue attempt at this time. The above account is an encapsulation of O'Mahony's style - of his caution and his courage. O'Mahony knew the danger that he willingly placed himself in and planned his route of escape in case it was needed.

In the *Tipperary Advocate* of 10 May 1862, Charles Joseph Kickham, wrote that after this incident it was made clear to O'Mahony that the prisoners would not accept a rescue attempt.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Philip Gray organized an abortive attempt to rescue the leaders of the Irish Confederation from Clonmel Gaol on 8 November 1848. Though Gray avoided capture, his lieutenant, John O'Leary from Tipperary town and the rescue party of sixteen others were arrested in a field at the Wilderness, outside Clonmel, on the Fethard road, and spent a few weeks in Clonmel Jail. O'Leary would play a significant role in planning the following year's rising and later

¹⁰⁷ Luby's Personal reminiscences in the *Irish World* (New York) 3 Mar. 1877.

¹⁰⁸ Charles J. Kickham 'Apologia pro amico suo' printed in the *Tipperary Advocate*, 10 May 1862.

still in the I.R.B.¹⁰⁹ The O'Mahonys who lived at the Wilderness, Clonmel, may have assisted Gray and the others at this time.¹¹⁰

Early in June 1849 the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Clarendon, influenced by Irish public opinion, conveyed to O'Brien, Meagher, McManus and O'Donoghue his decision to commute their sentences to transportation for life. On 9 July 1849, the prisoners were taken from Dublin's Richmond Bridewell and despatched on board the *Swift* at Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) on their journey to Van Dieman's Land which they reached on 27 October 1849.¹¹¹

The date of O'Mahony's departure from Ireland is unknown. With a price on his head in the late autumn of 1848, O'Mahony made good his escape from Island Castle, between Bunmahon and Dungarvan in County Waterford, on board the Dungarvan schooner, *Johanna*, to Newport, Wales, and thence, after a delay, to France. Captain Timothy Curran, who skippered the *Johanna*, was a brother-in-law of Fr Patrick Byrne, catholic curate at Carrick-on-Suir.¹¹²

ASSESSMENT

O'Mahony was the last of the Gaelic chiefs who became the first of the guerrilla leaders.¹¹³ It is hard to find a parallel to this unique dual role being combined in the one individual. The disturbances, which had been inaugurated by a spontaneous outpouring of loyalty and support to O'Mahony at Mullough, had lasted six weeks in total. If similar insurrections had taken place in other areas, the potential for a general revolution would have been far greater. Nevertheless, the adoption of guerrilla tactics with flying columns, rather than full-scale open warfare, now allowed the insurgent forces to withdraw underground and to keep the nucleus of the revolutionary organization intact.

¹⁰⁹ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 11 Nov. 1848; Marcus Bourke, *John O'Leary, A study in Irish separatism* (Tralee, 1967), pp.18-19.

¹¹⁰ Although there is no attested evidence, it is believed in the families that the O'Mahonys of the Wilderness, of Kilbehny (John O'Mahony's family), and of Laffina (Charles Joseph Kickhams's maternal family) were all related. See O'Neill, *The golden vale of Ivowen*, pp. 544, 555.

¹¹¹ Sloan, *William Smith O'Brien*, pp.291-301; Mitchel, *Jail journal*, p.300.

¹¹² John O'Mahony to Jane Maria Mandeville, 11 Feb. 1853 in James Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs: A John O'Mahony anthology* (Tipperary, 1957), p. 73; Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, p. 304.

¹¹³ Diarmuid Ó Mathúna 'The vision and sacrifice of John O'Mahony' in *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna* (1978), p.32.

O'Mahony's leadership was hindered by the very personal and intense loyalty of his followers. The fact that people would only follow O'Mahony, and the lack of officers to discipline the forces at his command, made a fully disciplined force impossible. Although O'Mahony's magnetism was an obstacle on this occasion it would be utilised to its full potential when it was combined with an adequate supply of officers in Fenian times. Michael Cavanagh from Cappoquin, County Waterford, a local leader in the 1849 rising in his native area, and subsequently O'Mahony's secretary in the Fenian Brotherhood, wrote later that:

The eagerness with which the peasantry and mechanics of the valley of the Suir flocked around the insurrectionary standard raised by John O'Mahony in September of that eventful year, and the courageous devotion with which they adhered to him for the seven weeks during which he baffled all the forces the authorities could bring against him, and plotted against them in their very garrisons and camps, afforded sufficient proof that, had they been properly organized and led by a sufficient number of skilled officers, they could, even with their scanty armament, have inaugurated a formidable insurrection that would extend through the island.¹¹⁴

This factor is also mentioned by Luby in his recollections where he explained that:

O'Mahony always attributed the rapid dissolution of his own insurrectionary movement, which embraced several thousand insurgents in South Tipperary and Waterford, to the fact that little or no material to officer his raw and undisciplined bands to give them some shape and consistency was then at his disposal. He maintained that the very numerical strength of the insurrection, under the circumstances, only added to the unwieldiness of the machine. ...A very slight change of circumstances might have rendered this insurrection far more formidable. Some of the local gentry were inclined to coquet with it. Richard Lalor Shiel's wealthy son-in-law, [John William] Power, of Gurteen (who afterwards, in a fit of temporary insanity, said to have resulted from

¹¹⁴ Michael Cavanagh, 'Joseph Brennan' (N.L.I., MS 3225, Hickey Collection).

some losses at the gaming table, committed suicide¹¹⁵) paid a visit to one of the insurgent camps. Of this there need be little doubt. Indeed, if O'Mahony had been in a position to represent the prospects of his movement in a somewhat more favourable light, there are reasonable grounds for thinking that Mr. Power might have joined him. [James William] Wall, of Coolnamuck, the all but ruined head of an ancient and once wealthy family, was also said at the time to be far from hostile to the aims of the insurgents. Subsequently, in '49, Phil Gray told me that Mr. Wall would at any moment be willing to place all the horses in his stables at our disposal, if we should require them. Whether or not Gray deceived himself to any extent in entertaining this notion I won't take on me to decide positively. O'Mahony certainly seemed to me to think that Mr. Wall was, in those days, by no means troubled with ANY QUALMS OF ULTRA-LOYALTY to the British crown.¹¹⁶

James William Wall, of Coolnamuck Court, County Waterford was a magistrate at that time.¹¹⁷ That August O'Mahony had met Doheny, James Stephens, and some three or four Carrick men, for a three-day conference in Coolnamuck wood (most likely with Wall's co-operation).¹¹⁸ In a letter dated 13 September, T. Moore Grubb, of Carrick, reported to the authorities that the insurgents lit signal fires in close proximity to Wall's house.¹¹⁹

The Powers (De la Poers), who lived at Gurteen le Poer Castle near Kilsheelan, represented the main line of the family and were descended directly from Robert le Poer who arrived in Ireland in the early years of the Anglo-Norman conquest. They were allied by various marriages with the Mandeville and O'Mahony families.¹²⁰ John William Power (1816-51) was the son of Edmond Power (who died

¹¹⁵ Power was in fact the step-son of Lalor Shiel and took his own life, on 12 May 1851, not as a result of a gambling debt but rather because he stood surety under the Court of Chancery for a man named Prendergast who absconded: Letter from Count Anthony de la Poer of Gurteen to the author, 20 July 2004.

¹¹⁶ Luby's Personal reminiscences in the *Irish World* (New York), 3 Mar. 1877.

¹¹⁷ *Thom's Irish almanac and official directory* (Dublin, 1848), p.521.

¹¹⁸ Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp. 208-9.

¹¹⁹ Letter from T. Moore Grubb to William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 13 Sept. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/1825). The Grubbs were a Quaker family who owned a coal and iron business in Carrick.

¹²⁰ *Burke's family records* (London, 1976), p.779; P.C. Power, *History of Waterford City and County* (Cork, 1990), pp.304-5.

in 1830) and Anastasia (née Lalor) whose second husband was Richard Lalor Shiel M.P. from Drumdowney, County Kilkenny.¹²¹ John William was a liberal M.P. for the borough of Dungarven in 1837, for County Waterford (1837-40); he was High Sheriff (1841) and Deputy Lieutenant for the County besides being a J.P.¹²²

An account written in the *Irish People* (New York), of 23 January 1869, by the Tipperary born journalist John Augustus O'Shea, throws further light on the alleged visit of Power to the insurgent camp referred to by Luby above:

On the midnight of the rising, John Power, of Gurteen, a Catholic Member of Parliament, step son of Richard Lalor Shiel, penetrated to the camp fires of the insurgents on the brow of Corrig-a-Nook. He was well known to the people, and, being a Catholic and Repealer, had much influence over them. His mission to the camp was to implore them to throw down such arms as they had and return to their homes. Savage saw that if he permitted such discourse he would not answer for the result. He promptly arrested Power and told him to dismount. He kept him a prisoner for a couple of hours, and at the request of some farmers, after consultation, released him on his parole of honour. Power was a high-bred, gallant gentleman, and was actuated, no doubt, by the best motives. His sad fate some months subsequent to this remarkable adventure with the youthful leader of the Waterford men was deeply deplored.¹²³

This account gives an impression somewhat inconsistent with that of Luby. What we can be sure of is that Power was one that was trusted by the people and knew it.

CONCLUSION

The events that took place during the late summer and early autumn of 1848 caused the revolutionary involvement of John O'Mahony, Michael Doheny, John

¹²¹ Richard Lalor Sheil, lawyer and playwright, played a leading role in the Catholic Association and consistently sought to conciliate liberal Protestant opinion. See Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848* (Cork, 1849), p.2.

¹²² H.A. Doubleday, Geoffrey H. White and Lord Howard de Walden, *The complete peerage or a history of the House of Lords and all its members from the earliest times, vol. x* (London, 1945), p.633; *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922*, edited by Brian M. Walker (Dublin, 1978), pp. 66, 431.

¹²³ John Augustus O'Shea, 'John Savage: Student, poet, patriot' in *Irish People* (New York), 23 Jan. 1869.

Savage, Philip Gray, and significant for subsequent events, James Stephens. In that year of 1848 O'Mahony showed his leadership capacity both organizationally and in the field. However, O'Mahony was never again to enjoy such intense revolutionary activity in his native land, where 'no man was ever followed with truer devotion or more unwavering fidelity,'¹²⁴ as he had done along the valley of the Suir in 1848. The events of that fateful year had longstanding consequences for O'Mahony who, up to then, had lived the comfortable life of a gentleman farmer, contentedly pursuing his scholarly interests. In the crucial hour of 1848, O'Mahony spontaneously emerged as a man of action which brought him from his home and drove him into exile. O'Mahony had now made his public pledge to the cause to which he would devote the remainder of his life - the attainment of complete Irish independence.

¹²⁴ Doheny, *Felon's track*, p.284.

CHAPTER 4: O'MAHONY IN FRANCE (1848-53)

BACKGROUND: FRENCH REPUBLIC 1848

A striking feature of the February 1848 revolution in France was the rapidity of success which it enjoyed, only to be followed by speedy defeat. King Louis Philippe abdicated on 24 February, and two days later the socialist Louis Blanc announced the establishment of the national workshops, which would provide work for the unemployed. Moderate republicans, like Alphonse de Lamartine, who became minister of foreign affairs, feared the radical demand for a war to liberate Poland. Within two weeks of Louis Philippe's abdication, Lamartine issued his Manifesto to Europe. This was a document intended to allay the fears of the other European powers, but it also reflected his views on the limitations of the revolutionary aims, such as they were

Half a century separates 1792 from 1848. To return after the lapse of half a century to the principle of 1792, or to the principle of conquest pursued during the Empire, would not be to advance, but to retrogress.... The world and ourselves are desirous of advancing to fraternity and peace.¹

As minister of the interior, Alexandre Ledru-Rollin was responsible for the organization of the elections for the constituent assembly, which, the republicans hoped, would draw up a comprehensive republican constitution and so validate the revolution of February. On 2 March the provisional government introduced universal male suffrage, thus enfranchising nine million new voters. For their part, the republicans, particularly those to the left, had argued for a delay in the elections in order to provide the opportunity of educating the electorate along republican lines. When the elections took place in April, the bishops took direct action in trying to influence the results. They drew up lists of acceptable candidates, which in turn the priests recommended to their parishioners. Over half of the 900 deputies elected were

¹ Quoted in Peter Jones, *The 1848 revolutions*, (Essex, 1981), p. 34 (Hereafter cited as Jones, *The 1848 revolutions*).

on the right. Of the remainder about 250 were, for the most part, moderate republicans and there were some 70 to 80 radical and socialist republicans.²

There had been considerable opposition to the scheme of national workshops from the right, who saw in them the potential for future revolutionary outbreaks. In June 1848 the constituent assembly announced its intention to abandon the national workshops. Their closure provoked the June Days uprising. The workers set up barricades. The troops of General Louis Eugene Cavaignac (the minister of war), acting for the government, were ruthless in their suppression of the uprising - over 3,000 people were killed. The February revolution had, by contrast, been a relatively bloodless affair, with a mere forty people killed.³

The main political consequence of the June Days was a further shift to the right revealed, first, by the trust placed by the constituent assembly in Cavaignac, and secondly, by the growing popularity of Louis Napoleon, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. Louis Napoleon was elected president of France on 10 December 1848. He polled over five million votes and Cavaignac over a million. Their nearest rival was Ledru-Rollin with a mere 370,119 votes. But for the most part a vote for Louis Napoleon, by the working class, was a vote against Cavaignac, the 'butcher of June'. Once Louis Napoleon had been elected president, the constituent assembly voted for its own dissolution in January 1849. Louis Napoleon was now in a position to consolidate his hold over French government and society. He resorted to traditional methods of administrative manipulation and purged the prefecture of its republican personnel. Despite such precautions the elections for the new legislative assembly held in May 1849 produced a surprising republican representation. There were some 75-80 moderate republicans and a further 180 radical and socialist republicans. Conservative deputies were still in a majority, winning about 500 seats out of the total 900. Although the numerical representation of the left-wing republicans was still considerable, their capacity to take determined political action was insignificant.⁴

Having actively associated himself with the Young Ireland party, the Dublin born architect and Paris correspondent of the *Nation* (Dublin), Martin Mac Dermott, was despatched to Paris in the early spring of 1848, to prepare the way for the deputation of the Irish Confederation – William Smith O'Brien, Thomas Francis

² Jones, *The 1848 revolutions*, pp.32-41, 82; Alfred Cobban, *A history of modern France, volume 2: 1799-1971* (Britain, 1981), pp. 133-46.

³ *Ibid.*

Meagher and Edward Hollywood – to meet Alphonse de Lamartine, the French minister of foreign affairs. In Paris, McDermott met with two veterans of 1798 – General Arthur O’ Connor and the Wexford leader, General Miles Byrne who had been sent by Robert Emmet to Paris to retain contact with the leaders of the United Irishmen there.⁵

On 3 April, Alphonse de Lamartine formally received the delegation of the Irish Confederation led by O’Brien, at the Hôtel de Ville in Paris. Martin McDermott, John Patrick Leonard and Lord Wallscourt, whose father was a prominent Orangeman, accompanied them. The French republican government was under threat from all sides and was in no position to antagonise Britain by offering help to Irish revolutionaries. Beyond enthusiasm the Confederate delegation received no help from France.⁶

On 21 July 1848, the executive council of the Irish Confederation sent Martin McDermott as an envoy to France for the second time in an attempt to procure officers to drill the men and direct the movement.⁷ At the same time two envoys, William Mitchel and Martin O’Flaherty, were sent to America to enlist aid (see chapter five). According to Charles Gavan Duffy, General’s O’Connor and Byrne set to work to procure the assistance that the envoy McDermott required. General O’Connor had an interview on the subject with General Louis Eugene Cavaignac, then chief of the executive in France, who expressed interest. News of the fiasco at Farrenrory, on 29 July, ended the hope of French aid.⁸

O’MAHONY LEAVES IRELAND

In the late autumn of 1848, O’Mahony had embarked at Island Castle, between Bunmahon and Dungarvan in County Waterford, on board the Dungarvan schooner, *Johanna*, and landed in Newport, Wales. In a letter to his sister, Jane Maria, dated 11

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Memoirs of Miles Byrne, edited by his widow [Fanny Byrne]* (Paris, 1863); T.F. O’Sullivan, *The Young Irelanders*, (Tralee, 1944), pp. 392-3.

⁶ Charles Gavan Duffy, *Four years of Irish history, 1845-49* (London, 1883), pp. 561-9 (Hereafter cited as Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*); Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848* (Cork, 1949), p. 167-8 (Hereafter cited as Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*); Robert Sloan, *William Smith O’Brien and the Young Ireland Rebellion of 1848* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 214-24 (Hereafter cited as Sloan, *William Smith O’Brien*).

⁷ ‘Patrick O’Donoghue’s narrative of the 1848 rising’ in *Tipperary Historical Journal*, (1998) p.39.

⁸ Duffy, *Four years of Irish history*, pp.693-6.

February 1853 from No 51 Rue Richelieu, Paris, O'Mahony wrote that he arrived in Newport in 1848 but does not state the month.⁹ In that same letter O'Mahony wrote that his brother-in-law, James Mandeville, paid £20 to Captain Timothy Curran for giving him (O'Mahony) a berth in the vessel. O'Mahony had a mere £9 to his name when he arrived at Newport, having given Captain Curran £1 out of the £10 in his possession, in order that Curran might divide it amongst his four crewmen.¹⁰

O'Mahony is not explicit in time, date and place during his time in Wales. Neither does he give any details of where he slept during his insurrection of September 1848. This lack of information points to the fact that he did not want to compromise anybody that he stayed with. He most likely lay low at or in the vicinity of Newport, perhaps with relatives, during his time in Wales, which may explain his choice of hiding place for we know, in fact, that the maiden-name of O'Mahony's great-grandmother, on his mother's side of the family, was Howell, a Welsh name.¹¹

In a letter from a Thomas Hughes to William Smith O'Brien, dated 15 May 1858, further light is thrown upon O'Mahony's movements at this time:

John O'Mahony now in New York, with whom I believe you became acquainted in Tipperary in 1848 is my attached friend and for this reason – that with a government reward for his apprehension and hotly pursued by detectives, he made his way to Newport, Monmouthshire, where I then had been. Though strangers to each other before, yet as all my feelings and sympathies were fully enlisted in the cause, we soon came together. I provided for his safety for eight or ten weeks though closely watched, until I found a favourable opportunity of taking him to London, where I got a passport for him under the name of John Hughes and placed him on board a steamer bound for [Le] Havre.¹²

⁹ 26 September, the day when Ellen Mary Power and John Killilea were arrested, is last date on which we can say with certainty that O'Mahony was still in Ireland. See *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 30 Sept. 1848.

¹⁰ John O'Mahony to Jane Maria Mandeville, 11 Feb. 1853 in James Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs: A John O'Mahony anthology* (Tipperary, 1957), p. 73 (Hereafter cited as Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*); John Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs* (Boston, 1868), p. 304 (hereafter cited as Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*.)

¹¹ Information on O'Mahony genealogy given by the late Mary Hanrahan, (great grand-niece of John O'Mahony), to Dr Diarmuid Ó Mathúna, Dublin.

¹² Thomas Hughes (with an address at Graham place, Fontenoy street, Liverpool) to William Smith O'Brien, 15 May 1858 (N.L.I., W.S. O'Brien papers, MS 446/3089).

Hughes relates above that O'Mahony remained in Newport for eight to ten weeks. In his '98 and '48, John Savage wrote that O'Mahony remained in Wales for six weeks until an opportunity offered for his conveyance to France.¹³ However, Hughes is probably the more reliable source as he was in O'Mahony's company at this time.

In the *Tipperary Vindicator* of 28 October 1848, it was reported that 'We have been assured that the gentleman [O'Mahony] has reached France and that within the last few days he addressed a letter to a female friend in Waterford, mentioning the particulars of his escape'.¹⁴ This newspaper report may have been disseminated in order to mislead the authorities and to provide a smokescreen for O'Mahony's journey to France. He may have been in Newport or even still in Ireland when the report was published.

O'MAHONY'S ARRIVAL IN PARIS

At the end of 1848, Paris was a city filled with political refugees from the defeated 1848 revolutions in various European cities, including Berlin, Vienna, Prague and Budapest. Spike Island born John Patrick Leonard, a distinguished Irish exile and Professor of English at the Sorbonne, helped the Irish in Paris and tried to generate sympathy in France for the Irish question. Charles Gavan Duffy once said of Leonard that for years he acted as if he were *Chargé d'Affaires* in Paris of an Irish government.¹⁵ In the *Irish World* (New York), of 17 March 1877, he recalled that:

The first time I met John O'Mahony was in 1848, on his arrival in Paris. He was with some of the young men compromised in the attempted rising.... The men present at our first interview were Eugene O'Reilly, who made amends honourable since for his patriotism, [Martin] MacDermott the poet, and others equally forgotten.¹⁶

¹³ John Savage, '98 and '48: *The modern history and literature of Ireland* (New York, 1860), pp.353 (Hereafter cited as Savage, '98 and '48); *Fenian heroes and martyrs* (Boston, 1868), p.304.

¹⁴ *Tipperary Vindicator* (Nenagh), 28 Oct. 1848

¹⁵ Janick Julienne, 'John Patrick Leonard (1814-1889), chargé d'affaires d'un gouvernement Irlandais en France' in *Etudes Irlandaises*, No. 25-2 automne 2000, pp.50-67 (Hereafter cited as Julienne, 'John Patrick Leonard'); Marcus Bourke, *John O'Leary: a study in Irish separatism* (Tralee, 1967), p.134, 207 (Hereafter cited as Bourke, *John O'Leary*)

¹⁶ J.P. Leonard article in the *Irish World* (New York), 17 Mar. 1877.

In April 1848 Eugene O'Reilly had, along with Richard O'Gorman, remained in Paris to obtain military training after the return to Dublin of the O'Brien-led delegation. O'Reilly returned to Ireland to take part in the attempted rising of July 1848 and would later become a general in the Turkish army.¹⁷

After their escapes from Ireland, James Stephens and Michael Doheny headed individually to Paris. Stephens arrived in Paris on 16 September and Doheny arrived two days after him. They met about 9 October. Soon afterwards, Doheny left for the United States and landed in New York early in 1849.¹⁸ It is possible, even likely, that O'Mahony met Doheny before the latter's departure for the United States. Doheny became a leading Irish revolutionary nationalist in New York in the years before the arrival of Mitchel and O'Mahony in that city.

During their years in Paris, O'Mahony and Stephens became members of the 'Irish Parisian Association' (Irish Society in Paris) which included the prominent United Irishmen survivors, General Arthur O'Connor and General Miles Byrne.¹⁹ It was probably through his friend J.P. Leonard that O'Mahony first met these two veterans of '98. The 'Irish Parisian Association' (referred to by Desmond Ryan in his *Fenian chief*) and the 'Irish Society in Paris' (mentioned in Stephens's correspondence) are almost certainly the same organization.²⁰

In a letter to his father in Ireland, dated 27 January 1850, Stephens wrote that up to June 1849 O'Mahony had stayed with a relative in Paris.²¹ Unfortunately Stephens does not relate either the name or address of O'Mahony's relative. We do know that, from mid 1849 onwards, Stephens shared the same accommodation with

¹⁷ Thomas Clarke Luby papers (N.L.I., MS 339a); *Personal narrative of my connection with the attempted rising of 1848 by John O'Mahony* (N.L.I., MS 868), p. 14 (hereafter cited as O'Mahony's narrative of 1848); Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, p. 65.

¹⁸ Michael Doheny, *The felon's track* (Hereafter cited as Doheny, *Felon's track*), pp.268-70; Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian chief: a biography of James Stephens* (Dublin, 1967), p.42 (Hereafter cited as Ryan, *Fenian chief*); Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, pp.291; T.C. Luby, Robert F. Walsh and Jeremiah C. Curtain, *The story of Ireland's struggle for self government with the lives and times of her great leaders* (New York, 1893).

¹⁹ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp.45, 102-3.

²⁰ Letter to James Stephens (signature of sender is illegible), dated 22 Mar. 1849 (T.C.D., Davitt addendum 9659d/48). Davitt addendum refers to the Stephens collection among the Michael Davitt papers in T.C.D.

²¹ James Stephens to his father, 27 Jan. 1850 (T.C.D., Davitt addendum 9659d/8).

O'Mahony at No. 26 Rue Lacépede, off Boulevard St Michel, in the Latin Quarter of Paris, east of the Pantheon, and near Jardin des Plantes.²²

IRISH RISING, SEPTEMBER 1849

By the end of 1848 elements of the old Confederate Clubs had taken on a new structure and became known under the name of 'democratic clubs' locally and the 'Irish Democratic Association' nationally. This network of secret clubs extended from Dublin to Cork and into Counties Kilkenny, Waterford and Tipperary.²³ In writing about the aftermath of O'Mahony's insurrection of September 1848, Michael Cavanagh of Cappoquin, County Waterford, stated that:

O'Mahony, before departing for France, laid the foundation of a secret revolutionary organization in the Vale of the Suir, [with] only about half a dozen of his most trusty and intelligent companions in arms forming the nucleus thereof. Among these were two enthusiastic members of the Dublin Confederate Club, John Savage and Philip Gray.²⁴

The other four men that made up the revolutionary committee put in place by O'Mahony at this time, had probably numbered among his lieutenants in September 1848; men such as Hickey, Hannan, Grant and Comerford (see chapter three). O'Mahony recognised that it was necessary to keep at least the 'nucleus' of a revolutionary organization intact should an opportunity for revolutionary insurrection present itself in the near future. This was a consistent feature of his policy.

Cavanagh's acquaintance with Gray commenced in March 1848, in Dublin, when Cavanagh became a member of the Swift Confederate Club based in that city,

²² Thomas Clarke Luby, 'The father of Fenianism: Personal reminiscences of Colonel John O'Mahony' in *Irish World* (New York), 10 Mar. 1877 (Hereafter cited as Luby, 'Personal reminiscences'); Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*, p.74.

²³ R.V. Comerford, *The Fenians in context: Irish politics and society 1848-1882* (Dublin, 1985), p.18 (Hereafter cited as Comerford, *Fenians in context*); John Newsinger, *Fenianism in mid-Victorian Britain* (London, 1994), p.18.

²⁴ Michael Cavanagh, 'Our dead comrades: Hugh William Collender' published in the *Worcester Messenger* from 19 Apr. to 19 July 1890 and reproduced in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological Society No. 57* (2001), pp.107-130. (Hereafter cited as Cavanagh, 'Our dead comrades: Hugh William Collender.') In the late 1850s, Cavanagh became an influential Fenian, serving as secretary to O'Mahony.

of which Gray was the secretary. Savage was also a member of this club.²⁵ Cavanagh later published O'Mahony's written statement of the contemplated course of action of the organization founded by him in the late autumn of 1848. It would appear that this plan was written down by O'Mahony and given to the committee of six before he left for France. According to this programme:

The home organization was to be perfected and extended quietly but indefatigably. The initiated members were to consist of but a few tried and active men in each locality. The masses were to be instructed to be in readiness for action, to watch attentively the course of events and bide their time. They were not to be required to commence any aggressive movement, but were to be taught to remain as if in ambush until the Irish flag should have been raised by *a body of armed and disciplined men from without*, around whom they would, at a fitting time, be required to rally. Until such a body were actually in the field the Irish peasantry were not to be asked to take up arms. I [O'Mahony] was to have been present myself with such armed force before the general rising. And if I, or someone else, could not take the field in the first instance with such armed force, there should, with my consent, have been no rising at all; in which case the people generally would have no cause to complain of being misled, for they would not have committed themselves to run any risk. Their actual position would not have been altered in the least degree. The initiated and working members of the organization were to be made understand that their great duty consisted in obedience to the orders of their officers. They were to have been forbidden to discuss the prudence or imprudence of the orders. It was also recommended that members of any one company or club should not seek to know the individuals that composed any other. All business communications was to have been carried on through their officers or delegates. The care of subordinates was to have been to hold themselves in readiness for immediate action. It should have been my care and that of those who were then acting with me to superintend the working of the whole, to watch opportunities, and to find *external military aid*. The latter was by me deemed indispensable in the position of our party at that time. I

²⁵ Ibid., p.120.

and those who thought as I did felt that the Irish people could then make no effective attempt at any rising without *powerful impulse from without*.²⁶

O'Mahony's plan of campaign for revolutionary organization, as outlined above, contained the seeds of Fenianism and shows the consistency of O'Mahony. It anticipated the Fenians strategy of seeking assistance for an Irish revolution from a power in conflict with Britain (at that time France) and mapped out the necessary course, which almost came to fruition in 1865. O'Mahony believed that a rising in Ireland had no chance of success without 'a powerful impulse from without' - the involvement of Britain in a foreign war with its consequent strategic potential for Irish revolutionaries. This revolutionary policy was later re-adopted by the Fenian Brotherhood, under O'Mahony's leadership, and was the blueprint for the rising of 1916, when there was the certainty of help from without up to Good Friday of that year.

O'Mahony had an inherited sense of responsibility for others who would get involved in the 1848 insurrection because he was in it. This remained a consistent feature of O'Mahony. In his plan of action, as outlined above, O'Mahony recommended that the 'masses' were not 'to run any risk' until the arrival of 'a body of armed and disciplined men from without' around which they could rally and be led. O'Mahony was aware of the necessity of having trained officers as the nucleus of any future revolutionary insurrection. He also insisted that the new Irish revolutionary organization have a cell-like structure - 'members of any one company or club should not seek to know the individuals that composed any other'.

SAVAGE'S DEPARTURE FOR NEW YORK/GRAY'S ARRIVAL IN PARIS

John Savage left for the United States soon after the formation of the new revolutionary organization in Ireland, and arrived in New York on 7 November 1848.²⁷ Philip Gray now became its most active propagandist left in Ireland. He returned to Dublin where, in the absence of nearly all the prominent national leaders

²⁶ Ibid., pp.121-3.

²⁷ Entry for 'John Savage' in *Dictionary of American biography XVI* (1935), pp.388-9.

of '48, he communicated the plan of the new conspiracy to his trusted associates of the Confederate Clubs still resident in Dublin.²⁸

In a letter dated 1 December 1848, a spy, who signed his letters as Mr. M., wrote to William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, that he had received information that Gray 'had been in France with Mr Mahony said he [Gray] ten days ago and he [O'Mahony] is a lieutenant in the France service'.²⁹ There is no corroborative evidence for this. Gray may have given deliberately misleading information to the spy. One week later, in a letter dated 8 December, Mr. M. informed William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, that:

I am told that he [Gray] was a most inseparable companion of O'Mahony and the other leaders the time of the disturbances. He was taken about Carrick here before and a case of pistols with some powder and ball [was] found in his custody. And I make no doubt but that he would feign excite the people now again for there was never more report of war in the country than there is at present.³⁰

The above report strongly suggests that from the winter of 1848, Gray was fulfilling the role of envoy between O'Mahony and the insurrectionary movement in Ireland.

The political theorist of land reform, James Fintan Lalor, from Tinnakill, Raheen, County Laois, was released from Newgate Gaol, Dublin, in November 1848 on account of his ill health. A secret oath-bound society was formally established in a field at Rathmines in the early spring of 1849.³¹ This revolutionary organization will be consistently referred to as the '49 movement. Its prominent members, along with Philip Gray and James Fintan Lalor were Thomas Clarke Luby, John O'Leary and, after his release from Kilmainham Gaol on 1 March 1849, the Cork born journalist and poet - Joseph Brenan. He had written for John Mitchel's *United Irishman* (Dublin) and its successor the *Irish Felon* (Dublin).³²

²⁸ Michael Cavanagh, 'Joseph Brenan' (N.L.I., Hickey Collection, MS 3225); Savage, '98 and '48, p.350.

²⁹ Letter from Mr. M to William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 1 Dec. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2529).

³⁰ Letter from Mr. M to William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 8 Dec. 1848 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2647).

³¹ Brendan Kiely, *The Waterford rebels of 1849* (Dublin, 1999), p.12 (Hereafter cited as Kiely, *Waterford rebels of 1849*)

³² Michael Cavanagh, 'Joseph Brenan' (N.L.I., Hickey Collection, MS 3225); Savage, '98 and '48, p.350.

In the late spring of 1849, Gray left South Tipperary and went to Paris. For a period of some months he received assistance from his fellow Irish exiles in that city and endeavoured to support himself by teaching drawing. In the early summer of 1849 Lalor recalled Gray to Ireland.³³ Thomas Clarke Luby made clear later that 'Returning to Ireland in 1849, Phil [Gray] formed a link of communication between O'Mahony and the secret movement in Ireland in which James Fintan Lalor, Joseph Brennan, John O'Leary, myself and others were engaged throughout that year'.³⁴

In a letter, dated 15 May 1849, Stephens wrote to an unnamed friend - 'Mon cher ami' (Doheny) that:

O'Mahony is in constant communication with his district – Carrick, Waterford, and part of Kilkenny – and this can be more widely spread with safety; the Dublin men must be hard at work, as they have recalled a man whose neck is in as much danger as anybody's that I know.³⁵

This was certainly Gray who returned to Ireland on Lalor's summons about the time Stephens's letter was written. Gray now had a plan ready.

In May 1849, Gray unfolded the plan of action of the '49 movement in detail to Cavanagh. It would appear that their meeting took place in Cappoquin, County Waterford. Cappoquin had a long established Confederate Club, which had been formed about March 1847 by John Williams, of Dublin, an influential member of the late central council of the Irish Confederation.³⁶ Gray met Cavanagh's chief objection – the want of regular officers to conduct the insurrection after the first blow was struck – by the assurance that these would come from France with O'Mahony: that he had been to Paris and had O'Mahony's authority for the promise. Cavanagh found out years later, from O'Mahony himself, that Gray had the authority to make such a promise but with the crucial proviso that:

After O'Mahony had got due notice and satisfied himself by personal inspection, that adequate preparations for an outbreak had been made in

³³ Letter from Thomas Clarke Luby to Thomas Francis Meagher published in the *Irish News* (New York), 14 Mar. 1857

³⁴ Luby, 'Personal reminiscences' in *Irish World*, 10 Mar. 1877.

³⁵ Letter from James Stephens to 'Mon cher ami', dated 15 May 1849 (T.C.D., Davitt addendum 9659d/6)

Ireland. Gray made no mention of this most important proviso at the time, and O'Mahony never got the stipulated notice.³⁷

Gray's assurance, in regard to O'Mahony's promise, satisfied Cavanagh and he undertook to prepare for O'Mahony's return, in accordance with the instructions he then received. Cavanagh took his fellow-townsmen of Cappoquin, Hugh Collender and Mick Lennan, into his counsel and all three settled on a systematic plan for organizing a select body, of limited numbers, in the town and the adjoining district. In June 1849, Fintan Lalor and Luby went on an organizing tour of Tipperary and Limerick, where they had the assistance of several local organizers. Joseph Brennan selected Cork City for his efforts, which were seconded by his enthusiastic lieutenants.³⁸

In a report dated 5 September 1849, William Henry Riall, Magistrate, Clonmel, wrote:

In the absence of Mr. Ryan, R.M. on sick leave, I beg to state that I have been this day informed by a respectable Roman Catholic gentleman residing near Carrick-on-Suir, that he is informed and believes that the system of swearing in is greatly increasing in that neighbourhood that it is not only a conspiracy against the payment of rents, but is political and has grown out of the disturbances of the last year that the parties sworn are not aware of the desired object, but merely sworn to be secret and ready to act when called upon, that he believes a rising is contemplated and very near at hand. He also tells me that Gray and Hannan are in the County Waterford and he has himself seen them, that these men are in correspondence with the exiles who left after the last year's disturbances who are now in France and in America. The said men, Hannan and Gray are he says well known to the police as being implicated at Ballingarry and Portlaw, that a woman named Miss Power residing at the Alms House at Gurteen between Clonmel and Carrick who was arrested last year in company with O'Mahony and twice found possessed of arms and

³⁶ Kiely, *Waterford rebels of 1849*, p.18.

³⁷ Cavanagh, 'Our dead comrades: Hugh William Collender', p.121.

³⁸ *Ibid.* pp.121-7.

ammunition is the principal correspondent with the parties in France and America.³⁹

There is corroborative evidence, in Stephens's papers, that contact was maintained by the Irish exiles in France with the revolutionaries in Ireland and the United States. The 'Miss Power' mentioned above was Mary Ellen Power who had been arrested along with John Killilea in September 1848 while aiding O'Mahony in his escape (see chapter three). Riall's report states erroneously that she had been arrested 'in company with O'Mahony'.

It is worth considering what were the sources of O'Mahony's intelligence from Ireland. He was almost certainly in regular correspondence with Gray and, perhaps, some of his other lieutenants from September 1848. There is certain evidence that O'Mahony was in correspondence with his brother-in-law, James Mandeville. In a letter dated 12 September 1849, John D.C. Hearn, of Shanakill, Rathgormack, reported to the Lord Lieutenant that:

I believe my Lord there is some such society at work in this parish collecting money to buy powder for some bad purpose, and from reports, and some letters I have seen from America. I take the liberty of sending you part of the *Times* newspaper. The rebels here expect some foreign aid, and to receive orders how to act from Dublin, the rebel Mahony I understand received a large sum of money lately from the proceeds of the sale of Lord Kingston's stock, one Mr. Mandeville of the Co. Tipperary his brother-in-law acting for him. Would it not be wise to see the letters from this Mahony to Mr. Mandeville or to young Mandeville the nephew for if these letters are according to report they are seditious; these persons live near Carrick.⁴⁰

The implication from the above report is that the authorities opened the Mandeville's mail. The sale of livestock, referred to above, would appear to have been from the Clonkilla farm, near Mitchelstown, County Cork, which O'Mahony had made over to

³⁹ Report of William Henry Riall, R.M. Clonmel, 5 Sept. 1849 (N.A.I., Outrage papers, 1849, Co. Tipperary, 27/2511).

⁴⁰ Report of John D.C. Hearn, Shanakill, Carrick-on-Suir, to the Lord Lieutenant, 12 Sept. 1849 (N.A.I., Outrages papers, 1849, Co. Tipperary, 27/2549).

his brother in law, James Mandeville, on 5 September 1848.⁴¹ One can assume that the correspondence from America, mentioned above, included letters from Michael Doheny and John Savage who had by this time established themselves in New York.

On 5 September 1849, Brenan, Gray, Lalor, Luby and the other leaders met at Clonmel and decided on Sunday, 16 September, as the date for a general rising. The plan of campaign involved attacks on a number of garrison towns in Tipperary and Waterford, to be followed by further attempts in Cork, Limerick and Kilkenny: Cappoquin was one of the places so selected.⁴² Although the necessary conditions for revolutionary insurrection formulated by O'Mahony, as reported by Cavanagh, were not met, the leaders of the '49 movement felt that they had to do something no matter how futile and despite the fact that they were directly violating O'Mahony's instructions.

Some years later Michael Cavanagh wrote that he did not know on what grounds the Dublin based Directory of the '49 movement saw fit to depart from the programme laid down by O'Mahony, but that 'When they did so O'Mahony's immediate friends no longer constituted the bulk of the organization; and distance, and want of safe means of communication, prevented him from taking much part in guiding them'.⁴³ It would appear that O'Mahony had been informed about the decision taken at the Clonmel convention sometime between the 5 and 16 September 1849. According to Cavanagh:

O'Mahony was decidedly opposed to the policy of immediate action as advocated by the more hasty and unreasoning members of the conspiracy; and accordingly, when he was informed that a general rising in September had been decided upon, he condemned it as unreasonable, premature, and fatal to our cause. He showed that, however wide the organization had extended itself, it was still in a very imperfect state of discipline – that many conditions, which he deemed indispensable, had been entirely disregarded – that no foreign or domestic excitement existed to prepare the popular mind for

⁴¹ Memorial of an assignment dated 5 Sept. 1848. Parties: John O'Mahony and John Mandeville (Registry of Deeds, 1848/17/211).

⁴² Kiely, *Waterford rebels of 1849*, p. 16; Anthony M. Breen, 'Cappoquin and the 1849 Movement' in *History Ireland*, (Summer 1999), pp.31-3 (Hereafter cited as Breen, 'Cappoquin and the 1849 Movement'); *The Cappoquin rebellion 1849* (Suffolk, 1998) (Hereafter cited as Breen, *Cappoquin rebellion 1849*); Cavanagh, 'Our dead comrades: Hugh William Collender', pp.121-7.

⁴³ Cavanagh, 'Our dead comrades: Hugh William Collender', pp.122-3.

revolution – that the numbers of which they boasted would but render the array more unmanageable. Under such circumstances he would assume no responsibility of leadership, nor would he allow his name to be used as the adviser of an insurrection in the conducting of which he would not have any part – neither would he solicit any others to enter into any enterprise whose defeat he considered certain. He added, however, that he would return to Ireland and participate in their dangers, but that he would betake himself to some part of the island where he would run no risk of being made a leader, for, though he could not induce others to risk their lives on a forlorn hope, he felt at liberty to stake his own at any hazard. But no time was allowed him to fulfil this chivalrous resolution – the revolution was begun and ended in a night.⁴⁴

It is ironic that O'Mahony, who had a central role in the development of the '49 movement, and had even produced the revolutionary programme that they claimed to be following, discouraged action when the time came. O'Mahony had very clear strategical differences with the leadership of the '49 movement regarding the conduct of any future insurrection. The only real opportunity for revolutionary insurrection, with the potential for broad based support, had passed by in 1848. O'Mahony knew from his experience of the September 1848 insurrection, that large numbers of undisciplined men without adequate officers only served to make the enterprise more unmanageable. His intelligence from Ireland now told him of the 'very imperfect state of discipline' of the significant numbers of which the '49 movement boasted.

JAMES FINTAN LALOR'S REQUEST

According to Charles Joseph Kickham the leaders of the 1849 movement sent an agent (almost certainly Gray) to France to procure O'Mahony's co-operation. O'Mahony refused to act with them. He was told that the leaders of the '49 movement were determined to go on without him, to which he replied that:

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Since the disgrace at Ballingarry, I am convinced it will take years of patient labour to prepare the Irish race to meet their foe in arms. My conscience will not permit me to use the influence I may possess with my countrymen, to lead them into what I must believe a desperate, if not altogether a hopeless struggle; but no blow will ever be struck for Ireland, which my single arm will not second. *I cannot be responsible for the lives of others, but I am free to risk, and if need be, to sacrifice my own life in the good old cause for which many a martyr poured out his life-blood on field and scaffold.*⁴⁵

This statement (which almost certainly is in O'Mahony's own words) quoted by Kickham, would appear to be a letter of reply from O'Mahony to the leadership of the '49 movement. With all his courage O'Mahony possessed caution, and deplored that his own September insurrection had been ruined by the precipitate action of some of his men. O'Mahony made clear that no matter what the danger to which he might be ready to expose himself, he would not again call out his men without a reasonable chance of success – and to ensure such a chance would require years of preparation. In his *Felon's track* (1849), Michael Doheny recalled 'I was aware that caution was a leading characteristic of O'Mahony's genius, and I felt assured he would not attempt any open movement without strong probabilities of success.'⁴⁶

The police and magistrates reports are the only contemporary sources which state that O'Mahony returned to Ireland in September 1849. They received their intelligence from informers in Tipperary who affirmed O'Mahony's presence in the country. In a report dated 9 September William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, reported that 'O'Mahony is still in the country about the Rathgormack district [County Waterford] with Gray and others'.⁴⁷ Gray had, along with Savage, provided leadership to the Waterford insurgents in the 1848 insurrection. In his report dated 23 September 1849, Ryan wrote that 'They [the '49 movement] have plenty of leaders. O'Mahony is in the country positively, and several others who went away are hiding'.⁴⁸ Six days later, in a report dated 29 September, Ryan repeats that 'O'Mahony is still in the

⁴⁵ Charles J. Kickham, 'Apologia pro amico suo' in *Tipperary Advocate*, 10 May 1862 (Hereafter cited as Kickham, 'Apologia')

⁴⁶ Doheny, *Felon's track*, p.269.

⁴⁷ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 9 Sept. 1849 (N.A.I., Outrages papers, 1849, 27/2532).

⁴⁸ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 23 Sept. 1849 (N.A.I., Outrages papers, 1849, 27/2637).

country somewhere most positively'.⁴⁹ False intelligence that O'Mahony was in Ireland may have been disseminated in in order to mislead the authorities.

It is difficult on the available evidence to come to a resolution as to whether or not O'Mahony returned to Ireland in 1849: while it is more generally believed he did not, it is impossible to dismiss the words of such a close friend and kinsman as Kickham who wrote that 'O'Mahony...took means to land in Ireland – in a part of the country where he would not be recognised by the people, and where without being responsible for the lives of others, he could risk his own, as he and his fathers had often done before'.⁵⁰ Perhaps Kickham confused O'Mahony's stated intent with what circumstances actually allowed him to do. If O'Mahony did travel to Ireland in September 1849, he did so to ensure that his name was not used/abused. We do not find in O'Mahony any inclination towards leading people into danger. In fact, O'Mahony always insisted that his followers should not be brought out unless they were ready.

Cavanagh claimed that no time was in fact allowed O'Mahony to fulfil his resolution to return to Ireland and risk his own life.⁵¹ He is the more reliable source on O'Mahony as he later served as his secretary in the Fenian Brotherhood. Cavanagh had an intimate knowledge of O'Mahony's revolutionary history and contemplated writing his biography, which was to have included accounts of 1848 and 1849. It is unclear whether Cavanagh managed to complete this work - the manuscript has not yet been traced.⁵²

CAPPOQUIN OUTBREAK

According to Cavanagh:

The vast majority of the local leaders of the movement were unaware of O'Mahony's condemnation of the proposed change of plans; in fact they never knew that there was any *radical* change from the original programme at all –

⁴⁹ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 29 Sept. 1849 (N.A.I., Outrages papers, 1849, 27/2674).

⁵⁰ Kickham, 'Apologia' in *Tipperary Advocate*, 10 May 1862.

⁵¹ Cavanagh, 'Our dead comrades: Hugh William Collender', p.123.

⁵² Entry for 'John O'Mahony' (written by John O'Leary) in *Dictionary of national biography*, vol. xiv (London, 1909), p.1061; Pádraig Ó Macháin and Thomas F. Overlander, 'Michael Cavanagh of Cappoquin, 1822-1900' in *Decies, Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society* (2000), p. 118-19.

they received their instructions from their superior officers, and carried them out as best they could, in most instances up to the final crisis.⁵³

At 9 pm on Saturday, 15 September, Cavanagh met with Brenan and Gray (who was to take charge of the rising in Dungarvan) outside Cappoquin. Insurgents, both within the town and the surrounding countryside, gathered the following evening to attempt to surprise the constabulary force stationed in Cappoquin in the old Army barracks – now Walsh’s Hotel. There followed a brief exchange of fire, which left one attacker, James Donoghue of Cappoquin, dead and caused the others to disperse. Shortly afterwards, Brenan, along with various local leaders from Cappoquin, including Cavanagh, Collender and Lennan, escaped to America. A potentially more serious attempt took place at Dungarvan, County Waterford. Here the insurgents allegedly had the support of a corporal and two privates of the garrison in Dungarvan Castle who were to be on guard duty that night. However, the insurgents in the town were not joined by those expected from the country areas and the government soon hurried reinforcements into the area.⁵⁴ O’Mahony and Gray had been actively engaged in the subversion of military personnel in September 1848. This would be carried out on a far more extensive scale by I.R.B. organizers in the early 1860s. John D. Hearn, one of the 1849 leaders in Dungarvan, went to America the following year and became involved in Irish-American military organizations in New York.⁵⁵ When O’Mahony eventually returned to Ireland from the United States, in the winter of 1860, he selected Hearn as his travelling companion (see chapter six).

The revolutionary movement inaugurated in 1848 by O’Mahony along the Suir valley provided the nucleus for the I.R.B in this region almost a decade later. A number of the leaders of the ‘49 movement, particularly Thomas Clarke Luby and John O’Leary, would play leading roles in the I.R.B. Denis Dowling Mulcahy, from Redmondstown, Clonmel, County Tipperary, was also active in 1849 and sheltered Brenan in his flight.⁵⁶ Mulcahy (later a prominent I.R.B. man) would be there at a critical moment for O’Mahony in America in later years. James Francis Xavier O’Brien, who was prominent in Dungarvan Confederate circles, became a leading

⁵³ Cavanagh, ‘Our dead comrades: Hugh William Collender’, p.123.

⁵⁴ Breen, *Cappoquin rebellion 1849*, pp.37-45; ‘Cappoquin and the 1849 Movement’ in *History Ireland*, (Summer 1999), pp.31-3; Kiely, *Waterford rebels of 1849*, pp.19-21

⁵⁵ Michael Cavanagh, *Memoirs of Thomas Francis Meagher* (Worcester, Mass., 1892), appendix, pp.17-18 (Hereafter cited as Cavanagh, *Memoirs*.)

member of the I.R.B. and was one of the pall-bearers at O'Mahony's funeral in 1877.⁵⁷

MAKING A LIVING/ IRISH COLLEGE, PARIS

O'Mahony and Stephens remained in Paris for a number of years, where they lived the life of political exiles. Many years later, in the *Irish World*, of (New York) of 17 March 1877, J.P. Leonard commented on O'Mahony's life in Paris:

It was one of great privations borne with heroic courage. He never complained or repined; his aspirations for Ireland kept up his spirits and his fine constitution enabled him to bear hardships that would have bowed down the minds of men of as much physical strength but without that *feu sacre* that defied adversity.⁵⁸

O'Mahony faced exile without resources, after having made over his property to his sister and brother-in-law in September 1848.

In the preface to his translation of Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (published in 1857) O'Mahony wrote that during his stay in Paris he compiled a comparative vocabulary of the Greek, Latin and Gaelic languages, at the request of a 'French savant'.⁵⁹ It can be assumed that he received some pecuniary reward for the completion of this work. In his *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, Savage wrote that:

His [Stephens's] efforts as a *litterateur* thus brought Stephens a handsome compensation, which, added to certain remittances, which O'Mahony received from time to time out of the remains of his Irish patrimony and the product of his exertions as instructor of Gaelic to some students of the Irish College, enabled our exiles to live comfortably enough.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 30 Sept. 1849 (N.A.I., Outrages papers, 1849, 27/2674).

⁵⁷ Kiely, *Waterford rebels of 1849*, p.30; P. McCarthy, James Francis Xavier O'Brien (1828-1905): Dungarven-born Fenian' in *Decies, Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society* (1998), pp.107-38.

⁵⁸ Letter from J.P. Leonard, of Paris, to the *Irish World* (New York), 17 Mar. 1877.

⁵⁹ *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn.... the History of Ireland, from the earliest period to the English invasion, by the Reverend Geoffrey Keating, D.D.* Translated from the original Gaelic and annotated by John O'Mahony (New York, 1857), p.13 (Hereafter cited as O'Mahony, *History of Ireland*).

⁶⁰ Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs* p.307.

Teaching the Irish language to students at the Irish College, O'Mahony eked out a living.⁶¹ In the Penal era, and for a long time thereafter, the Irish College in Paris filled the role of a traditional seminary for young aspirants to the priesthood from Ireland. County Cork born Patrick Sweeney was the rector of the college from 1828 to 1850.⁶²

It is worth considering some factors which may have facilitated O'Mahony's obtaining his teaching position in the Irish College. O'Mahony's friend in Paris, Martin McDermott, received his early education at a school conducted in Ussher's Quay by Dr Thomas MacNamara, who was rector of the Irish College (1868-1889).⁶³ It may have been through McDermott's acquaintance with MacNamara that O'Mahony obtained his teaching position (if MacNamara was in Paris at this time) but it was more likely through O'Mahony's friend - J.P. Leonard

During his years in Paris O'Mahony became acquainted with Francis Morgan, a Dublin born lawyer. Morgan had been the commander of Daniel O'Connell's 'Repeal cavalry' in 1844 and later became a leading member of the Irish Confederation.⁶⁴ Years later, he recalled O'Mahony as a 'genial, educated and high-spirited gentleman' and would attend his funeral in Dublin in 1877.⁶⁵ Morgan would certainly have known John Miley (the former chaplain to Daniel O'Connell) who succeeded Patrick Sweeney as rector of the Irish College in 1850.⁶⁶ Morgan may have introduced O'Mahony to Miley, if O'Mahony did not already know him through his own family's support for the Catholic Emancipation and Repeal campaigns.

Fr Patrick Lavelle, of Partry, County Mayo, was educated at the Irish College, Paris and was appointed Professor of Philosophy of the college in 1854. He taught the Irish language to students from the Irish-speaking dioceses in addition to his duties as Professor of Philosophy. O'Mahony and Lavelle may have first met during their years in Paris. It would appear that Lavelle replaced O'Mahony as teacher of Irish in the college after O'Mahony's departure to America in November 1853 and

⁶¹ *Irish People* (New York), 17 Feb. 1866

⁶² Fearghas Ó Fearghail, 'A stormy decade in the Irish College, Paris, 1849-1859' in *The Irish-French Connection 1578-1978* (Paris, 1978), pp.108-11; Liam Swords, *Soldiers, scholars, priests: short history of the Irish College, Paris* (Paris, 1985).

⁶³ O'Sullivan, *The Young Irelanders*, pp.392-3; Doheny, *Felon's track*, pp.299-300.

⁶⁴ Letter from Francis Morgan to the *Irish World* (New York), 17 Mar. 1877; Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, p.202.

⁶⁵ Letter from Francis Morgan to the *Irish World* (New York), 17 Mar. 1877.

⁶⁶ Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*, p.88.

very likely taught some of his former students. After Lavelle's departure from the college in 1858, Thomas McHale (appointed Professor of Scripture and Canon Law in 1849) filled the post of Irish teacher left vacant by Lavelle. Thomas McHale was the nephew of John McHale, the Archbishop of Tuam who, in turn, appointed Lavelle parish priest of Partry, Co Mayo after his return to Ireland in 1858.⁶⁷ John McHale took a more benevolent view of the Fenians, than other members of the catholic hierarchy, and permitted Lavelle to maintain his links with the movement.⁶⁸

REVOLUTIONARY SECRET SOCIETIES IN PARIS

Over much of Western Europe the artisans were in the forefront of revolutionary activity. In 1848 the Irish Confederation (whose Dublin membership was strongly represented by the artisans) had taken a keen interest in events as they unfolded in France.⁶⁹ Marc Caussidière, prefect of police for Paris after the February 1848 Revolution, had previously been an organizer of secret societies. In his memoirs Caussidière wrote that 'The real strength of the secret societies lay in the working classes, who possessed a certain disciplined force, always ready for action at a moment's notice'.⁷⁰ In his narrative of the attempted Irish rising of 1848, O'Mahony also remarked that 'the mere working men were ready and always willing'.⁷¹ O'Mahony's high opinion of the Irish artisans was undoubtedly strengthened by his experiences of their counterparts in Paris.

It has been suggested, and indeed disseminated, that O'Mahony and Stephens joined republican and socialist clubs where they learned about organized conspiracy in order to gain experience for a future rising in Ireland.⁷² No concrete evidence has yet been uncovered that would confirm this. In his *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs* (1868), John Savage wrote an account of O'Mahony and Stephens's years together in

⁶⁷ Patrick Boyle, *The Irish College in Paris, 1578-1901* (Dublin, 1901), p.219; Proinsias Mac Cana, *Collège Des Irlandais, Paris and Irish studies* (Dublin, 2001), pp.172-3; R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1989), p.387.

⁶⁸ For further information on Lavelle see: G. Moran, *A radical priest in Mayo, Fr Patrick Lavelle: the rise and fall of an Irish nationalist, 1825-86* (Dublin, 1994).

⁶⁹ Comerford, *Fenians in context*, p.14.

⁷⁰ Cited in Peter Jones, *The 1848 revolutions*, p.81.

⁷¹ O'Mahony's narrative of 1848, p. 9

⁷² Ryan, *Fenian chief*, p.xxiii.

Paris.⁷³ This account is very similar in wording to an earlier anonymous article which appeared in the *Irish People* (New York) of 17 February 1866, stating that:

At this period, the Continent of Europe generally, and Paris particularly, was inwoven with a network of secret political societies. As a means of inviting and combining the people for the purposes of successful revolution, they had peculiar fascinations for those whose former attempts at rebellion proved a failure, simply for want of previous organization of the revolutionary elements. O'Mahony and Stephens soon conceived of the idea of entering the most powerful of these societies, and acquiring those secrets by which means an undisciplined mob can be most readily and effectually marched against an army of "professional cut-throats." Accordingly, they became enrolled members – and most valuable ones too – of one of those very "dangerous brotherhoods" which some well-to-do impostors so religiously anathemise; and thus they became pupils of some of the ablest and most profound masters of revolutionary science which the nineteenth century has produced.⁷⁴

None of these 'profound masters' produced a successful revolution. The above account (almost certainly penned by Savage) was published at a time when the prospect of revolutionary insurrection in Ireland appeared imminent. Its non-specific nature suggests that it was written primarily for propagandist reasons. The names of the societies that O'Mahony and Stephens may have joined are not mentioned.

Stephens (who had a peculiar notion of the concept of truth) claimed, thirty years later, to have been acquainted with all the all the leading masters of revolution in Europe, which probably means nothing more than that he moved in revolutionary circles in Paris.⁷⁵ For his part, O'Mahony did not reveal anything about such contacts in Paris in his writings. Neither did he publicly dispute any statements made by Stephens as this would have undermined Stephens's position in the I.R.B.

LOUIS NAPOLEON'S *COUP D'ETAT* – DECEMBER 1851

⁷³ Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs* p.307.

⁷⁴ Article entitled 'The men in the gap: James Stephens' in *Irish People* (New York), 17 Feb. 1866.

⁷⁵ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp.50-1.

Kildare born John Devoy wrote very incisively that ‘Stephens was very proud of his participation in the Paris affair, and thought it qualified him to pronounce judgement on military matters. This was unfortunate for Ireland’.⁷⁶ The ‘Paris affair,’ referred to by Devoy, was the actual fighting at the barricades in Paris during the resistance to Louis Napoleon’s *coup d’etat* in December 1851.

By 1850 Louis Napoleon had gained considerable support within the legislative assembly by means of political manipulation and control. He took advantage of an economic downturn in 1851 to present himself as the political realist who would save France from socialism and collapse. Eventually, in December 1851, he carried out a carefully planned *coup d’etat*, which effectively overthrew the Republic. There was resistance – in Paris workers put up barricades – but it was easily crushed. The Second Republic had come to an end.⁷⁷

O’Mahony and Stephens were deeply impressed by the radical political culture of Paris; their sympathies lay with the French republic. In a letter to his fellow Irish scholar, John O’Daly, in the autumn of 1856, O’Mahony mentions the participation of himself and Stephens, on the Republican side, in the fighting at the barricades during the resistance to the *coup d’etat* in December 1851. In this letter, O’Mahony asked O’Daly to tell Stephens (who returned to Ireland from France in early 1856) that ‘I still hold the same political faith we both pledged ourselves to so often in our eyrie in the *Quartier Latin*, and which we proffered our lives in the bloody days of December; in the *coup d’etat* 1851’.⁷⁸ There is no conclusive evidence to prove that O’Mahony was an active participant in the resistance to the *coup d’etat*. Those at the barricades did not leave records. It is significant that O’Mahony refers to himself and Stephens as having ‘proffered’ their lives on the occasion of the resistance to Louis Napoleon’s *coup d’etat*. It would be completely inconsistent with O’Mahony’s character and style to exaggerate any action he took in defending his political beliefs either in his public statements or private letters. O’Mahony was certainly prepared to back up his democratic ideals with commitment to action.

⁷⁶ John Devoy, *Recollection of an Irish rebel* (New York, 1929), p.97. Devoy was a Fenian organizer in the British army (from October 1865 to February 1866) and later the driving force behind the Clan na Gael.

⁷⁷ William H. C. Smith, *Second empire and commune, France 1848-1871* (London and New York, 1996), pp.10-11 (Hereafter cited as Smith, *Second empire and commune*); Richard Cavendish, ‘Louis Napoleon elected President of France’, in *History Today*, (Dec. 1998), p.48.

⁷⁸ John O’Mahony to John Daly, autumn 1856 quoted in Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp. 61-2.

In the autumn of 1851 Luby decided to join the French Foreign Legion to learn infantry tactics. When he arrived in France he found recruiting temporarily suspended and went to Australia for a year before returning to Ireland.⁷⁹ In his recollections Luby wrote that:

O'Mahony and Stephens were prepared to take a part, on the side of the republic, in the fighting in Paris at the time of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'etat*. Circumstances, unfortunately or rather perhaps fortunately, prevented them from carrying out their intentions in this respect. I have heard O'Mahony give a most curious and interesting narrative of the circumstances that prevented himself and Stephens from being actively engaged at the final crisis.⁸⁰

It can be inferred from Luby's vague account that O'Mahony and Stephens were involved in the early stages of the fighting in defence of the French republic but not at the 'final crisis'. Perhaps the fighting finished before they could get involved with the resistance. Far more specific is the account of O'Mahony's friend and Paris resident, J.P. Leonard, who has left us an impression of O'Mahony as the fighting broke out:

In Paris on the day of the *coup d'etat* O'Mahony walked across the city while the bullets were flying about and merely looked on to learn how people fight in the streets to get a little experience for the future, for he hoped to take part in a *coup d'etat* of the people in Ireland.⁸¹

O'Mahony would have been very happy to participate in this defence of democracy on the streets of Paris in December 1851. It is significant that Leonard mentions having seen only O'Mahony on that day, moving calmly among the street barricades, apparently impervious to the danger from the bullets flying around him. Stephens was not in Leonard's sights.

As a pragmatic revolutionary, O'Mahony had a very keen sense of the strategic issues at stake for Ireland which could ensue from the final outcome of the fighting in December 1851. This is evident in his letter to the *Irish People* (New

⁷⁹ Thomas Clarke Luby papers, p.25 (N.L.I., MS 332)

⁸⁰ Luby, 'Personal reminiscences' in the *Irish World* (New York), 10 Mar. 1877.

⁸¹ J.P. Leonard article in the *Irish World*, 17 Mar.1877.

York), of 14 December 1867, where he wrote that ‘In the hope that the impulse from without, which I then deemed, and which I still deem, to be essential to success, might come from France, I remained in that country under many privations till after the fall of the Republic of February’.⁸² The ‘impulse from without’, hoped for by O’Mahony, was the outbreak of war between France and Britain, which included the possibility of military aid for Ireland from the French Republic.

The fall of the Second Republic, in the *coup d’etat* of December 1851, and the rise of Louis Napoleon to imperial status marked the end of all hopes of the spread of the European revolution and led to the break-up of the conspiratorial circles to which O’Mahony and Stephens may have been connected.⁸³ In the *Irish People* (New York), of 29 October 1870, O’Mahony wrote that:

The present organized revolutionary movement for the establishment of a democratic republic in Ireland, which has been for many years in progress in that country and Great Britain, took its first start from France. I may say that it was really conceived and initiated in France, a short time previous to the overthrow of the republic of 1848. It had the approval and concurrence of certain leading members of the French Republican party, and had received from them assurances of their zealous support in procuring the alliance and military aid of their government for the insurgent Irish nation, in case they could themselves succeed in saving their own democratic institutions from the reactionary aggressions of the monarchists, and the treacherous machinations of Louis Napoleon. The notorious *coup d’etat* interrupted the relations of international fraternity then commenced between the revolutionaries of France and Ireland.⁸⁴

It would appear on the face of it that O’Mahony, with the help of other Irishmen in exile in Paris, which almost certainly included J.P. Leonard, conducted ongoing negotiations with the French Republican government up to the time of the *coup d’etat* in December 1851. O’Mahony saw the French republic as holding out the best

⁸² Letter from John O’Mahony, entitled ‘Fenianism as it was’, in the *Irish People* (New York), 14 Dec. 1867.

⁸³ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, p.54.

⁸⁴ Article by O’Mahony entitled ‘Ireland’s solidarity with France’ in *Irish People* (New York), 29 Oct. 1870.

chance of initiating a war with Britain. It can be inferred from Stephens's correspondence that O'Mahony was in contact with both Arthur O'Connor and Miles Byrne (former United Irishmen) as well as Martin McDermott (former Young Irelander) who had direct access to the French Republican government.⁸⁵ Arthur O'Connor died on 25 April 1852. Miles Byrne lived in retirement in Rue Ponthieu (close to where the Metro station of St Philippe du Roule stands today) until his death, ten years later, in 1862.⁸⁶

FINAL YEARS IN PARIS, 1852-3

Following the excitement of the *coup d'état*, O'Mahony spent a couple of months in J.P. Leonard's home at the seaside town of Dunkerque in 1852.⁸⁷ Leonard would be an important contact in Paris for the Fenian Brotherhood in the 1860s (see chapter seven). He later recalled that during O'Mahony's stay at his home '1847, the year of the Famine, left a deep impression on his mind. He could speak of the miseries he had witnessed only with tears in his manly eyes, and bursts of manly anger that made them flash with fire'.⁸⁸ Four years after leaving Ireland O'Mahony was still reflecting on the accumulating horrors that he witnessed during the Famine years. The only reference to the Famine in O'Mahony's writings, that I am aware of, is in the quotation below from the notes to his translation of Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras feasa ar Éirinn* from Irish into English:

Stanihurst, Cambrensis, Spenser, and the still viler herd which Keating lashes in his preface, were the Castle-Hacks of their day, then employed to apologize and find lying pretexts for the direct robbery and murder of the Irish nobility and people, just as a like herd is actually employed, now that the Irish nobility is nearly all either extinct or reduced to poverty, in finding excuses for the indirect robbery of the landless nation – for cheating the poor out of their last

⁸⁵ Letter from Stephens to 'Mon cher ami' (probably Michael Doheny), dated 15 May 1849, (T.C.D., Davitt addendum 9659d/6); Letter from Stephens to his father, dated 27 Jan. 1850, (T.C.D., Davitt addendum 9659d/8).

⁸⁶ *Memoirs of Miles Byrne, edited by his widow [Fanny Byrne]* (Paris, 1863); Bourke, *John O'Leary*, p.34.

⁸⁷ J.P. Leonard article in the *Irish World*, 17 Mar. 1877.

⁸⁸ Letter from J.P. Leonard, of Paris, to the *Irish World* (New York), 17 Mar. 1877.

penny, and for killing by famine, as the sword and gibbet can no longer be used indiscriminately.⁸⁹

After the *coup d'état* of 1851, O'Mahony spent a further two years in Paris before sailing for New York. This suggests that he wished to assess the potential that existed for the outbreak of war between Louis Napoleon's regime and Britain. What was always foremost on his mind was the possibility of obtaining military aid from Britain's opponent in a future war. As a pragmatic revolutionary, O'Mahony viewed Britain's enemy as Ireland's potential friend and ally. Although ideologically opposed to Imperial Russia, O'Mahony would seek aid from that power for an Irish rising in the mid 1850s (see chapter five.)

Louis Napoleon considered an alliance with Britain essential in order to ensure that France would not be isolated in Europe; he also believed that France's commercial and financial interests coincided with those of Britain. In January 1852 a new constitution was drawn up under the direction of Louis Napoleon; on 2 December the Empire was proclaimed, Louis Napoleon becoming Napoleon III. From this time onwards, war between the two Imperial powers of Britain and France could only be realistically expected in the event of a crisis in the balance of power in Europe.⁹⁰

The political reaction reflected in the *coup d'état*, and the advent of the second empire, gave O'Mahony pause to seek a more congenial atmosphere for the pursuit of his dream - the establishment of an Irish Republic. Whatever arrangements for a new revolutionary organization were made between Stephens and O'Mahony before he left for the United States, they were based no doubt on O'Mahony's document of late 1848 reproduced by Cavanagh in his narrative (quoted earlier). O'Mahony's move to the United States would appear to have been inevitable. The success of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* was undoubtedly a factor in O'Mahony's decision to move to America. As someone was against a society of privilege, O'Mahony would have been far happier living in the American Republic than under Louis Napoleon's Imperial regime.

⁸⁹ O'Mahony, *History of Ireland*, p. xxxv.

⁹⁰ Smith, *Second empire and commune*, pp.12, 39-40.

In November 1853, O'Mahony left Paris for New York – a move that he had probably long contemplated.⁹¹ The timing of his departure was most likely influenced by the announced arrival of John Mitchel in New York City. O'Mahony's decision to go to America made sound sense for a number of reasons. There was the very obvious need to make a sustained attempt to channel the growing strength of Irish-America into a new Irish revolutionary organization. The American Republic would provide a far better base for such an organization than Imperial France. Probably more significant was the fact that O'Mahony would have been unsuited by nature to be the leader of a secret conspiracy - an open revolutionary movement was impossible in Ireland. His physique alone would have precluded it even if his nature did not. Stephens, a bureaucrat / conspirator by nature, would have found it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain any position in an open revolutionary movement in America. He could only effect his machinations from behind the scenes in a non-transparent way. In Ireland Stephens could build his organization upon O'Mahony's name. A crucial element in whatever organization O'Mahony set up was the groundswell of support and loyalty to the O'Mahonys which had existed for generations in the counties Cork, Limerick, and Tipperary. In the late autumn of 1848, O'Mahony had left behind him a loose revolutionary structure that he could later put into play in these counties as well as parts of Waterford and Kilkenny.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that O'Mahony's years in Paris influenced his political outlook, further strengthening his support for the forces of democratic republicanism. From the time that his writings were first published in the mid 1850s, O'Mahony consistently expressed his preference for Republican France as an ally in the context of an Irish revolution.⁹²

O'Mahony and Stephens had witnessed democracy in action in Paris following the revolution of 1848. During the *coup d'etat* of 1851, and in its aftermath, they had first hand experience of democracy undermined. Both men communicated some

⁹¹ John O'Mahony's Gaelic Manuscripts (N.L.I., MS G 641)

⁹² See for example a Lecture by O'Mahony entitled 'Ireland's position in reference to coming events in Europe' delivered before the Ancient Order of Hibernians, at the Cooper Institute, New York City, on 24 Jan. 1860 and published in the *Phoenix* (New York), 4 Feb. 1860; 'Irish recruits for France' in *Irish*

French radicalism to the Fenian movement, which was coloured, but not determined, by their experiences in France; in Stephens's case the element of oath-bound secret conspiracy; in O'Mahony's transparent democracy and republicanism. O'Mahony, influenced by his years spent in Paris, carried his vision of a Democratic Republic into the Fenian Brotherhood and Stephens cultivated the art of conspiracy.

People (New York), 15 Oct. 1870; 'Ireland's solidarity with France' in *Irish People* (New York), 29 Oct. 1870.

CHAPTER 5: EMMET MONUMENT ASSOCIATION, 1854-56

BACKGROUND: NEW YORK CLUBS 1848-53

Between 1841 and 1851 a human bridge was being formed between Ireland and the United States with the emigration of nearly a million people of Irish birth. Many of the immigrant Irish, from the 1840s onwards, were concentrated in the cities in which they landed or along the rivers, canals and railways where work was available.¹ The most numerous Irish community was gathered in New York City. By 1855 some 175,000 people, representing 28 per cent of the population of New York City and Brooklyn, were Irish born. By 1860 this number had risen to 259,000.² Generally lacking capital or skill, these emigrants were forced into the worst paid and least secure employment. The tenements of New York's Five Points area, located in Lower Manhattan, east of Broadway and north of City Hall, were as unhealthy as the wretched huts of Ireland.³ This mass influx of recently arrived Irish immigrants found great difficulty in establishing themselves in a new country. Pauper immigration on such a scale would have created resentment anywhere, so it is hardly surprising that there was a good deal of prejudice against the Irish in New York and other American cities at this time. This caused the recent immigrants to cling closely together and made them all the more responsive to what was going on in their home country. Most of the recent immigrants harboured bitter first-hand memories of poverty and degradation from the famine years in Ireland. They were strongly nationalistic and would back any venture that appeared to advance the cause of Irish independence.⁴ The Irish were emerging as one of the most powerful voting blocks in the United States; the 1860 census listed 4,100,000 foreign-born, of whom 1,600,000 were Irish.⁵

¹ Thomas N. Brown, 'The origins of Irish-American Nationalism' in *Irish nationalism and the American contribution* (New York, 1976), p.328 (hereafter cited as Brown, 'The origins of Irish American nationalism').

² Kenneth E. Nilsen, 'The Irish language in New York, 1850-1900' in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, (Baltimore and London, 1997), p.254.

³ Tyler Anbinder, "'We will dirk every mother's son of you': Five Points and the Irish conquest of New York politics' in *Éire-Ireland*, spring/summer 2001, pp. 29-47; E.R.R. Green, 'The beginnings of Fenianism' in T.W. Moody (ed.) *The Fenian movement* (Dublin, 1968), pp.13-14 (hereafter cited as Green, 'The beginnings of Fenianism'); Cormac Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and beyond: the great Irish famine in history, economy and memory* (Princeton, 1999), pp.114-5.

⁴ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish catholic diaspora in America* (Washington D.C., 1997), p.66 (hereafter cited as McCaffrey, *Irish catholic diaspora*); William D'Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States, 1858-1886* (Washington, 1947), pp. 61-4 (hereafter cited as D'Arcy, *Fenian Movement*).

⁵ W.S. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America* (Pennsylvania and London, 1975), p.94.

While revolutionary organization had gone moribund in Ireland with the death of James Fintan Lalor, the Irish revolutionary leader of 1849, it still had a powerful resource across the Atlantic in New York. Here existed a long established and influential Irish community with a vast potential of hitherto unexploited Irish money and manpower which appeared to offer leverage to Irish nationalists.⁶ Some attempts had already been made to organize this power realistically for Irish purposes, but so far to little effect. Robert Tyler, son of the American president John Tyler, headed the Repeal Convention, established in New York City in the autumn of 1843. This movement believed that action to restore self-government to Ireland was a legitimate interest of a citizen of the United States. Repeal in the 1840s initiated organized Irish-American commitment to Irish independence. At this time a great many of the Irish communities in the United States had repeal clubs.⁷

It was in 1848 that Irish-American nationalism acquired the characteristics later identified with the Fenian movement: republican separatism and physical force.⁸ In early 1848, after hearing about the successful revolution in France, the leaders of the Irish Confederation turned their thoughts to revolution in Ireland. Many Irish-Americans welcomed this new direction. In New York, Philadelphia and several other American cities mass meetings were held, large sums of money were collected, and companies of men were armed and drilled, all for Irish revolutionary purposes. The New York Irish were particularly active. In the spring of 1848 Kilkenny born Michael Phelan, a James Huston and others established a military organization known as the Irish Republican Union, whose companies trained with a view to action in Ireland. Its membership included many veterans of the recent Mexican War. Much hope was invested in the County Tyrone-born James Shields who had distinguished himself as a United States General in this War.⁹

Two envoys, John Mitchel's younger brother, William, and his former solicitor, Martin O'Flaherty, were sent to the United States by the Irish Confederation

⁶ Green, 'The beginnings of Fenianism', pp.13-14; McCaffrey, *Irish catholic diaspora*, p.66.

⁷ McCaffrey, *Irish catholic diaspora*, p.143; George Potter, *To the golden door: The story of the Irish in Ireland and America* (Boston, 1960), p.572 (hereafter cited as Potter, *to the golden door*); Brown, 'The origins of Irish American nationalism', p.335.

⁸ John Belchem, 'Nationalism, Republicanism and exile: Irish immigrants and the revolutions of 1848' in *Past and present*, Feb. 1995, p.110 (hereafter cited as Belchem, 'Nationalism, Republicanism and exile').

⁹ Joseph Denieffe, *A personal narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood* (New York, 1906), p.v (hereafter cited as Denieffe, *A personal narrative*; Michael Doheny, *The felon's track* (Dublin, 1918),

in the early summer of 1848 to enlist aid.¹⁰ Instructions had been given to them 'to purchase arms and ammunition and to bring them with officers and volunteers and land them on the western Irish coast'.¹¹ Following the arrival of the two envoys in New York an Irish Directory was established there by prominent members of the Irish American community to coordinate their activities and to cooperate with the Irish Confederation in Ireland. The 'Directory' played some part in the unsuccessful schemes for arming the Confederate Clubs in 1848. In this endeavour they were aided by the prominent United Irishmen survivors then in Paris, Generals Arthur O'Connor and Myles Byrne. The Irish Directory included such people as Judge Robert Emmet, son of Thomas Addis Emmet, the secretary of the supreme council of the United Irishman whose younger brother, Robert Emmet, led the Irish revolt of 1803. Charles O'Connor, a lawyer and son of the United Irishman, Thomas O'Connor, was another member of the Directory.¹²

The 'Directory' raised £10,000 (\$50,000). Two agents were separately despatched to Ireland during the mid summer of 1848 with a portion of the money (£1,000), and a promise that more important assistance would be sent later. The year 1848 in Ireland saw the rising instigated by the Irish Confederation, led by William Smith O'Brien, collapse in failure on 29 July. The two agents sent by the 'Directory' to Ireland returned to the United States shortly afterwards. The money raised in America for arms arrived in Ireland too late for anything but the defence of those members of the Irish Confederation who were by then under arrest.¹³ However, the Irish Directory continued in existence after the collapse of the July 1848 rising.

There had been number of unsuccessful attempts by the United States to strike at Britain through an invasion of Canada during the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Such attempts were widely supported by the United Irishman exiles in America. During the fall of 1812 the First New York Regiment of Riflemen (incorporating the Republican Greens) advanced with the state militia, whose officers

pp.v-vi; Michael F. Funchion (ed.), *Irish American voluntary organizations* (Westport, Connecticut, 1983) p.101 (hereafter cited as Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*).

¹⁰ Charles Gavan Duffy, *My life in two hemispheres* (London, 1898); Charles Gavan Duffy, *Four years of Irish history, 1845-9* (London, 1883), p.559- 60 (hereafter cited as Duffy, *Four years*).

¹¹ Patrick O'Donoghue, 'Incidents connected with political disturbances in Ireland in 1848: origin, progress and failure of the movement' in *Tipperary historical journal*, 1998, p.39.

¹² Gavan Duffy, *Four years*, p.639; Desmond Ryan, *Fenian chief: a biography of James Stephens* (Dublin, 1967), pp.102-3.

¹³ Gavan Duffy, *Four years*, pp.693-5; Brendan O'Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon, Young Irelander* (Dublin, 1990), p.75.

included Robert, son of Thomas Addis Emmet, only to stop at the border without engaging the enemy. Although the Irish Republican Union had been instituted to encourage and direct revolutionary Irish nationalism in America, it threatened to invade Canada in July 1848, but faded away following the collapse of the rising in Ireland.¹⁴ The project of an Irish-American invasion of Canada was to be resurrected in 1866.

In New York the Irish Republican Union was organized into military companies prior to being incorporated as the Ninth Regiment into the New York State Militia in 1850.¹⁵ The Irish Republican Union, now known as the Silent Friends, continued to exist as a secret Irish revolutionary group within the Ninth Regiment. Many of the leading figures in this Irish-American Revolutionary society had been prominent in the Irish risings of 1848 and 1849. Though disappointed at the turn of events in Ireland, Irish American revolutionaries, with their ranks now augmented by Irish Confederation refugees, including Michael Doheny, Thomas Devin Reilly, Joseph Brennan and John Savage, still hoped that an uprising could take place in Ireland in the not too distant future. The Silent Friends encouraged the formation of several Irish-American military companies, and soon two other Irish regiments, the Sixty-Ninth and the Seventy-Second came into being. The more famous Sixty-Ninth New York State Militia, formed in 1851, had Doheny as its lieutenant colonel. It was also during 1851 that Michael Phelan visited Ireland and England, ostensibly as a billiard player, to open communication with Irish revolutionaries there.¹⁶ In New York thousands of Irishmen were enlisted into these exclusively Irish regiments of the militia. The New York Irish set a pattern for other states. Although loyal Americans, the Irish-American militia men hoped very soon to put their military training to use in Ireland. These militia companies were informal bodies, and the military experience gained in them was necessarily limited. But they had an importance of another kind in keeping up a fighting spirit among the Irish in America.¹⁷

At this time Irish-Americans lacked a united leadership to channel all their efforts, which resulted in certain amount of in-fighting. Within a short time the Silent

¹⁴ David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States* (Dublin, 1998), p.84; Hereward Senior, *The Fenians and Canada* (Toronto, 1978), pp. 27-32 (Hereafter cited as Senior, *The Fenians and Canada*); Brendan Ó Cathaoir, *Young Irelander abroad: the diary of Charles Hart* (Cork, 2003), pp. 6-7.

¹⁵ Denieffe, *A Personal narrative*, p.v.

¹⁶ John O'Mahony, 'Death of Michael Phelan' in *Irish People* (New York), 21 Oct. 1871; Michael Cavanagh, 'Our dead comrades – Captain Michael Phelan', in the *Celtic Magazine*, I (1882), pp.17-25.

¹⁷ Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*, p.101-2.

Friends fell prey to factionalism, the traditional nemesis of Irish revolutionary societies. One faction led by Doheny and Maurice Walsh, the treasurer of the Silent Friends, denounced the organization's president, James Huston, and his colleagues for ineffective and corrupt leadership. Huston's faction in turn accused Doheny of causing dissension and claimed that Walsh's accounting procedures as treasurer were less than proper. Relations between the two groups became so bitter that the organization disintegrated in 1853.¹⁸

New York became the haven of most of the Irish Confederation refugees who had fled Ireland after the Irish risings of 1848 and 1849. They were all to make new lives for themselves in the demanding conditions of the still evolving nation on the other side of the Atlantic. Leading members of the Irish Confederation, notably Richard O'Gorman, John Blake Dillon, Thomas D'Arcy McGee and Michael Doheny (after a brief stay in Paris) had fled there directly between the late summer and autumn of 1848.¹⁹ Thomas Francis Meagher, John Mitchel and Terence Bellew McManus eventually escaped from a penal colony in Tasmania to the United States. Mitchel and McManus had planned their escapes while on parole with the aid of Dublin born Patrick James Smyth, who had been sent by the 'Irish Directory' especially from America for that purpose. Smyth, a leading member of the Irish Confederation, had escaped to the United States after the collapse of the attempted rising of July 1848.²⁰

O'MAHONY'S ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK

The certainty of Britain becoming involved in a war with Russia and the arrival of Mitchel in New York on 29 November 1853 following his escape from the English penal colony in Van Dieman's Land, once more raised hopes of a chance to work for revolution in Ireland. A fresh impetus was now given to the existing Irish-American military organizations in New York.²¹ Of all the *émigrés*, of his time, Mitchel perhaps maintained the best balance in his attitude to Irish affairs. He was prepared to involve himself whenever prospects seemed realistic.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ John O'Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism*, Vol. I (Dublin, 1896), p.79 (hereafter cited as O'Leary, *Recollections*); D'Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, pp.1-2.

²⁰ John Mitchel, *Jail journal* (Dublin, 1913), p.300 (Hereafter cited as Mitchel *Jail journal*); O'Leary, *Recollections*, Vol. I, p.79.

In November 1853 O'Mahony left Paris and sailed for America.²² In this he was probably influenced by the expected arrival of John Mitchel in that city. In an account written in 1862, O'Mahony wrote that:

I really was delirious – *insane* if you will – for several days in consequence of long mental and physical suffering, severe study and extreme nervous excitement. This was some eight years ago [1854], and shortly after my arrival in America. Since then the attack has had no reoccurrence. It is, certainly, very hard for any man to prove himself *sane*.²³

There is no evidence to suggest that O'Mahony ever had any reoccurrence of this nervous collapse during the remainder of his life. In his *Compendium of Irish biography*, published in 1878, Alfred Webb wrote that on the completion of O'Mahony's translation of Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, in July 1857, he suffered a nervous collapse and entered an asylum, for a short period, before reaching a complete recovery.²⁴ Webb probably confused the time and circumstances under which O'Mahony's nervous collapse actually occurred.

On O'Mahony's arrival in New York, in January 1854, Mitchel publicly welcomed him and the friendship between them proved durable against all political friction and personality clashes of later years. It is possible, even likely, that O'Mahony and Mitchel had been acquainted since their Trinity College days (see chapter one). The arrival of Mitchel and O'Mahony in New York within a couple of months of each other gave rise to hopes of unity and effective leadership among the factions among the Irish there. The exiled Irish who formed the nucleus of a revolutionary organization in New York, looked to Mitchel as their anticipated leader at this time. According to Luby Mitchel had the capacity to unify the Irish living on the continent of North America at this time. Many years later Luby wrote that:

He [O'Mahony] often told me of the evidences of the great hope and faith at the time reposed in Mitchel, which he found in British America and in the States, as he came along to New York after his landing in the New World.

²¹ Denieffe, *A Personal narrative*, p.vii; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.2.

²² John O'Mahony's Irish Manuscripts (N.L.I., MS G 641).

²³ Letter from O'Mahony to Fr Patrick Lavelle, printed in the *Irishman* (Dublin) 16 Aug. 1862.

Mitchel could then have done in America anything he pleased for the cause of Ireland. Even the native-born Puritans of New England then believed in him: for they chose to look on him as almost one of themselves.²⁵

O'Mahony and Mitchel's destinies would be inextricably linked together from the time of their arrivals in New York up to the time of Mitchel's death in 1875.

On 7 January 1854, Mitchel established a new newspaper, the *Citizen*, in New York. With the outbreak of the Crimean War in March 1854, Mitchel saw an opportunity to make another attempt for Irish independence. He urged Irishmen to turn the situation provided by Britain's difficulties in the Crimean War to revolutionary advantage. A new revolutionary organisation was formed under his inspiration on 14 April 1854, the Irishmen's Civil and Military Republican Union. This organization was open to members of the militia companies and other Irish societies.²⁶

The members of the 'Union' planned to raise funds for the purpose of aiding those who, within the next two years, should engage in any well-planned struggle for Irish independence. The society, as its name indicated, was a two-fold one. The civil branch was composed of married men and others who could not actively participate in bringing about an Irish rising, but who would contribute financially towards that end. The military branch was composed of those willing to return to Ireland to assist in an Irish insurrection. It was organized into companies, had regular officers and certain nights for studying the military drill.²⁷ In his newspaper, the *Citizen* (New York), Mitchel promised that if the European war lasted another year an armed invasion, or a 'filibustering raid' (he was using the then current American terminology) would be made on Ireland. Some years later O'Mahony wrote that 'Soon after I landed in America, in the beginning of 1854, I found what I thought a most promising Irish organization here, with John Mitchel at its head. I joined it eagerly and hopefully'.²⁸

Mitchel wished to determine whether the Russian government would be interested in providing military assistance for a revolution in Ireland. It was hoped that this aid would result in the independence of Ireland and a consequent weakening

²⁴ Alfred Webb, *A compendium of Irish biography* (Dublin, 1878), p. 402.

²⁵ Luby, 'Personal reminiscences' in *Irish World* (New York), 10 Mar. 1877.

²⁶ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.5.

²⁷ *Times* (New York) 5 Dec. 1855; *Irish American* (New York) 15 Dec. 1855.

²⁸ John O'Mahony, 'Fenianism as it was,' in the *Irish People* (New York), 14 Dec. 1867.

of Britain, then engaged in the Crimean conflict with the tsar's government. Shortly after the commencement of the Crimean War, Mitchel contacted the Russian minister in Washington and the Russian consul in New York. The Russians showed little interest and nothing came of these negotiations.²⁹ Mitchel's experience of New York was brief and bitter. He had in fact given all his energy to a public feud with John Hughes, Catholic Archbishop of New York, and as a result had become unpopular with a number of Irish in that city. Mitchel's organization, which had grown at a very slow pace, disintegrated when he abandoned both the *Citizen* (New York) and his negotiations with the Russian government, and left New York for Knoxville, Tennessee, at the end of 1854.³⁰ Many years later, Luby wrote that:

It [Mitchel's leaving New York] was a dreadful blow, then, to O'Mahony – It caused a fearful revulsion of feeling in his mind – when Mitchel suddenly and capriciously withdrew from the movement, when, after some communications with the Russian Ambassador, he hastily gave up all hopes of procuring Russian assistance.³¹

All hopes that Mitchel would lead the Irish movement in America were then abandoned. O'Mahony ruefully concluded later that 'Never had any Irishman a more commanding position than Mitchel then occupied. That position he flung from him. He retired from the organization, and it soon split up into two rival factions'.³² O'Mahony's early years in New York were full of hardship and frustration. He was bitterly disappointed by the fact that Mitchel had given up Irish political agitation and moved to Tennessee while the Crimean War was still in progress.

ORGANIZATION OF THE EMMET MONUMENT ASSOCIATION

At the time of O'Mahony's arrival in New York, as often before and since, the groups of Irish exiles and their political organizations were riven with dissension. The founding of the Emmet Monument Association by O'Mahony, Michael Doheny and several other Irish American revolutionaries in New York, restored unity to some

²⁹ Mitchel, *Jail journal*, appendix, pp.377-9.

³⁰ Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*, p.102; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.5.

³¹ Luby, 'Personal reminiscences' in *Irish World* (New York), 10 Mar. 1877.

extent. This new revolutionary organization, launched in March 1855, was the successor to the Irishmen's Civil and Military Republican Union and was the forerunner of the Fenian Brotherhood. The Emmet Monument Association was set up to fill the gap created by the demise of the 'Union' and, forming itself along similar lines, was a secret society within the Irish American military companies. It was later recalled, in a public address of the 'Association,' that after Mitchel left New York a convention was called there with a view to 'systematic and organized action'.³³ Delegates attended the Convention from various parts of the United States, each delegate representing 25 men. A plan was adopted, partly military and partly civil, and a National Directory appointed. Most of the members of its National Directory, including O'Mahony and Doheny, were resident in New York City.³⁴

The Emmet Monument Association was ostensibly organized for the purpose of erecting a monument to the Irish patriot Robert Emmet who had been executed following the failure of his revolt of 1803. The name of the 'Association' was suggested by the closing passage in Emmet's speech from the dock in 1803:

I have but one request to ask at my departure from this world. It is the charity of its silence. Let no man write my epitaph; for as no man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them, let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them rest in obscurity and peace, my memory be left in oblivion, and my tomb remain uninscribed, until other times and other men can do justice to my character. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then and not till then, let my epitaph be written.³⁵

Any society planning to erect a monument to Emmet would have to secure Irish independence first. Emmet's speech from the dock was so universally known that O'Mahony could call his organization the Emmet Monument Association and everyone knew what he meant; the Emmet Monument Association was dedicated to fulfilling Robert Emmet's epitaph by establishing an Irish nation state. Many Irish-

³² John O'Mahony 'Fenianism as it was,' in the *Irish People* (New York), 14 Dec.1867.

³³ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

³⁴ Ibid; Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.vii.

³⁵ Quoted in Robert Kee, *The green flag: a history of Irish nationalism* (London, 2000), p.168 (Hereafter cited as Kee, *Green flag*).

Americans were convinced that when Ireland became a nation state, they too would be liberated from the oppression of American nativism.

The Emmet Monument Association was a military organization, called into existence for the special purpose of preparing for the liberation of Ireland. Joseph Denieffe, a Kilkenny born member of the 'Association' then living in New York, drew the analogy of joining the Emmet Monument Association as being similar to joining the Free Masons 'If someone wanted to know anything of the order they would have to become Masons themselves'.³⁶ The association of the military companies with secret societies angered the more vehement of the catholic clergy in the United States. Fr Kelly of Jersey city ordered a Captain Farrell of the Montgomery Guards out of the church on the grounds that he was a member of a secret military organization.³⁷

In the *Irish American* (New York), of 19 January 1856, the Emmet Monument Association published a statement, which revealed that:

Preparation, therefore, was the rule of our exertions and our hope. We resolved to arm and discipline all our countrymen who were not attached to the militia of the States, and who were ready for any hazard. No more speeches, no more resolutions – no more threats – no more boasts – no more failing – no more appeals for *beggars*, sympathy, but silent, steady, sedulous work, with our teeth clenched and our hearts steeled until events presented themselves that we could turn to account.³⁸

This plan of campaign clearly anticipated the strategy of continued preparation until the moment of opportunity arrived - the policy as already formulated by O'Mahony and later pursued by the Fenian Brotherhood under his leadership. O'Mahony himself became captain of 'The Edward Fitzgerald Guard' (one of the companies composing the Emmet Monument Association) organised on 7 April 1854. It had a Michael F. Nagle as first lieutenant and consisted of one hundred men.³⁹

Although the Emmet Monument Association had branches in other states, such as Massachusetts, its main strength was to be found in New York in the Irish

³⁶ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.1-2.

³⁷ Potter, *To the golden door*, p.573.

³⁸ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

regiments and companies in the New York State Militia.⁴⁰ By June of 1855 the Emmet Monument Association's members drilled once a week and, according to a contemporary report in the *New York Times* it 'Numbers in this city alone more than 3,000 determined men, pledged by oath to obey the summons of their chiefs and embark for Ireland when ordered'.⁴¹ The fact that Emmet Monument Association published those figures indicates that it was an open organization only keeping its inner policies, and contacts with Ireland, as secret as possible.

RUSSIAN NEGOTIATIONS OF THE EMMET MONUMENT ASSOCIATION

Following Mitchel's example, O'Mahony, Doheny and the other leaders of the Emmet Monument Association approached the Russian consul in New York to see if the tsar's government would be willing to provide transportation and arms to Irish-American revolutionaries who wished to fight for independence in Ireland while the Crimean War was still in progress. Most Americans were pro-Russian and very friendly relations existed between the United States and Russia. Diplomatic disputes about British recruitment for the war among the United States population raised the prospect of Anglo-American friction; by early 1856 the United States was on the brink of entering the conflict on the Russian side.⁴²

The Emmet Monument Association opened negotiations with the Russian consul along specific lines. Many years later Luby wrote that:

O'Mahony laboured hard in the "Emmet Monument Society" (sic) and succeeded in opening up negotiations with the Russian consul in New York, with a view to procuring from the Russian government transportation to Ireland for 2,000 men and arms for 50,000 more.⁴³

The Russian consul seemed favourable to the idea. According to Luby, a memorial from the Emmet Monument Association proposing that Russia should supply arms

³⁹ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.viii.

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, 5 Dec. 1855 reprinted in *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856; Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.1.

⁴¹ *New York Times*, 5 Dec. 1855 reprinted in *Irish American* (New York), 15 Dec. 1855.

⁴² Clive Ponting, *The Crimean War: the truth behind the myth* (London, 2004) (Hereafter cited as Ponting, *The Crimean War*), pp. 244-9.

⁴³ Luby, 'Personal reminiscences' in *Irish World* (New York), 10 Mar. 1877.

and transport for an Irish-American expedition to Ireland, was 'drawn up in strict accordance with the advice and dictation' of the Russian consul. The representatives of the 'Association' had apparently satisfied the Russian consul of their power and influence over the Irish element in America and of the expediency of Russia's aiding their project. The Russian consul forwarded the memorial without delay to St Petersburg where it was favourably received.⁴⁴ Negotiations along these lines were ongoing until the sudden Russian defeat and the Peace of Paris in March 1856 made it moot issue.

In any event, even if the Russians had provided assistance, it is doubtful that a successful uprising could have taken place in Ireland as the revolutionary movement there was in a state of disorder at this time. The Emmet Monument Association had no contact with any revolutionaries in Ireland, a fact that many of its members in America were apparently unaware of. Joseph Denieffe discovered as much when he went to see Doheny before taking a trip home to Ireland in June 1855, to enquire if he could be of any service to the organization there. Though no contact existed with forces in Ireland and no preparations had been undertaken for the projected invasion, Doheny told Denieffe to inform the Irish revolutionaries that they were ready to land an expedition of thirty thousand men for an armed invasion that September and gave him a *carte blanche* to organize there.⁴⁵

With this vague commission, Denieffe enrolled a few revolutionaries in an Irish branch of the Emmet Monument Association in Kilkenny City, where he was welcomed by Dr Robert Cane (the principal leader of the Confederate Clubs in Kilkenny in 1848) and John Haltigan (printer in the *Kilkenny Journal* and subsequently a prominent local I.R.B. leader), but found little scope for political activity. After meeting Philip Gray, Thomas Clarke Luby and others in Dublin, Denieffe decided to concentrate for the present on earning a living. Denieffe and his organization remained in readiness for the promised invasion from the United States but September came and went without any news from Doheny.⁴⁶

OPPOSITION TO THE EMMET MONUMENT ASSOCIATION

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.3.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.7 -14.

The Emmet Monument Association, like other Irish-American revolutionary groups, met with opposition from certain Irish American nationalists. Shortly after its organizational meeting in March 1855, James Huston, the former president of the Silent Friends, together with John McClenahan (who had replaced Mitchel as editor of the *Citizen* in December 1854) and others attempted to establish a rival movement. This new grouping tried to attract members and potential members of the Emmet Monument Association.⁴⁷

McClenahan tried, without success, to persuade Captain Oliver Byrne, an engineer and member of the 'Association', that he was distrusted by its leading members.⁴⁸ The Emmet Monument Association later issued a statement claiming that 'After failing in this he [McClenahan] distinctly avowed his fixed purpose to break up this organization'.⁴⁹ McClenahan suggested through the pages of his newspaper, the *Citizen* (New York) that some of its members were less than sincere. Although McClenahan did concede that, in the current political climate, it was vital 'to arm and drill and induce other Irishmen to do likewise', he concluded that 'Everything beyond this is premature as yet'.⁵⁰ McClenahan repeatedly ridiculed the 'Association' and expressed his opposition to its plans in the *Citizen* (New York). He was particularly critical of its attempts to collect money for a rising. On 28 July 1855, McClenahan states in reference to the leaders of the Emmet Monument Association:

We know men who aspire to be generals, who could not march a sergent's guard across the park. All the would-be leaders may be honest enough for all that we can swear to the contrary. But the question is, are they wise and did they ever know how to take care of their own money?⁵¹

Although McClenahan had good reason to be critical of the rather unrealistic plans of the 'Association' for a rising in Ireland, there is no doubt his criticism was also motivated by his personal hatred of Doheny. The latter's decision to establish a

⁴⁷ Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*, p.103.

⁴⁸ *Irish American* (New York), 15 Dec. 1855 and 19 Jan. 1856.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 19 Jan. 1856.

⁵⁰ *Citizen* (New York), 11 Mar. 1855.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28 July 1855.

newspaper, the *Honest Truth* (New York), to offset the opposition of the *Citizen* (New York), did not endear Doheny to McClenahan.⁵²

The Emmet Monument Association issued a statement some months later, claiming that 'The co-operation of business or monied men was considered indispensable to the successful operation of the system'.⁵³ It would appear that it was for this reason that the Boston branch of the Association secured the co-operation of 'monied men' such as Thomas Smith, a retired policeman.

Smith and others involved with the Boston branch of the Emmet Monument Association branch decided to hold a convention of Irish revolutionaries in that city, despite the fact that the leadership in New York, who valued secrecy, were unenthusiastic about the idea. This convention, which met in Boston on 14 August 1855, adopted a constitution for a new organization, which became known as the Irish Emigrant Aid Society.⁵⁴ Although its name might lead one to think that it was a charitable organization, its stated intention was to aid the cause of Irish freedom by every means consistent with the laws of the United States.⁵⁵

The proceedings of the Boston convention received wide coverage from the press, much to the annoyance of the leaders of the Emmet Monument Association who claimed, some months later, in a public address that:

Notwithstanding the earnest protest of the members of our council against newspaper publicity as ruinous, if not fatal, they found to their surprise and dismay not alone the proceedings of the convention but the constitution and objects of the society were paraded ostentatiously before the public. The fears of our society having been thus realised, it became a subject of painful consideration what course it became us to pursue. We had determined to work in silence. There had been noise enough and ridicule enough when its emptiness had been exposed. If opportunity offered, well and good; if not we would provoke no ridicule for boasts unfulfilled. Therefore it was that we bore with misrepresentation and abuse. And even after this exposure (we may

⁵² Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*, p.103.

⁵³ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Times* (New York), 5 Dec. 1855; *Irish American* (New York), 15 Dec. 1855.

as well call it betrayal) of our object, we resolved to work on noiselessly as before.⁵⁶

Yet because of the publicity it received, the Irish Emigrant Aid Society was able to establish a number of branches during the next few months. Irish American organizations throughout the United States were invited to affiliate with this new society, which announced that a national convention would be held in New York in December.⁵⁷ Although O'Mahony, Doheny and the other leading members of the Emmet Monument Association were opposed to the convention, they claimed that for the sake of Irish unity they would send a delegation to confer with the Irish Emigrant Aid Society in Boston to try and formulate 'a plan of action upon which both organisations could act in harmony and unison for the future'.⁵⁸

A delegation, comprising O'Mahony and James Roche, a native of County Monaghan and former editor of the *Galway Vindicator*, was appointed by the Emmet Monument Association to get a distinct answer from the Irish Emigrant Aid Society in Boston as to whether the Emmet Monument Association would be allowed to send representatives to the convention. A meeting was arranged. Smith informed them at this meeting that the Emmet Monument Association would be entitled to four delegates upon their complying with the rules of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society. No branch of the 'Association' outside New York was to be allowed any representation at the convention. Smith wanted the delegation of the Emmet Monument Association to attend the convention as representatives of an affiliate of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society. However, the Emmet Monument Association would only send a delegation on condition that they would be recognised as a separate and distinctly independent organization.⁵⁹

After some wrangling, O'Mahony claimed that Smith had explicitly agreed to their proposal. Smith, however, maintained he had not, but rather had simply agreed not to oppose the admission of delegates from the 'Association' should they attend. In a letter to the *Irish American* (New York), dated 23 Dec. 1855, O'Mahony claimed that a distinct agreement had been made that 'The Emmet Monument Association should be represented at the Convention by four delegates elected by its grand

⁵⁶ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁵⁷ *Citizen* (New York), 25 Aug. 1855.

⁵⁸ Letter from John O'Mahony, dated 23 Dec. 1855, to the *Irish American* (New York), 5 Jan. 1856.

council, without complying with the rules or becoming members of the Emigrant Aid Society'.⁶⁰ The four delegates chosen were O'Mahony, Doheny, Oliver Byrne and P.M. Haverty, a Dublin born publisher and bookseller.

On 4 December 1855, some hundred delegates, representing twenty-four states, met in the Astor House in New York City for the first national convention of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society. Robert Tyler, who had only become connected with the society the day before, chaired the convention and was elected president of the 'Society'.⁶¹ The convention, controlled by Smith's forces, proved to be a stormy affair marked by bitter personal differences. In a letter to the *Irish American*, dated 10 December 1855, O'Mahony, in justification of his appearance at the Astor House convention, wrote that:

I should never have done so, had I not been shamelessly deceived by false pretences, and entrapped into it by an explicit arrangement entered into with the very callers of the said convention. The agreement entered into by me was violated by Dr. Smith, of Boston.⁶²

Even his most declared enemies, as in the Emigrant Aid Society incident, could never directly question the veracity of O'Mahony's statements, and had to resort to circulating their own 'alternate' version of events – but without challenging O'Mahony's.

Tyler made the opening speech at the convention, in which he announced that nobody had a right to be there except members of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society. O'Mahony rose to explain the position in which he and his colleagues stood and was met by uproar. He recalled later that:

I was the first to disturb the harmony of that motley assemblage by my protesting against the broken faith of its conductors, and by my obstinately insisting on an explanation of the base and swindling trick that had been practised by Dr. Smith upon our Association and myself. When I stood up to complain, the Chairman, Mr. Tyler, who is a worthy gentleman, they tell me,

⁵⁹ *Irish American* (New York), 5 Jan. 1856.

⁶⁰ Letter from John O'Mahony, dated 23 Dec. 1855, to the *Irish American* (New York), 5 Jan. 1856.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

and who had, no doubt, been prejudiced against us by misrepresentations, refused to listen to my remonstrance. He was seconded by the chartered minions of Mr. or Dr. Smith even the honest men, duped and imposed upon, as I have since discovered, by calumnious and malicious insinuations joined in the outcry raised against me. The majority of the meeting, from its prejudiced and misguided Chairman, down to the meanest and vilest fellow of the Smith-chartered gang, all sought to silence me and to put me down. Indignant at having been so treacherously waylaid by a paltry knave I would not yield to them. I meant to show them how much I scorned and despised them, and I hope I did it. I kept the floor; my colleagues seconded me, and hence the notorious row at the Astor House.⁶³

A motion was then passed that the chairman should name a credentials committee. This committee refused to seat the four delegates from the Emmet Monument Association on the grounds that they were not members of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society.⁶⁴ Doheny, clearly upset over this, declared he spoke for 2,000 Irish revolutionaries in the military companies and proceeded to denounce McClenahan, who was present at the convention, as an English spy.⁶⁵ The Emmet Monument Association issued a statement, published in the *Irish American* (New York), claiming that 'The delegates [from the Emmet Monument Association], being only four in number, still submitted to the decision of the Convention consisting of over fifty, and having perhaps fifty other proxy votes.'⁶⁶ In the showdown, O'Mahony and his faction were outvoted and consequently excluded from the meeting. O'Mahony believed that 'By the packed and Smith-chartered convention at the Astor House, they hoped to have extinguished us forever'.⁶⁷

Further dissension was caused when some of the military companies attached to the Emmet Monument Association went over to the Irish Emigrant Aid Society while the convention was going on. Previous to its adjournment, on the third day of proceedings, a Captain Felix Duffy entered the convention and stated that he was authorised by four military companies of the 'Association' to tender their adhesion to

⁶² Letter from John O'Mahony, dated 10 Dec. 1855, to the *Irish American* (New York), 15 Dec. 1855.

⁶³ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 29 Dec. 1855; *New York Tribune*, 7 Dec. 1855; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

the Irish Emigrant Aid Society.⁶⁸ Some weeks later O'Mahony wrote that 'The Astor House row had made the traitors who *had been* up to then in the ranks of the E.M.A. to come out in their true colours'.⁶⁹ The 'traitors' that O'Mahony refers to here included Captain Felix Duffy and his comrades.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EMMET MONUMENT ASSOCIATION

The Emmet Monument Association continued to hold meetings throughout the early part of 1856. Although after the Astor house convention groups on both sides made conciliatory statements, the bitterness was revived again at a meeting of the 'Association' at the Tabernacle, New York City, on 11 January 1856.⁷⁰ The speeches made at this meeting were sent to the 'know-nothing' newspaper, the *Evening Express*, whose antipathy to the *Citizen* (New York) was well known. This showed how deep the rift between the two rival factions had become and almost certainly ended any possibility of reconciliation between them.⁷¹ In his speech at the meeting, Doheny attacked both McClenahan and Smith. James Huston, the former president of the Silent Friends and Doheny's old rival, happened to be at the meeting and countered with an attack on Doheny. O'Mahony made it clear to potential dissident members attending the meeting that if a union of the two societies occurred under the auspices of the Emigrant Aid Society, then 'The men of your council, who have been prominent in this matter, will, of course, retire from your ranks'.⁷²

In the Emmet Monument Association's public address, of 11 January 1856, it was predicted that because 'It [Irish Emigrant Aid Society] solemnly abjured even the intention of doing that which every one supposed it assembled to effect; it stands self-doomed "legal, peaceable and constitutional"'.⁷³ The crucial difference between the two rival organizations was that the Irish Emigrant Aid Society was essentially a pro-establishment organization while the Emmet Monument Association was a revolutionary body. A problem that had beset the Irish Republican Union when drawing up plans for an 'Irish Brigade' to invade Ireland in 1848, was the critical

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *New York Times*, 7 Dec. 1854; *Irish American* (New York), 15 Dec. 1854.

⁶⁹ Letter from John O'Mahony, dated 6 Jan. 1856, to the *Irish American* (New York), 12 Jan. 1856.

⁷⁰ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁷¹ *Citizen* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁷² *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁷³ *Citizen* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

comments of Robert Tyler and other prominent Americans who warned that as an army of invasion against a foreign power, they stood in breach of the American constitution.⁷⁴ Remarks of this tenor made by Tyler in 1855 contributed to O'Mahony's suspicion that the Irish Emigrant Aid Society was organized by the British to destroy the Emmet Monument Association.

In his address to that same meeting of the Emmet Monument Association, of 11 January 1856, O'Mahony stated:

Now, taking into account the fact that we of the E.M.A. were the only real, *bona fide* filibusters⁷⁵ who could, on short notice, even if all materials were at hand, be made available for the invasion of Ireland, I ask you, Irishmen, could any British police agent, could any detective placed upon the foreign service, perform better work for his employers, than to break up such an organization? Break up our body and England would no longer need to watch the American coast with war-ships. The Emigrant Aiders; if we can judge from Mr. Tyler's letter and their newspaper gasconades, will give the English minister public warning of their intended attack, and may perhaps send a formal cartel of defiance to Queen Victoria. Now, fellow countrymen, my opinion of these two men, Smith and McClenahan, is that, if they be not actually in the British pay at present, they ought to be so. They have laboured hard to do the work of England. No servants of any European Fouché⁷⁶ could have done it more cunningly. I hope they have been paid for it. It were a pity such efficient service as theirs should have been gratuitous. A senseless cry has been raised against us as disturbers of unanimity. Some simple and well-minded people cry out for the amalgamation of the two societies. You may amalgamate with Messrs. Smith & Co., if you please, but I, for one, will not amalgamate with any society directed by men who act like the agents of a secret police. I will not amalgamate with men who come to New York avowedly to put down Irish filibustering, for such Mr. Tyler says was one of the objects of the Convention - with men who will make no move without the leave of the District Attorney. They are, Mr. Tyler says, an eminently conservative body - a mere joint stock

⁷⁴ Belchem, 'Nationalism, Republicanism and exile', p.114.

⁷⁵ Filibuster - invasion force.

company, preparing to take some future American war with England by contract. (cheers and laughter) A war, by the way, that I consider very unlikely to happen soon. John Bull, it is true, blusters a little now, and brother Jonathan brags. Still, I do not believe in any immediate war between Wall-street and the London Exchange. Even if such a Godsend to suffering humanity does occur in our days, America will not be long in organizing an Irish army, without the help of the Emigrant Aiders. In that case the action proposed by Mr. Tyler would be either superfluous folly or American buncombe. But the real fact is, that, notwithstanding Mr. Tyler's letter, the majority of the Emigrant Aiders still think that the Society is a filibustering institution. For myself, I believe Mr. Tyler. The concoctors of the Society and its prominent members never mean to venture their lives on so desperate a hazard. Being myself an Irish filibuster, I can in this matter form a union with none but filibusters. (Cheers) I believe that if the Irish soldiers, who have learned their discipline here, propose to fight for the liberty of Fatherland on this side of the grave, they must prepare to do it without asking passports from the American Minister. (Cheers) They must watch and wait silently, patiently and perseveringly for an opportunity of eluding the vigilance of the American authorities and baffling the spies of the British. There must be no more conventions, no more newspaper claptrap, no more chin whacking, no more political buncombe. Smith must not know of the intended expedition; neither must it be proclaimed in the *Citizen*.⁷⁷

O'Mahony's account is consistent with the editor of the *Boston Pilot*'s belief that the founding of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society was a plot by the British to enlist Irish Americans for service in the Crimea.⁷⁸ The major dispute between Britain and the United States was over the recruitment of American mercenaries which was illegal under the 1818 Neutrality Act.⁷⁹

On 7 January 1856, eleven members of the Cincinnati branch of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society appeared in the United States federal court in that city to stand

⁷⁶ Joseph Fouché, Duke of Otranto, was Napoleon Bonaparte's infamous Minister of Police, a post he later held under Louis XVIII.

⁷⁷ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁷⁸ *Boston Pilot*, 15 Dec. 1855.

⁷⁹ Ponting, *The Crimean war*, pp.247.

trial on an indictment charging them with violation of the neutrality law in setting on foot an expedition against England. Two members of the American Protestant Association, an ally of the 'Know-Nothing' organization, had infiltrated the Cincinnati branch of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society for the purpose of exposing it.⁸⁰ The infiltration of spies into their organization would later prove to be a major difficulty for the later Fenian Brotherhood in advancing their revolutionary plans.

At their meeting four days later, the Emmet Monument Association adopted the resolution that:

While this meeting cannot help pointing to the arrest of the gentlemen in Cincinnati as one of the disastrous results of that false and fatal course of noisy agitation which the E.M.A. from the beginning deprecated and condemned; yet believing that those gentlemen were unconsciously led into that course with honest and honourable motives, we tender them our sincere sympathy and, assure them that every assistance we can render them is at their disposal.⁸¹

Although the federal court warned the eleven members of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society that 'there can be no such thing as a divided allegiance', the judge decided that talking about an invasion of Ireland was quite different from actually making plans to invade. The prisoners were released.⁸² William G. Halpin (who would become a prominent Fenian) was prosecuted by the British Consul in Cincinnati, Charles Rowecroft, in 1856, upon a charge of conspiracy to organize a revolutionary expedition to Ireland. Halpin in turn prosecuted Rowecroft on charges of enlisting men for the Crimean War, and was instrumental in forcing that consul's recall.⁸³

It is appropriate at this point to draw attention to the American dimension of these successive Irish American revolutionary movements. The Emmet Monument Association attempted to reconcile Irishmen's loyalty to Ireland with their loyalty to

⁸⁰ By 1854, an anti-Irish, anti-catholic, secret society, the Order of the Star Spangled Banner, had evolved into the American Party. Members took masonic type oaths and used a variety of countersigns. When asked about their party goals, principles and symbols, they feigned ignorance, earning the moniker 'Know-Nothings'. They had spectacular success in the 1854 and 1855 local and state elections: McCaffrey, *Irish catholic diaspora*, pp.101-2, 142.

⁸¹ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁸² Brown, *Irish-American nationalism*, p.28; Potter, *To the golden door*, p.572.

⁸³ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.313-4; Ponting, *The Crimean war*, pp.248-9.

the United States. This is evident in their public address of 11 January 1856, in which they declare:

Acknowledging then our obligations as citizens, and none others, we assert as fundamental principles: First, that within the spirit and true import of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence every citizen has an inherent and inalienable right to encourage and aid, by word or deed, and in such manner as to him may seem meet [fit], every people or nation struggling for independence.⁸⁴

By showing a sense of human solidarity with all oppressed nations the Emmet Monument Association claimed to be acting in the name of certain values common to all Americans. In developing a rationale for a war on English rule in Ireland, nationalist propaganda emphasized Americanism, praising the United States as the cradle of human liberty, in contrast to aristocratic and imperialistic England. It insisted that the United States had a moral obligation to lift the burden of oppression from Ireland.⁸⁵ In their public address of 11 January 1856, the Emmet Monument Association further proclaimed that:

What America achieved, with the applause of all mankind for America [its independence], it would be no crime in Irishmen to attempt for Ireland. The neutrality law is a mere law of expediency or convenience, creating no moral duty; it leaves the sacred principles that underlie the Constitution undisturbed and indestructible. Congress enacted it to meet an emergency; Congress may repeal it tomorrow to meet another.⁸⁶

The loyalty of the 'Association' to Ireland is defended here on American terms by linking their American destiny with Irish sovereignty. The Emmet Monument Association, fully aware that loyalty to America is a matter of citizenship, stated that it was their belief that 'The surest road to loyal citizenship is through "The School of

⁸⁴ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁸⁵ McCaffrey, *Irish catholic diaspora*, p.144; Brown, *Irish-American nationalism*, p.24.

⁸⁶ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

the Soldier”.⁸⁷ This reasoning had provided the *raison d'être* of the many Irish-American militia companies from the late 1840s onwards.

In 1848 American politicians had organized meetings in support of an imminent rising in Ireland. Committees had been formed and fundraising drives launched. A good deal of the instigation for this activity had come from opportunists endeavouring to muster the Irish vote. 1848 had been a presidential election year and the Irish vote - as high as a third of the electorate in New York City - had been worth cultivating.⁸⁸ In his address to that meeting of the Emmet Monument Association of 11 January 1856, O'Mahony stated that:

Setting aside the suspicion of British agency in the matter, the Convention dodge had another very obvious purpose – an American political one. What, for instance, might not Mr. Tyler aspire to in this country? If backed by the whole Irish vote? He would become an American O'Connell.⁸⁹

Because the societies organized by Irish-American nationalists represented power, the intrusion of politics was not easy to check. Some of their members frequently became aspirants for public office.⁹⁰

Many Irish-Americans sought power and economic opportunities through the politics of Irish-American nationalism. The need to earn a living and establish a social identity in a strange society almost always set up a personal conflict between the demands of America and Ireland in the minds of even the most determined emigrant advocates of the Irish 'cause'. The conflict was resolved usually so as to dilute the amount of energy directly applied to Ireland.⁹¹ It was a source of gratification for O'Mahony that 'We have for this time at least prevented the sacred name of Erin from being made the shibboleth of partisan politicians in America – from being made the stalking horse of an unprincipled and base adventurer like Smith'.⁹² In his writings O'Mahony makes several castigating references to the way that some American politicians, who had no interest in Ireland, used Irish issues to get themselves elected.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Belchem, 'Nationalism, Republicanism and exile', pp.113-4.

⁸⁹ *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁹⁰ Brown, *Irish-American nationalism*, pp.41-2.

⁹¹ Kee, *Green flag*, pp.288-9.

The Crimean War ended in March 1856, and along with it the hopes of Irish revolutionists that the United States might enter the conflict on the Russian side. The editor of the *Gael*, S.J. Richardson, later commented that 'For various reasons the help promised by Russia never materialised; delay and procrastination seemed to be the rule until finally the Crimean war came to an unexpected close, thereby ending all hopes of assistance from their new ally'.⁹³ The disunity that manifested itself between the two main Irish American organizations in the United States may have been a contributing factor in the Russian government's policy of 'delay and procrastination'.

CONCLUSION

Shortly after the close of the Crimean war, the directors of the Emmet Monument Association dissolved their organization, but at the same time created a permanent committee of thirteen representatives, which had the power to revive it when the prospects for an Irish rising looked more promising.⁹⁴ This remained a consistent pattern with O'Mahony. Before leaving Ireland for France in the late autumn of 1848 O'Mahony had instituted a revolutionary committee of six members (see chapter four). This was a parallel of the permanent committee of thirteen members of the Emmet Monument Association. It always made sense to O'Mahony that an organization would survive no matter what happened to him personally. In a letter to the *Irish American* (New York), of 12 January 1856, he concluded:

I care but little for what any one outside of my own friends thinks of the motives that impel all my actions in Irish affairs. I want no general approval for any acts of mine.... My personal friends know well that I will not take my *guidance* or *misguidance* from any man or set of men with respect to my duties to my country. My road therein has long been marked out. I cannot now easily miss it.⁹⁵

The Emmet Monument Association's strategy - of continued preparation until the moment of opportunity arrived - which had been formulated by O'Mahony in late

⁹² *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

⁹³ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.viii-x.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

1848, was later pursued by the Fenian Brotherhood under his leadership. Although the Emmet Monument Association lasted but a short time and never got its revolutionary plans off the ground, it was through its permanent committee of thirteen that the Fenian Brotherhood was constituted.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6: EARLY YEARS OF THE FENIAN BROTHERHOOD, 1857-60

LOW POINT

It is clear from his correspondence in the autumn of 1856 with his fellow Gaelic scholar, John O'Daly, that O'Mahony intended to retire from Irish political agitation in America. O'Mahony wrote to O'Daly at this time:

My private course has not been very successful. I am sick of Young Ireland and its theatrical leaders, whose want of steadfastness of purpose and childish pettishness with the people that were disheartened by their own irresolution and want of forecast, makes me more despair of my country than any fickleness of its populace. I am sick of Irish Catholics in America. I am sick of Yankee-doodle twaddle, Yankee-doodle selfishness and all Yankee-doodledom! The very names of parties are inverted here. Your slavery-man is a Democrat. A Republican *pur sang* - your abolitionist - is an aristocrat! Even in the anti-slavery party, there is nothing sound - they are mere political tinkers - would-be patchers-up of an old kettle they call a Constitution, that they should rather throw into the furnace and cast anew.

It is refreshing to my heart to turn from Irish tinsel patriots, the people's leaders on *gala* days, and from American retrogression, to the stern front and untiring constancy of the continental apostles of liberty and the ceaseless preparation of their disciples.¹

O'Mahony had reservations about the American republic because it had implicitly accepted the institution of slavery in its constitution in order to avoid alienating the southern states, in the post revolutionary war period. O'Mahony's sense of disillusion was deepened by the factionalism which existed among the Irish exiles and emigrants in the United States. In the above quotation O'Mahony contrasts the more conservative Young Ireland exiles very unfavourably with European radical

¹ John O'Mahony to John O'Daly, autumn 1856, quoted in Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian chief: a biography of James Stephens* (Dublin, 1967), pp. 61-2.

Republicans. In a letter to an unnamed ‘influential Irish nationalist and revolutionist of ’48’ residing in Ireland at the time – (most likely Patrick James Smyth), dated 19 May 1861, O’Mahony wrote that:

Since their attempted insurrection in ’48, it cannot be denied that the Chiefs of the Young Ireland party have, to a considerable extent, with the solitary exception of the late Michael Doheny acted the part of “Dog in the manger” with respect to Irish revolutionary movements.²

Michael Doheny was a leading figure in the Irish-American revolutionary organizations from his arrival in New York in early 1849 until his death on 1 April 1862.³ O’Mahony’s lieutenant in September 1848, Philip Gray, died in January 1857, following an active period working with Thomas Clarke Luby on the *Tribune* (Dublin). O’Mahony wrote Gray’s obituary in Thomas Francis Meagher’s *Irish News* (New York) stating that:

This Philip Gray I found to be the most untiring and most indomitable of all the men that ever took the field for fatherland. He could never be made to understand that we were beaten. It was he that worked hardest of us all to retrieve the lost cause. He is also the man of whom least has been said and whose name has been scarcely heard by one out of ten, even in our democratic ranks. Of him I must say that Ireland needs but a few steady, silent and persevering laborers as he, with some cool headed planners to point their work for them, in order to be again ready for revolution, whenever internal agitation, England’s difficulties, or external events afford her an opportunity therefor. I have said be *ready* for revolution, because after considering the subject a good deal, and having had some experience at home and in France, I have come to the conviction *that no society of men who are not armed, disciplined and regularly officered, can make a revolution at any stated time fixed upon by themselves beforehand.*

² Letter from O’Mahony, dated 19 May 1861, printed in the *Irish People* (New York) 14 Dec. 1867.

³ John Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs* (Boston, 1868), p.293 (Hereafter cited as Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*)

I have thought it right to state this opinion of mine here, apropos of the indomitable carbonara, Philip Gray, because some give me the credit of thinking that a revolution can be effected in Ireland by popular conspirators at some *pre-determined* time, or upon some *pre-arranged* signal. I do not believe any such thing. But what I think is, that unless our countrymen at home do organize always and run the risk of being now and then condemned by our tyrants as traitors and conspirators therefor, that opportunity will come to them either from without, as it did in '48, or some political ferment within, as it has often done, and that they will be found undecided and unready; and thus let the chance glide by in *omne volubilis avum* [in every volatile age].⁴

O'Mahony's revolutionary thinking, as expressed above, is consistent with the programme he put in place for the new revolutionary organization in late 1848 as quoted by Michael Cavanagh in his narrative⁵ (see chapter four). O'Mahony's maturely considered opinions given here, and in the above letter, constituted the basis of the policy on which he founded, in conjunction with Stephens, the co-operative organizations of the Fenian Brotherhood in America, and the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood in Ireland (as will be seen).

RE-ORGANIZATION

From the early summer of 1856, O'Mahony retired from any active part in the Emmet Monument Association. For the next year he concentrated on his translation of Seathrún Céitinn's famous seventeenth century History of Ireland: *Foras feasa ar Éirinn* from Gaelic into English.⁶ In the autumn of 1857 the Emmet Monument Association, which had suspended its activities the previous year, was reconstituted and O'Mahony once more threw himself into Irish revolutionary agitation in the United States. In that same letter dated 19 May 1861 and quoted above, O'Mahony wrote that:

⁴ *Irish News* (New York) 14 Mar. 1857.

⁵ Michael Cavanagh, 'Our dead comrades: Hugh William Collender' published in the Worcester Messenger from 19 Apr. to 19 July 1890 and reproduced in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological Society* No. 57 (2001), pp.121-3.

⁶ *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn... the History of Ireland, from the earliest period to the English invasion, by the Reverend Geoffrey Keating, D.D.* Translated from the original Gaelic and annotated by John O'Mahony (New York, 1857).

In 1857 the association since known as the Fenian Brotherhood⁷ was established by Michael Doheny, Michael Corcoran, and some fifteen others. I had nothing to do with starting it; but I soon became one of its members. After a year or so I was elected its “Head Centre”, or President and have held this office ever since.⁸

In 1858 O’Mahony was elected head centre of the Fenian Brotherhood in America – an office he would hold for the period that it was a force in Irish politics in America. The concomitant Phoenix Brigade, of which Corcoran had overall command, was founded in New York the same year.⁹ The fact that the prominent Irish political leaders of 1848 (with the exception of Doheny) were bypassed in founding the Fenian movement gave it an essentially egalitarian/proletarian form. In this sense it differed from all previous national organizations which were organized from the top down.

In 1855 Britain’s involvement in the Crimean War triggered the foundation of the Emmet Monument Association. The Fenian Brotherhood was launched in response to the serious eruption in Anglo-French relations of the late 1850s when there was a real threat of a war between France and Britain. The hopes of Irish-American revolutionaries had been further enhanced by the news of the mutiny of the native troops in British service in India - the Sepoys - which began in May 1857. The major centres of discontent in the Indian mutiny were in north and central India, at Delhi, Lucknow and Cawnpore. Another realistic opportunity for Irish revolutionaries now presented itself with British vulnerability arising from the uprising in India combined with rising Anglo-French tension.¹⁰

In early 1859 Thomas Doyle, a trusted officer of the Royal Irish Constabulary, was assigned to New York for the specific purpose of keeping the Inspector General

⁷ The organization founded by Doheny and Corcoran in 1857 will be consistently referred to as the Fenian Brotherhood (although it did not assume that title until the late spring of 1859). So far I have not been able to determine the date in 1857 that the organization was founded.

⁸ Letter from O’Mahony to an unidentified ‘revolutionist of ‘48’, dated 19 May 1861, printed in the *Irish People* (New York) 14 Dec. 1867

⁹ Pádraig Ó Macháin and Thomas F. Overlander, ‘Michael Cavanagh of Cappoquin, 1822-1900’ in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society*, p. 108.

¹⁰ R.V. Comerford, *The Fenians in context: Irish politics and society 1848-82* (Dublin, 1998), p.43 (Hereafter cited as Comerford, *Fenians in context*); R.V. Comerford, ‘Anglo-French tension and the origins of Fenianism’ in F.S.L. Lyons and R.A.J. Hawkins (eds.) *Ireland under the union: varieties of tension, essays in honour of T.W. Moody* (Oxford, 1980), pp.154-5 (Hereafter cited as Comerford,

of police informed of the progress of the Fenian Brotherhood in America.¹¹ It is of particular interest that the general tenor of Doyle's reports is consistent with O'Mahony's own accounts in most, if not all, instances. In a despatch, dated 6 November 1860, Doyle reported that:

It was when the British army stood before Delhi and Lucknow, and the affairs of India required the presence of a powerful British force, that the Phoenix Society¹² as now organised, was initiated in New York. The idea connecting the one with the other is clear enough, it is that of the political maxim "England's difficulty Ireland's opportunity".¹³

A protracted war against the Sepoys could require the dispatch of increased numbers of British troops overseas, which would leave Britain and Ireland more vulnerable to French invasion.

In early 1856 James Stephens returned to Ireland from Paris, no doubt partly because of the expectations associated with the Crimean war. Late in the autumn of 1857, Owen Considine, a member of the Emmet Monument Association, arrived in Dublin from New York bringing a letter for Stephens from a committee of seven consisting of Michael Doheny as Chairman, John O'Mahony, Oliver Byrne, James Roche, Michael Corcoran, Patrick O'Rourke and John Reynolds. These seven men most likely numbered among the thirteen representatives of the Emmet Monument Association, unnamed by O'Mahony, who constituted its permanent committee from the spring of 1856 (see chapter five). They positively asked Stephens to establish a revolutionary organization in Ireland to win national independence with which they and other Irish-American exiles could co-operate.¹⁴

'Anglo-French tension and the origins of Fenianism'); A.J.P. Taylor, *The struggle for mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford, 1954), pp.102-3.

¹¹ Leon Ó Broin, *Fenian fever: an Anglo-American dilemma* (Dublin, 1971), p.11 (Hereafter cited as Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*)

¹² Doyle is referring here to the Phoenix Brigade.

¹³ Inspector Thomas Doyle Report No.92, 6 Nov. 1860 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI) (Hereafter cited as Doyle reports)

¹⁴ Thomas Clarke Luby 'The father of Fenianism: personal reminiscences of Colonel John O'Mahony' in the *Irish World* (New York), 24 Mar.1877 (hereafter cited as Luby, *Reminiscences*); John O'Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, Vol. I* (London, 1896), pp.80-1. (hereafter cited as O'Leary, *Recollections*); Joseph Denieffe, *A personal narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood* (Shannon, 1969), p.17 (hereafter cited as Denieffe, *A personal narrative*).

Considine also brought a private letter from O'Mahony to Stephens warning him of the fragmentary nature of the American base and of the financial weakness of the Irish Americans due to the widespread unemployment of that year. Stephens overlooked O'Mahony's warning, choosing to believe that there was a strong united organization behind the invitation rather than a number of loosely linked groups, and sent a reply to the Fenian Brotherhood in New York containing his demands and stipulations.¹⁵ The collapse in disgrace of the 'independent' Irish party grouping (nicknamed the 'pope's brass band'), which rendered a large proportion of the population deeply distrustful of constitutional methods, probably gave Stephens the encouragement that he needed.¹⁶

In June of 1855 Doheny had given Joseph Denieffe, returning from the United States to Ireland, *carte blanche* to recruit members for an Irish branch of the Emmet Monument Association. In January 1858, the bearer of Stephens's letter of reply to the New York committee was Denieffe, whom Stephens had summoned for the purpose from his job at Carrickmacross, County Monaghan.¹⁷ Denieffe reached New York at the end of January 1858 and delivered Stephens's letter to Doheny, O'Mahony and the five already noted.¹⁸ In this letter, dated 1 January 1858, Stephens wrote that the:

Bearer of this letter leaves by to-night's mail, and I undertake to organize within three months of the date of his return here at least 10,000, of whom about 1,500 shall have firearms and the remainder pikes. These men, moreover, shall be so organized as to be available (all of them) at any one point in twenty-four hours' notice at most. It must be needless to say that such an organization as this represents the whole body of Irish Nationalists - even the indifferent would be inevitably drawn after us, the start once given. Nor do I hesitate to assert that, with the aid of the 500 brave fellows you promise, we shall have such a prospect of success as has not offered since - I cannot name the epoch of our history.

¹⁵ Thomas Clarke Luby's recollections of early Fenian events communicated to John O'Leary, 1890-1 (N.L.I., MS 331), pp.7-8 (hereafter cited as Luby's recollections); O'Leary, *Recollections I*, pp.80-1.

¹⁶ T.W. Moody, 'Fenianism, Home Rule and the Land War' in *The course of Irish history*, edited by T.W. Moody (Cork, 1967), pp.277-8.

¹⁷ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.17; Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 24 Mar. 1877.

¹⁸ Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 24 Mar. 1877.

Now for the conditions. The first is money. There is a slight reproach in my words when I say: you ought to have foreseen this, knowing as you do that the men of property are not with us (of course I speak but of the national men of property), and that we are without means, you would have shown a wise foresight by sending us the nerves of organization as of war. I shall be able to borrow enough to go on with the work till I hear from you; that is, on a limited scale, and at great inconvenience to myself and friends, but anything like delay on your part will not only retard its progress, but otherwise injure the Cause and should you be unable to come into my terms, the business must be given up altogether. You must then be able to furnish from £80 to £100 a month, dating from the departure of bearer from New York. Had I a casting vote in your council, I should, moreover, suggest you sending (sic) 500 men unarmed to England, there to meet an agent who should furnish each of them with an Enfield rifle. This, of course, would involve considerable expense; but were it possible it would so stave off suspicion that we might fall upon them altogether by surprise. Of course, too, this money should come from you, and I beg of you, if possible, to raise it and act on my suggestion.

A few words as to my position. I believe it essential to success that the Centre of this or any similar organization should be perfectly unshackled; in other words, a provisional dictator. On this point I can conscientiously concede nothing. That I should not be worried or hampered by the wavering or imbecile it will be well to make out this in proper form, with the signatures of every influential Irishman of our union.¹⁹

There was no question of whether Stephens's conditions would be accepted or not. This was characteristic of the pattern of future events.

While Stephens waited for confirmation that O'Mahony and the others in New York would accept his stipulations, a further complication in Anglo-French tensions occurred, on 14 January 1858, with the attempt by the revolutionary Felice Orsini to assassinate Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie de Montij: the plot had been

¹⁹ James Stephens to Michael Doheny, 1 Jan. 1858, printed in Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.159-60.

concocted among a group of exiled continental revolutionaries living in London.²⁰ The urgency of organizing a new revolutionary organization in Ireland was now greater than ever, but final approval from America was slow in coming. The condition of affairs in Irish circles in the United States was bad owing to an economic crisis; unemployment had hit many Irish workers and the Irish-American press, with few exceptions, was hostile or indifferent to a new revolutionary organization, and much immersed in American politics. As a consequence money in Irish circles was scarce and difficult to collect. The results of a fund raising operation on the part of the Fenian Brotherhood, only raised four hundred dollars (£80 sterling).²¹

On the morning of 17 March 1858, Denieffe returned from the United States to Dublin with the acceptance of Stephens's terms by the Fenian Brotherhood. Denieffe bore a document, dated 28 February 1858, with the signatures of eighteen Irish-Americans including the seven signatories of the letter of invitation to Stephens in the autumn of 1857. The other eleven names were: T.W. Lynch, Thomas N. Dwyer²², Thomas O'Connell, James Cavanagh, Daniel O'Connell, Michael O'Connell, Michael O'Keefe, John Burke, John McDonnell Hughes, John Doran and John Kavanagh.²³ This Kavanagh would appear to be the Dubliner of that name who was wounded at the Widow McCormack's house at Farenrory, near Ballingarry, on 29 July 1848. He was then brought to Kilkenny, where Dr Robert Cane looked after him, and subsequently escaped to America where he became an officer in the United States army; Kavanagh was killed at the battle of Antietam on 17 September 1862.²⁴

The document carried by Denieffe, dated 28 February 1858, stated that:

We the undersigned members of the Irish revolutionary committee, hereby appoint and constitute James Stephens of the city of Dublin chief executive of the Irish revolutionary movement and give him on our own and our comrades behalf supreme control and absolute authority over the movement in Ireland.²⁵

²⁰ Comerford, 'Anglo-French tension and the origins of Fenianism', pp.152-3; R.E. Zegger, 'Victorians in arms: the invasion scare of 1859', in *History Today*, xxiii, no. 10 (Oct. 1973), pp.705-14; William H.C. Smith, *Second empire and commune: France 1848-1871* (London and New York, 1996), p.45.

²¹ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.16-28; Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 24 Mar. 1877

²² Thomas N. Dwyer was a dealer in paper maker's stock at 42 Maiden lane and 25 West Broadway, New York City: *Phoenix* (New York), 4 June 1859.

²³ Document of 28 Feb. 1858 (T.C.D., Davitt add., 9659d/207).

²⁴ Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, p.306.

²⁵ Document of 28 Feb. 1858 (T.C.D., Davitt add., 9659d/207)

The eighteen signatories of the document may have constituted the entire membership of the Fenian Brotherhood at this time.

During his trip to New York, Denieffe had lost all illusions on the immediate possibility of financial or physical support for a militant movement from the majority of Irish-American exiles. In his narrative, Denieffe records that he made clear to Stephens that there was as yet no proper organization in New York, only a body of associates.²⁶ Despite the difficulty with which the £80 sterling (the very minimum amount that Stephens had stipulated as a necessary monthly income) had been collected, and the obvious lack of any serious activity in New York, Stephens would not be deterred.

On the very evening of Denieffe's return to Dublin, 17 March 1858, (he probably wanted to grab the day) Stephens launched a new revolutionary organization at his lodgings in Magennis Place, behind Lombard street by initiating Luby, Denieffe, Peter Langan and Garrett O'Shaughnessy. At the beginning Stephens's organization was not allowed to have a name, so strong was his emphasis on secrecy. It subsequently became known as the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood (I.R.B.).²⁷ This new organization was dedicated to the establishment of an Irish Republic by force of arms.²⁸ In a letter to the *Irish People* (New York), dated 19 May 1861, O'Mahony wrote that:

In becoming a partner in the Fenian organization, I placed a good deal of hope in the revolutionary elements, which I had left after myself at home, in Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Tipperary. I had partially kept up my relations with those quarters, and I felt certain that my name was there, at any time, worth some thousands of stalwart fighting men – many of them my own blood – even were there no national organization at all in existence. This I considered a good basis to build an organization upon. I have not been disappointed in my expectations.²⁹

²⁶ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp. 16-28; Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 24 Mar. 1877.

²⁷ We shall consistently refer to it by this title.

²⁸ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp. 16-28; Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 24 Mar. 1877.

²⁹ Letter written by O'Mahony, dated 19 May 1861 printed in the *Irish People* (New York) 14 Dec. 1867.

The I.R.B. spread mainly along the valley of the Suir, bordering on the counties Kilkenny, Tipperary and Waterford, which had been organized in 1848 – in short, where O’Mahony’s influence was strongest. In his organizing tour of these counties during the summer of 1858, Stephens found the artisans and labourers responsive to him.³⁰

THE PHOENIX SOCIETY

Patrick J. Downing, a native of Skibbereen, went to the United States in 1853 and subsequently became a member of the Emmet Monument Association. In early 1856 he returned to Ireland, imbued with strong revolutionary motivation, and commenced to drill and organize men in southwest Cork in anticipation of military assistance from America. Later that same year, Patrick J. Downing, Diarmuid O’Donovan Rossa, Daniel McCartie and others, founded the Phoenix National and Literary Society in Skibbereen.³¹

In May of 1858 Stephens and Luby travelled to West Cork where a Bandon shopkeeper, James O’Mahony, gave them a letter of introduction to O’Donovan Rossa. Stephens and Luby next visited Skibbereen and swore in O’Donovan Rossa and the others. The Phoenix Society thus assumed a militant character and became a regional unit (one of the earliest) of a widespread national organization. It was in this guise that the Phoenix Society extended rapidly after May 1858, so that we find it established across the Kerry border in the towns of Kenmare and Killarney at the beginning of October. This region had been badly afflicted by the famine of the 1840s.³²

Prior to his departure for Australia in 1855, Charles Gavan Duffy sold the *Nation* (Dublin) to a partnership dominated by Alexander Martin Sullivan, a native of Bantry. By 1858 Sullivan was the sole proprietor of the paper. Following his return

³⁰ Denieffe, A personal narrative, pp.25-6; Luby’s recollections (N.L.I., MS 331); Ryan, *Fenian chief*, p.60.

³¹ Diarmuid O’Donovan Rossa, *Rossa’s recollections 1838-1898* (Shannon, 1969), pp.149-50, 317-19 (hereafter cited as *Rossa’s recollections*); Seán Ó Luíng, *Ó Donnabháin Rosa I* (Dublin, 1969), pp.16-33 (hereafter cited as Ó Luíng, *Ó Donnabháin Rosa I*); William D’Arcy, *The Fenian movement in the United States: 1858-1886* (Washington D.C., 1947), p.124 (Hereafter cited as D’Arcy, *The Fenian movement*).

³² *Rossa’s recollections*, p.150; Ó Luíng, *Ó Donnabháin Rosa I*, pp.84-8.

to Ireland, on 8 July 1856, William Smith O'Brien was a frequent commentator on Irish national issues identifying himself with aspirations for constitutional nationality. In a letter dated 25 October 1858, Sullivan informed O'Brien that some of the members of the Phoenix Society were freely using his name to recruit new members.³³ The *Nation* (Dublin), of 30 October, quoted a letter from O'Brien, dated 26 October, in which he strongly disassociated himself from all attempts to identify the national cause with secret organizations. In this letter he wrote that 'I do not think it at all probable that I shall ever invite my fellow countrymen to connect themselves with me in any proceeding which requires concealment'.³⁴ O'Brien, who never belonged to a secret society, supported Sullivan's opposition to the new revolutionary movement.

In his letter to the *Irish People* (New York), dated 19 May 1861, (already mentioned) O'Mahony wrote that:

It [the I.R.B.] was not long spreading far and wide, and might have soon been placed in an effective condition had not some of your well known nationalist leaders and all of your wretched so-called national press denounced it and striven to hunt it down. From the latter, indeed, nothing else could have been expected, but the former surely might have given me and my friend [Stephens] as fair a trial as I gave to them in '48, when I was the only man of any local influence in Tipperary that did not either shun or desert them. Some of these gentlemen took it into their heads that their own names had been made use of to start the Fenian organization, and they somewhat gratuitously came before the public on this pretence to state their disconnection with it. It seemed as if the gentlemen imagined that it could not have gained ground without them. Knowing the position in which I stood to them in '48, their disclaimers hurt my self-esteem not a little.³⁵

The 'well known nationalist leaders,' referred to by O'Mahony above, were O'Brien and possibly also Dillon and Martin who (like Mitchel and Meagher) could not accept

³³ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp. 103, 145; John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (New York, 1929), p.36 (Hereafter cited as Devoy, *Recollections*).

³⁴ *Nation* (Dublin), 30 Oct. 1858; Richard Davis, *Revolutionary Imperialist: William Smith O'Brien 1803-1864* (Dublin and Darlington, 1998), p.341 (Hereafter cited as Davis, *Revolutionary Imperialist*).

Stephens and certainly did not perceive him as a 'leader' of any national organization. O'Mahony was understandably disappointed by the fact that, despite his losing all by coming out in support of O'Brien and the other political leaders in '48, not alone did they not assist the I.R.B. but actually denounced it.

During the first week of October 1858 the parish priests of Kenmare, Bantry and Skibbereen preached sermons against secret societies. Between the 8 and 15 December, the government moved and arrested several 'Phoenix Society'³⁶ suspects in Bantry, Skibbereen, Kenmare and Killarney.³⁷ In the months following the arrests, A.M. Sullivan organized a 'Fair Trial Fund' to aid the prisoners. Subscriptions to this fund included those sent through Peter Langan, a founding member of the I.R.B. Others to contribute were John McHale, Archbishop of Tuam, and O'Brien in spite of his strong aversion to secret organizations.³⁸

At a special commission in March 1859, the case against the 'Phoenix Society' prisoners petered out after jury disagreement. Most of the accused were quickly released but O'Donovan Rossa and five others were held for eight months. After some negotiations they agreed to plead guilty to secure the release of one of their number, Daniel O'Sullivan (of Dromanassig, Bonane) who had been sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. The prisoners, with the exception of O'Sullivan, were released in July 1859. He remained in jail until November 1859, although the government, according to O'Donovan Rossa, had promised his immediate release.³⁹ In a report dated 8 June 1860, four of the 'Phoenix Society' members from Skibbereen, Daniel McCarthie, William O'Shea and the brothers Patrick J. and Denis Downing, were noted by Inspector Doyle as engaged in military training in the United States in one of the pike regiments of the Fenian Brotherhood.⁴⁰

³⁵ Letter from O'Mahony, dated 19 May 1861, printed in the *Irish People* (New York) 14 Dec. 1867.

³⁶ I will consistently refer to these men as the 'Phoenix Society' prisoners.

³⁷ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, p. 103, 145; John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (New York, 1929), p.36 (Hereafter cited as Devoy, *Recollections*).

³⁸ *Nation* (Dublin), 5 and 12 Mar. 1859; Seán Ó Lúing, 'The Phoenix Society in Kerry, 1858-9' in *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society*, No. 2, 1969, p.19; Robert Kee, *The green flag: a history of Irish nationalism* (London, 2000), p.302 (hereafter cited as Kee, *green flag*).

³⁹ Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, *Irish rebels in English prisons* (New York, 1882), pp.26-7 (hereafter cited as O'Donovan Rossa, *Irish rebels*); *Phoenix* (New York), 1 June 1861; Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 14 Apr. 1877; Davis, *Revolutionary Imperialist*, pp. 342-3.

STEPHENS VISITS THE UNITED STATES, OCTOBER 1858 – MARCH 1859

Following a second trip to the United States to collect funds, in the early summer of 1858, Denieffe returned to Ireland one month later with a mere £40. O'Mahony's task of raising funds was not easy, for a financial crisis in the United States in 1857 had thrown many of the Irish labourers out of employment and depleted Irish emigrant savings. As a consequence very little money was in fact sent from the United States to the I.R.B. for several years. In addition to this many Irish Americans needed to be convinced that there was something realistic to subscribe to.⁴¹

Dissatisfied with the poor response to his demands for money, Stephens decided to visit the United States in order to collect funds himself. He arrived in New York City on 13 October 1858.⁴² Stephens expected to obtain a large sum of money (between £5,000 and £10,000) at the disposal of the so-called 'Irish Directory', a committee of Irish Americans in New York City that had existed since 1848.⁴³ They had the control of these funds, which were intended for Irish revolutionary purposes. £10,000 had originally been collected in 1848. In the mid-summer of that year the Irish Directory had sent a messenger to Ireland with £1,000. A portion of this sum was used in the legal defence of the Irish Confederation prisoners in Ireland. A few thousand more was used in the organization of the escapes of John Mitchel, Thomas Francis Meagher and Terence Bellew McManus from Van Dieman's Land. Among the members of the Irish Directory in 1858 were Thomas Francis Meagher, Richard O'Gorman, Judge Robert Emmet, Charles O'Connor (a wealthy Irish-American lawyer and the son of the United Irishman Thomas O'Connor) and Horace Greeley (editor of the influential daily New York *Tribune*).⁴⁴

O'Mahony emphasised to Stephens that it was indispensable to secure the confidence of Mitchel and Meagher, who were then the two most influential Irishmen

⁴⁰ Doyle Report No.72, 8 June 1860 (Fenian Papers, NAI).

⁴¹ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.28.

⁴² Ibid; Luby's recollections (N.L.I., MS 331).

⁴³ Comerford, *Fenian in context*, p.50; Brendan Ó Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon: Young Irelander*, (Dublin, 1990), pp.75, 139 (Hereafter cited as Ó Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon*).

⁴⁴ Charles Gavan Duffy, *My Life in two hemispheres* vol. ii (London, 1898), pp.5-6; Ó Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon*, pp.75, 139; Leo Hershkowitz, 'The Irish and the emerging city: settlements to 1844' in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore and London, 1997), pp.19-20.

in the United States.⁴⁵ On 21 October 1858, Stephens arrived at Knoxville, Tennessee, to solicit the help of Mitchel who could be expected to carry influence with the Irish Directory though not himself a member.⁴⁶ Mitchel afterwards recalled his impression of Stephens at this meeting ‘All he wanted was that I should publicly call on my fellow countrymen in America for money, and no end of money, to be remitted to him for revolutionary purposes’.⁴⁷ Mitchel declined to join in any public appeal to aid Stephens’s fundraising in America but personally gave him fifty dollars and wrote in support of him to the Irish Directory in New York.⁴⁸ At a special meeting of the that body in New York, on 6 November 1858, Meagher proposed the following resolution which is in Stephens’s handwriting:

Having heard Mr. Stephens statement – in which we place implicit reliance - we are convinced that the state of things now existing in Ireland not only justifying [sic] but imperatively call [s] upon us to place in the hands of Mr. Stephens the entire of the money still remaining in the hands of the Directory; and that in this voting said money we fully discharge the trust originally reposed in us.⁴⁹

The following month Meagher joined fourteen members of the Fenian Brotherhood in signing a revised version, dated 9 December 1858, of Stephens’s original commission (of 28 February 1858). The new revised version stated that:

We the undersigned members of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood⁵⁰, as a further mark of our confidence in the capacity and devotion of James Stephens, Kilkenny, Ireland, hereby appoint the said James Stephens Chief Executive of the Irish revolutionary movement and give him, on our own and our comrades behalf, supreme control and absolute authority over that movement *at home and abroad*.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp.112.

⁴⁶ William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel* (London, 1888), vol ii, pp.128-40.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.119-20.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*; Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp.120-40.

⁴⁹ Document dated 6. Nov. 1858 (T.C.D., Davitt addendum 9659d/65) (Davitt add. refers to Stephens collection among the Davitt papers in T.C.D.).

⁵⁰ This is the first place that I am aware of where the title ‘Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood’ is applied by the Fenian Brotherhood to their sister organization in Ireland.

⁵¹ Document commissioning Stephens, New York, 9 Dec. 1858 (T.C.D., Davitt addendum 9659d/208).

This would prove to be very significant in the future. In Stephens's view the Fenian Brotherhood, including its head centre, was subordinate to his orders as set down in his reply of 1 January 1858 to their invitation to form a new revolutionary organization in Ireland. Seven of the fifteen signatories to the document of 9 December 1858 (quoted above) had signed Stephens's original commission of 28 February 1858. They were O'Mahony, Doheny, Corcoran, Roche, Byrne, Reynolds and O'Dwyer. The remaining eight signatories to the December 1858 document were Thomas Francis Meagher, Michael Phelan⁵², John Burke, Owen Keenan, William Briggs, John McCory (all resident in New York), John Comber (Philadelphia) and James Cantwell (Philadelphia). James Cantwell, originally of Dublin, was one of the council of fourteen which had met at Boulagh Common, north of Ballingarry, on 28 July 1848; he subsequently escaped to the United States.⁵³

In a letter from Meagher to Stephens, dated 26 January 1859, Meagher formally withdrew his signature from the document of 9 December 1858, explaining that:

I have come to the conclusion, after some days of conscientious reflection, that, if it be not criminal, it is unworthy of me, in any way, however trivial or indirectly, to urge or authorise a revolutionary movement, in the hazards of which, from a conviction of their utter uselessness, I feel at present no disposition whatever to participate.⁵⁴

We can infer from this that the Irish Directory retracted their resolution of 6 November 1858 (already quoted).⁵⁵ We know that both Mitchel and Meagher retracted and without their support the Irish Directory would not have entertained Stephens's demands.

In spite of O'Mahony's insistence on the importance of winning Mitchel and Meagher over, Stephens (in this his sole entry into diplomacy) antagonised both of them as well as Judge Robert Emmet of the Irish Directory. When leaving the United

⁵² Kilkenny born Michael Phelan had been a co-founder of the Irish Republican Union whose military companies trained for revolt in Ireland during the spring of 1848.

⁵³ Michael Doheny, *The Felon's track* (New York, 1849), p.303.

⁵⁴ Letter from Meagher to Stephens, 26 Jan. 1859 (T.C.D., Davitt add. 9659d/66).

⁵⁵ There is no extant document that corroborates this beyond Meagher's letter of 26 Jan. 1859.

States, in March 1859, Stephens expressed contempt for all Irish-American leaders with the exception of O'Mahony.⁵⁶ It speaks volumes for O'Mahony's personal relations that his consistent support of Stephens never compromised his friendship with Mitchel and Meagher. Although they found Stephens intolerable, Mitchel and Meagher were O'Mahony's allies to the end. However, the basis for all O'Mahony's subsequent problems had now been laid.

After leaving America, in March 1859, Stephens did not return to Ireland but made his way to Paris from where he directed the Irish organization. He was able to do this because John O'Leary and Thomas Clarke Luby were at hand, O'Leary to act as emissary to the Fenian Brotherhood, Luby to maintain contact with the local I.R.B. leaders in Ireland.⁵⁷

HEAD CENTRE OF THE FENIAN BROTHERHOOD

There is a clear consistency in the behaviour pattern that emerges: in Ireland during the summer and fall of 1848, with the foundation of the Emmet Monument Association in 1855, and again after the foundation of the Fenian Brotherhood – this is O'Mahony's steadfast and firm readiness to supply leadership at any moment of crisis. In the *Irishman* (Dublin), of 16 August 1862, O'Mahony wrote that:

In 1859 the small remnant of the Emmet Monument Association then in existence remodelled its organization and elected me as its president. Many imperative reasons, not necessary to be mentioned here, forced me with much reluctance and even *distaste* to accept that office. The association at my suggestion assumed the title of the Fenian Brotherhood.⁵⁸

O'Mahony's statement can be seen as a deliberate reassertion of his position in relation to Stephens. The name under which those who worked in either part of the movement (in the United States or in Ireland) were to go down in history was the one O'Mahony gave to the American branch of the organization in the summer of 1859: the Fenian Brotherhood or 'Fenians'.

⁵⁶ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp.148-56.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-65.

⁵⁸ Letter from John O'Mahony to Fr Patick Lavelle printed in the *Irishman* (Dublin) 16 Aug. 1862.

O'Mahony saw the necessity of giving the Fenian Brotherhood an independent stance from the home (Irish) organization and envisaged that the movement as a whole should aim at continued existence until its mission was fulfilled. In a detailed personal defence written in the *Irish People* (New York) in 1868, O'Mahony wrote that:

I accepted the position of "Head Centre" of the Fenian Brotherhood with the understanding that my duty should be to unite and to organize as far as possible the Irish element in America, to concentrate its moral and material forces, and to direct them systematically and intelligently, but yet resolutely and unremittingly, towards the overthrow of the English oligarchy, and the liberation of Ireland. This was to be done *openly* and above board. However, as the aid of the Irish nation at home must ever be indispensable to the success of any attempt to rescue our native land from thralldom, the sustainment and arming of a closely allied and co-operative organization in Ireland and Great Britain, which was known as the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, was deemed the first and most important object in the Fenian programme. The understanding was that the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood should be organized *secretly*, and that its members should be subject to strict military rules, with James Stephens as its leader and chief. As soon as both these organizations should have acquired sufficient extension, discipline and resources, it was hoped that they would be able "to make their own opportunity" for a combined onslaught upon the common enemy. But if their resources should not be found adequate to this, it was believed for certain that both branches of the Irish people could be put and kept in a state of constant and ever watchful preparedness for availing themselves with promptitude and determination of any favourable opportunity that might present itself to them from without through the foreign embarrassments of England. By making their own opportunity was meant *the landing of a sufficient supply of arms and disciplined men in Ireland*. England's engaging in some foreign war should at some time present the opportunity from without. Until either occurred the Irish revolutionaries at home were to have done nothing more than to organize, arm to the best of their ability, watch, and bide their time. Such was the Fenian policy as understood by me. It was adhered to with considerable

perseverance and constancy both here and in Ireland up to the beginning of '64. It was adhered to by me up to the fatal summer of '65.⁵⁹

An insurrection in Ireland would have little hope of success unless the military power of Britain was employed elsewhere, which O'Mahony always insisted on. The Fenian Brotherhood, under O'Mahony's leadership, would be kept in a constant state of preparedness until advantage could be taken of Britain's difficulties with foreign powers.

PHOENIX (NEW YORK), 4 JUNE 1859

The immigrant flood of the 1840s and 50s, especially after the famine, provided the Irish-American press with readers and the hostility of the Know-Nothing movement gave it a cause.⁶⁰ On 4 June 1859, O'Mahony launched a new weekly newspaper, the *Phoenix* (New York) published from 44 Ann Street, New York. *It was the first paper to advocate the principles of Fenianism.* By having a newspaper at his command O'Mahony was enabled to promote his project and to head off challenges from other groups. At this point the Fenian Brotherhood was attracting some attention in the American press and when some editorial comment appeared in the *Times* (New York) in 1860, which O'Mahony considered a slur on his fellow countrymen, he challenged the editor, Henry J. Raymond, to a duel.⁶¹

Editorial control of the *Phoenix* (New York) was solely in the hands of O'Mahony with James Roche (formerly a sub-editor with Meagher's *New York Irish News*) as editor.⁶² Roche had been a prominent member of the Emmet Monument Association in 1855 and was one of the signatories of the Fenian Brotherhood's invitation to Stephens in the autumn of 1857. Michael Doheny was a major contributor to the *Phoenix* (New York). In the first issue of the paper, dated 4 June 1859, it was stated that 'The name "Phoenix" suggests the principles and objects of the Journal that assumes it; being emblematic of a resurrection and a new existence'.

⁵⁹'Fenianism – an exposition' by John O'Mahony in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868 (Hereafter cited as O'Mahony, 'Fenianism')

⁶⁰ Thomas N. Brown, 'The origins and character of Irish-American nationalism' in Lawrence J. McCafferty (ed.) *Irish Nationalism and the American contribution* (New York, 1976), pp.345-6.

⁶¹ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.104.

⁶² The *Irish News* (New York) was started by Meagher in 1856.

⁶³ It was hoped that having a newspaper under its own control would help consolidate the Fenian Brotherhood's influence. The *Phoenix* (New York) combined contemporary news reports of events in Ireland and in the Irish-American community with details of the activities of the Fenian Brotherhood as well as recollections and reflections on aspects of Irish history. It played a significant part in transforming the movement into a major factor in American public life. In that first issue of the paper, O'Mahony wrote that:

I have no taste for journalism, and nothing could have induced me to engage in such an undertaking but the conviction that an organ such as I hope to see the *Phoenix* become was indispensable to the cause to which I have been devoted from my earliest boyhood, a cause whose service I cherish with pious reverence as a sacred heirloom in my family, and to maintain which all my energies, mental and physical, shall be directed henceforth.⁶⁴

Many Irish Americans viewed the struggle for human freedom as one which bound together the destinies of Ireland and the United States. O'Mahony saw no conflict in loyalty to Ireland with loyalty to the United States and believed that the aspirations of both were in perfect harmony. For O'Mahony, as well as for Mitchel, the survival of the Irish as a nation demanded the establishment of an independent state, linked to the United States by a common republicanism.⁶⁵ In the first issue of the *Phoenix* (New York), O'Mahony sets out its agenda with distinct American overtones and appeals to the United States as the exemplar of republicanism. This was in keeping with his residence in what was the only significant republic in existence at that time:

Published in the commercial metropolis of this great republic and addressed chiefly to men who either are already or who intend soon to become American citizens the *Phoenix* cannot altogether exclude from its columns those local and sectional questions which at present divide political parties in this country.

⁶³ *Phoenix* (New York), 4 June 1859.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Hereward Senior, *The Fenians and Canada* (Toronto, 1978), pp.36-37 (Hereafter cited as Senior, *The Fenians and Canada*); Thomas N. Brown, 'The origins of Irish-American nationalism' in *Irish*

It shall, however, preserve a strict neutrality with respect to them, treating the events to which they give rise merely as the news of the day, in which, as an essentially Irish organ, it has little or no immediate interest. This neutrality must, however, be understood with respect to such questions as do not threaten to destroy the integrity of the American Republic and thereby endanger the success of the grand experiment in self-government which is now upon its trial in this country. All Irish republicans have a direct interest therein. It is a question of paramount importance to every man who seeks to establish self-government in his own land. The *Phoenix*, then, shall inculcate upon all its Irish American readers the duty of allegiance to the constitution and laws of the United States, whether they be citizens or not. This allegiance can never interfere either with the higher duties which they owe to the land of their birth or with the love which should bind them to their parents, kindred and friends who still writhe in that bondage from which they themselves but yesterday fled thither. It is not an allegiance that condemns as treason to this Republic any organized attempt of its Irish born citizens for the liberation of their own land, without consent of the constituted authorities here; but which not only does not condemn but loudly applauds similar attempts when made by private American citizens or others for the invasion and subjugation of other countries where they can claim no inheritance or birthright but that of the spoiler and the tyrant.⁶⁶

The views expressed by O'Mahony above are consistent with those of the earlier Emmet Monument Association. The 1850s was the decade of the phenomenon called 'filibustering' a term used at that time to describe an attempt made by an army of invasion against a foreign power such as American incursions into Central America. In May 1855, William Walker (lawyer, newspaperman and adventurer) led an expedition of volunteers from San Francisco to Nicaragua to snatch it from Costa Rican rule and establish American settlements.⁶⁷

Nationalism and the American contribution (New York, 1976), p.341-3 (Hereafter cited as Brown, 'The origins of Irish-American nationalism').

⁶⁶ *Phoenix* (New York), 4 June 1859.

⁶⁷ Thomas Keneally, *The great shame: a story of the Irish in the old world and the new* (London, 1998), p.302-03. (Hereafter cited as Keneally, *The great shame*).

In his report dated 23 December 1859, the Dublin police agent, Doyle wrote that:

I am forced to the conclusion that he [O'Mahony] is a sanguinary enthusiast whose real intentions are indicated in the language addressed by him to his followers through the columns of his newspaper. He does not counsel merely, he has pledged himself to share the danger; he is not merely a newspaper editor.⁶⁸

The weekly publication of the *Phoenix* (New York) gave the membership of the Fenian Brotherhood an enhanced sense of solidarity providing visible evidence of an organization under able leadership.

On 12 April 1862, James Roche founded the first Irish Fenian newspaper newspaper in the town of Galway, entitled the *Galway American*. The *Galway American* was virtually a continuation of the *Phoenix* (New York) which ceased publication in August 1861. In effect, Roche (probably with O'Mahony's support) transferred the *Phoenix* (New York) across the Atlantic. There was the probability that a Fenian filibuster would use Galway as its landing point.⁶⁹

IRISH PATRIOTIC DEFENCE FUND

In January 1859 the Fenian Brotherhood in New York launched the 'Irish Patriotic Defence Fund', which was intended for financing Stephens's work but whose ambiguous title enticed contributions from some people who took this to be another 'Fair Trial Fund' – like that started by A.M. Sullivan and the others in Ireland.⁷⁰ In the *Phoenix* (New York), of 23 July 1859, Doheny wrote that:

On the 13th of January last Mr. O'Mahony was appointed treasurer and controller of a Fund, partly in the hands of a former treasurer, partly there subscribed, and partly there afterwards to be subscribed. He then and there distinctly and explicitly stated that he would receive no money to be applied to

⁶⁸ Doyle Report No.55, 23 Dec. 1859 (Fenian Papers, NAI).

⁶⁹ See Toby Joyce, 'The Galway American 1862-63: James Roche and the American Civil War' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 1995, pp.108-9.

the legal defence of the Irish State prisoners. Another meeting of the same men and their friends was held in the same place on the 20th of January, and then and there he twice made the same statement.⁷¹

On 22 January 1859, the leading Irish-American newspapers of New York, the *Irish American* (New York) and the *Irish News* (New York) announced the fund as being for the defence of the members of the 'Phoenix Society,' arrested in Ireland in December 1858, and contributions were made. Stephens was in the United States from October 1858 to March 1859 and it may have been his idea to use the 'Phoenix Society' arrests as a pretext for raising money in America, which could be secretly diverted to conspiratorial purposes in Ireland.

In April 1859, O'Mahony changed the name of the fund from the 'Irish Patriotic Defence Fund' to 'Fenian Fund' in order to clear up any confusion that had arisen.⁷² In the first issue of the *Phoenix* (New York), of 4 June 1859, he wrote that 'In reply to numerous correspondents we have once for all to state that the object of this [Fenian] fund is the establishment of an organization composed of the bravest and best men of the Irish at home and abroad'.⁷³

In the *Irish American* (New York), of 25 June 1859, the editor, Patrick J. Meehan (a member of the Fenian Brotherhood) demanded an explanation relative to the appropriation of the fund and claimed that:

It has been previously intimated to us indirectly that none of the money collected here under the name of the 'Irish Patriotic Defence Fund' has gone to the assistance of the Irish state prisoners; but, at the time, we paid little regard to this rumour, as we were sure it must have originated in some misconception or mistake. Moreover we had the fullest confidence in the gentleman to whom the management of the fund had been committed and we could not believe that he or his associates could be led to the adoption of any policy so narrow and short sighted as to exclude their co-patriots who were suffering confinement at home from participation in the benefits of the fund, a

⁷⁰ *Phoenix* (New York), 23 July 1860; *Irish American* (New York), 25 June 1859 and 20 Jan. 1866.

⁷¹ 'Reply to Mr. Meehan's letter by Col. Doheny' printed in the *Phoenix* (New York), 23 July 1859.

⁷² *Phoenix* (New York), 23 July 1859.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 4 June 1859.

great portion of which was contributed under the stimulus of the indignation felt at their arbitrary arrest and unwarrantably severe treatment.⁷⁴

Meehan's article amounted to the charge that O'Mahony had obtained money under false pretences. In reply to this, and other letters written by Meehan, O'Mahony responded, in the *Phoenix* (New York) of 23 July 1859, that:

I never, to my knowledge, received a single cent, which was contributed for the special purpose of defending the Irish political prisoners in a British court of law. As I have stated before now, some one or two letters were sent to me tendering subscriptions for that object, but I invariably refused to take charge of them, upon which I was as invariably requested to apply them to the object for which the "Irish Patriotic Defence Fund" had been instituted.

With most of the issues raised by Mr. Meehan, I have strictly nothing to do. I have no account to render to him as editor of the *Irish American*, either in my private or my official capacity. I was appointed to receive money for certain objects, and to perform other much more important functions connected therewith. That I have done so to the entire satisfaction of all who have trusted me, with the exceptions of Messrs. Meehan and Lalor, must be fairly evident to the public before now. I have offered to refund any money contributed under an erroneous impression. No one except Mr. Lalor had reclaimed his contribution. It appears that neither Mr. Meehan nor his partner, Mr. Cole, could reclaim anything from me under a like plea; for it seems they did not contribute any money to the fund since I was appointed its manager, and, as I believe, *not since there were any prisoners at all.*⁷⁵

In the context of the conflicting interpretations placed on the fund it would appear that Stephens used O'Mahony and the others (Doheny and Corcoran) in a deceitful way. Meehan continued to dwell on the matter of the fund, in his *Irish American* (New York), long after he was explicitly told that the money raised was never intended for

⁷⁴ *Irish American* (New York), 25 June 1859.

⁷⁵ Article by O'Mahony entitled 'Mr. Meehan and the Defence Fund' in the *Phoenix* (New York), 23 July 1859.

the purpose of defending the prisoners in Ireland. His articles had serious repercussions for the Fenian Brotherhood as contributions to the fund ceased.⁷⁶

The Fenian headquarters were located at this time at No. 6 Centre Street, New York. Doheny practised law from an office in this same building, opposite to the Superior Court.⁷⁷ At a meeting of the Fenian Brotherhood held here on 3 July 1859, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

Inasmuch as Patrick J. Meehan was, and is yet, a member of this Brotherhood, and as such was thoroughly aware of the objects for which its members contributed funds and of the application of such funds, and inasmuch as he could learn any day, how the contributions lately received were applied, and rather, inasmuch as he was bound by the most sacred obligation not to reveal the proceedings of the Brotherhood and has, notwithstanding, without cause or provocation, or asking any explanation, published in the *Irish American* Newspaper two articles inevitably tending to draw public attention to what his faith was pledged to keep secret, and has since been summoned before this Brotherhood and declined to attend, we hereby pronounce him guilty of violating his obligation to the Brotherhood and expel him ignominiously from our body.⁷⁸

Captain Michael Corcoran, Lieutenant Theodore Kelly, Sergeant John Doran and John D. Hughes were appointed by the Fenian Brotherhood as a deputation to communicate the above resolution to Meehan.⁷⁹

Four years before, in 1855, Richard Lalor, sub-editor of the *Citizen* (New York), had been dismissed by its editor, John McClenahan, after being accused of copying the names of the paper's subscription list for Doheny's new paper entitled the *Honest Truth* (New York).⁸⁰ On 23 July 1859, Lalor, now the editor of the *Irish News* (New York), told his readers that:

⁷⁶ *Irish American* (New York), June-July 1859; O'Leary, *Recollections*, vol i, pp. 105-9.

⁷⁷ Marcus Bourke, *John O'Leary: a study in Irish separatism* (Tralee, 1967), p. 39.

⁷⁸ *Phoenix* (New York), 23 July 1859.

⁷⁹ As may be recalled one of the signatories of the Fenian Brotherhood's invitation to Stephens in the autumn of 1857 was John D. Hughes: this is probably the same person listed as John D. Hughes above.

⁸⁰ *Pilot* (Boston), 24 Mar. 1855.

We did, on several occasions, to parties prominently connected with what's generally called the Phoenix Movement, privately, honestly and cordially disavow any faith in its immediate exertions or success. We did so because we entertained the same opinions that Wm. Smith O'Brien expressed in Boston and which were published in this journal.⁸¹ We did so because we knew that the support constantly spoken of as available for Ireland in drilled and armed men from here was an immense exaggeration. We did so, because we had no confidence in the ability or resources of the leaders here to direct and control any such stupendous effort as they essayed.⁸²

Lalor's comments reflect those of McClenahan in the *Citizen* (New York) in 1855 in relation to the Emmet Monument Association (see chapter five).

In response to a paragraph, which appeared in the *Nation* (Dublin) of 15 July 1859, claiming that no money was received from America for the defence of the Phoenix Society prisoners, O'Mahony made it clear that the funds under his control were not contributed for that purpose. He went on to state that the 'Fenian Fund' had 'an object, which however you shall not now know from me'.⁸³ It was clear to anyone familiar with O'Mahony's role in Irish-American politics (including Inspector Doyle) that this 'object' meant aiding the revolutionary insurrection in Ireland.⁸⁴

O'Mahony was often disheartened by the Irish propensity for factiousness. Probably recollecting the opposition encountered by the Emmet Monument Association in 1855, as well as more recent events, he concluded that 'We are, as usual, full of the spirit of dissension. Those of us who are willing to work and to dare, must needs be assailed by men who neither dare nor wish to do anything'.⁸⁵ Clearly O'Mahony was feeling the thankless burden of leadership during the 'Irish Patriotic Defence Fund' controversy. Luby later wrote that 'This unlucky name [Irish Patriotic Defence Fund] was in my opinion the pregnant cause of long-lasting misconceptions,

⁸¹ When O'Brien arrived in New York, on 25 February 1859, O'Mahony and Meagher publicly greeted him. O'Brien's arrival occasioned a civic and military parade directed by Colonel Ryan of the 69th Regiment: Davis, *Revolutionary Imperialist*, pp. 343-4; Keneally, *The great shame*, pp. 314-15.

⁸² *Irish News* (New York), 23 July 1859.

⁸³ Letter from O'Mahony, dated 8 Aug. 1859, to the *Nation* (Dublin) reprinted in the *Phoenix* (New York), 20 Aug. 1859.

⁸⁴ Doyle Report No.39, 23 Aug. 1859 (Fenian Papers, NAI)

⁸⁵ Letter from John O'Mahony 'To the contributors of the Patriotic Defence Fund', dated 14 July 1859, printed in the *Phoenix* (New York), 23 July 1859.

of collapse of revenues, almost of the utter breakdown of our movement'.⁸⁶ And it may have been Stephens's doing.

In the *Irish People* (New York), of 25 January 1868, O'Mahony recalled that:

When assuming the direction of the Fenian movement on this continent – a thing which I did with painful reluctance - I felt fully conscious of the extreme peril in which I thereby placed my name and my character, both of which I prized more than life, and fully as highly as I did the freedom of my native land.⁸⁷

O'Mahony felt an inherited responsibility to provide leadership to the community whenever it was expected and needed regardless of the odds or of his personal distaste. That inherited burden of leadership in desperate circumstance is reflected in the haunted look apparent in the photograph of O'Mahony reproduced in Devoy's *Recollections*.⁸⁸ All descriptions of O'Mahony agree on a detached mystical strain in his demeanour.

CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE FENIANS

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Fenian Brotherhood under O'Mahony's leadership was the firmness with which they withstood the hostility of, and pressures from, the catholic church. In a letter to his fellow Fenian, William Sullivan, of Tiffin, Ohio⁸⁹, dated 4 April 1859, O'Mahony wrote that:

We must calculate upon a certain amount of opposition from some of the priests. I do not, however, consider it judicious to come into collision with them openly. Those who denounce us go beyond their duty as clergymen. They are either bad Irishmen, who do not wish to see Ireland a nation, or very stupid and ignorant zealots, who do not understand what they are about. Our association is neither anti-catholic nor irreligious. We simply bind ourselves

⁸⁶ Luby's recollections (N.L.I. MS 331)

⁸⁷ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868.

⁸⁸ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.266 (page opposite).

⁸⁹ William Sullivan would be elected a member of the central council of the Fenian Brotherhood at the Cincinnati convention in 1865.

to conceal such matters as are needful to be kept from the enemy's knowledge, both for the success of our strategy and for the safety of our friends.⁹⁰

O'Mahony knew that the Fenians could not take too anti-clerical a line, as this ran the risk of alienating practising catholics who were otherwise favourable to the organization. Catholicism was an essential element in their sense of identity for many of them – especially those without knowledge of their language. An aversion to oath bound secret societies (outside the confines of their church) was part of the training for catholic clergy. But perhaps the most significant reason for the catholic hierarchy's opposition to the Fenian Brotherhood was that its members did not prove amenable to their control and seriously threatened their social influence.⁹¹

O'Mahony believed in the complete separation of church and state. However, the Fenian Brotherhood was not against the catholic church; nor was it a secret society as its aims and activities were known. O'Mahony wished to establish that the Fenian Brotherhood in both its form and its object was not contrary to catholic doctrine or morality. By way of a response to clerical opposition, he stated explicitly, in a speech at the Apollo Rooms, Broadway, on 17 March 1860, that:

This Fenian organization in America, of which I am at once the President and principal servant, is not a *secret society*. Our object is no secret, neither are our means of attaining it. It is only secret in so far as it allows *an unlimited power of reticence to me*, with respect to such parties and such matters as I may deem it advisable to keep concealed, not alone from the enemy, but from those of my own brother associates, whose immediate cooperation may not be needed in relation thereto. Whether my Brothers be rash or prudent in placing so much trust in my hands, is a question that concerns them and me alone. It may be a *folly* on their part, but it is scarcely a *sin*. It is a trust, which every soldier must place in his officer. For the Fenian Brotherhood of America is a *military*, not a *civil or deliberative* organization, and those who seek to interfere with us, as if we were a *secret society*, might just as well interfere with our friends of the 69th regiment in their obedience to the commands of

⁹⁰ Letter from O'Mahony to William Sullivan of Tiffin, Ohio, 4 Apr. 1859, printed in *Rossa's Recollections*, p.301.

our gallant comrade, Colonel Corcoran, who, as you are aware, is also the Colonel of the Phoenix Brigade.⁹²

O'Mahony's personal style would have been cramped in a secret society. He felt more comfortable with an open national movement. The Fenian Brotherhood in the United States was an open and legal organization keeping only its plans and contacts with Ireland as secret as possible.

The association of some priests (although few in number) with Fenianism served to weaken the effect of the denunciations by the catholic hierarchy. It was widely believed that the opposition of the bishops in the United States was at the instigation of Cardinal Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin, who was regarded by the Fenians as being very acceptable to the British government.⁹³

SPREAD OF THE FENIAN BROTHERHOOD

O'Mahony had two main groups of Irish-American political opponents in the United States - the catholic hierarchy and constitutional nationalists. In a letter dated 19 May 1861, O'Mahony outlined the difficulties faced by the Fenian Brotherhood at this time:

Opposed on all sides - by all the '48 leaders except Michael Doheny - by the so-called national press in Ireland and America - by a great portion of the Catholic priests - by the worldly, the weak minded and the timid - it was no wonder that the Fenian Brotherhood was from the start, slow, and beset with difficulties, not the least of which were the recent failures of the many societies got up for the same object. In this country the Fenian Brotherhood was often on the verge of extinction.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Oliver P. Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat, 1861-75* (London, 1999), p.81 (Hereafter cited as Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat*).

⁹² *Phoenix* (New York), 24 Mar. 1860.

⁹³ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.109.

⁹⁴ Letter from O'Mahony, dated 19 May 1861, printed in the *Irish People* (New York) 14 Dec. 1867

O'Mahony's statement that the Fenians encountered the active opposition of the Irish-American newspapers in New York City is corroborated by Denieffe who was in the United States in early 1858. In his retrospective narrative, Denieffe wrote that:

Some of the Irish-American newspapers took a special interest in decrying any active movement in Ireland. They were, for various reasons, pandering to the local politicians, and, consequently, were not with us. The *Irish American*, then the leading and most influential Irish paper in America, was, I remember, one of them.⁹⁵

It was not until near the close of the Civil War, when feeling was running high against Britain who supported the Confederacy, that the tone of the Irish-American press changed. Progress was slow during the early years of the Fenian Brotherhood, partly on account of the failure of the revolutionary societies in New York, which preceded it. In that same letter to William Sullivan, of 4 April 1859, O'Mahony wrote:

It is hard to get the mass of the Irish in New York to believe that any one can be serious who speaks of freeing Ireland. They have had their hopes disappointed, when raised to the highest pitch, twice or three times within the five years I have been here. Then, the majority of them are mere dupes of designing politicians who scoff at the notion that any one could be so green as to hope for Ireland. But this must soon cease. True men are beginning to see that we are really in earnest, and they will not much longer heed the sneers which the venal and corrupt have always at hand for every noble and disinterested action.⁹⁶

The 'hopes' of Irish Americans, which had been 'raised' to a high degree during the Crimean War, were suddenly and unexpectedly dashed with the news of the Peace of Paris in early 1856. O'Mahony had at that time accused Robert Tyler, the son of a former United States president, John Tyler, of trying to win political capital from his connection with Irish American revolutionaries (see chapter five). As it increased in

⁹⁵ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.22.

⁹⁶ Letter from O'Mahony to William Sullivan of Tiffin, Ohio, 4 Apr. 1859, printed in *Rossa's Recollections*, p.300-4.

strength, the Fenian Brotherhood would become attractive as a platform to politicians, ambitious for self-advancement in the American milieu, with attendant problems which were to mature later.

A shortage of money and promoters also impeded the growth of the Fenian Brotherhood in the early years of its existence. This is evident in that letter from O'Mahony to William Sullivan of 4 April 1859 where he wrote that:

It is natural that our progress should be slow at first, particularly as our finances do not yet warrant us in sending round agents to the different centres of the Irish-American population. Neither have we at our disposal in this country the right kind of man to send forth as our representative. I could not myself be absent from this for many days without injury to the movement. We must then wait for the arrival of Mr. O'Leary, who must now be on his way out.⁹⁷

John O'Leary (who had taken a prominent part in the '49 movement) was sent over from Ireland by Stephens to take over O'Mahony's routine office duties in connection with the Fenians in New York. O'Leary arrived in that city on 1 May 1859 and remained in the United States until the following September.⁹⁸ O'Mahony wrote later that 'He [O'Leary] remained in my Central Office for several months and gave me valuable assistance during the trying crisis through which the organization was then passing'.⁹⁹ This certainly includes the 'Irish Patriotic Defence Fund' controversy.

The *Phoenix* (New York), of 23 June 1859, related that, in a recruitment drive for the Fenian Brotherhood that month, O'Mahony visited Fenian circles in various inland and mid western cities, including Buffalo, Cleveland and Pittsburgh. In his report dated 3 September 1859, Doyle wrote that:

He [O'Mahony] is the recognised head for all America and in this capacity pays occasional visits to distant cities, ostensibly to promote the objects of the organisation - reconciling differences and infusing confidence as far as he can - not a very easy task in my opinion.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ O'Leary, *Recollections*, Vol. I, pp. 99-113.

In the *Phoenix* (New York) it was announced that O'Mahony visited Boston for this purpose on 6 September 1859.¹⁰⁰ In his report quoted above, Doyle continues:

Captain Michael Corcoran has been elected colonel of the 69th. He is a prominent member of the Phoenix Council [Fenian Brotherhood], one of the shareholders of the *Phoenix* newspaper, and one of the deputation recently sent by the Phoenix Council to acquaint the editor of the *Irish American* that he had been expelled from their society for having drawn public notice to the management of the 'Patriotic Defence Fund,' adverted to in former reports – he is therefore of the 'first water'. He is proprietor of the 'Hibernian Hall' where a Drill Room is appointed for the use of the First Regiment of the Phoenix Brigade on one night of each week, and where also he retails spirits, porter etc. The 'Hibernian Hall' is a place of some note in New York, there are very large rooms for the purposes of balls, meetings, drilling etc. and any party may have a room for hire – the place is patronised by the Irish almost exclusively.¹⁰¹

Colonel Michael Corcoran, from Carrowkeel, County Sligo, had been a member of the Irish Constabulary for three years before he resigned this position and emigrated to America in 1849. He enlisted as a private in the sixty-ninth regiment of the New York State Militia and, by 25 August 1859, had risen to the rank of colonel. Corcoran was simultaneously colonel of the 'Phoenix Brigade' of the Fenian Brotherhood (which he had co-founded with Doheny in 1857).¹⁰² One of the most prominent officers in the Irish companies was Oliver Byrne - an engineer whose theoretical writings on military affairs were published in the *Phoenix* (New York). Byrne along with the paper's editor, James Roche, had been leading figures in the Emmet Monument Association and were also signatories of the Fenian Brotherhood's invitation to Stephens in the autumn of 1857. Another important figure in the Fenian Brotherhood was O'Mahony's personal secretary, Michael Cavanagh, a native of

⁹⁹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868; O'Leary, *Recollections*, Vol. I, pp. 105-9.

¹⁰⁰ *Phoenix* (New York), clipping from 1859, in Doyle Report No. 41, 3 Sept. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

¹⁰¹ Doyle Report No. 41, 3 Sept. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

Cappoquin who had participated in the attack by the '49 movement on the barracks in that town. Besides being a revolutionary, Cavanagh was an accomplished Irish scholar.¹⁰³

In his letter published in the *Irish People* (New York) dated 19 May 1861 (quoted earlier) O'Mahony wrote that:

With the exception of Michael Doheny, the men who created the Fenian Brotherhood had no extensive widespread prestige attached to their name. Neither were they wealthy. It has, nevertheless, already done a great deal. But had those whom I have mentioned [Mitchel, Meagher, Dillon, O'Gorman, Martin, Smith O'Brien and others] joined it from the beginning, its weight would have been long since sensibly felt *in the balance of nations*. So far from aiding it, all opposed it - some openly, but everyone either directly or indirectly.¹⁰⁴

Events more and more forced O'Mahony into the leadership of Irish-America as one by one the surviving Young Ireland personalities there – O'Gorman, Mitchel and Meagher - refused or evaded it. In his report dated 8 October 1859, Doyle wrote that:

It does not appear that the chief men of the '48 movement, Messrs. William Smith O'Brien, Thomas Francis Meagher, John Mitchel, or Richard O'Gorman, are in any degree responsible for the organisation of the Phoenix Society but, as a matter of course, their sympathy and aid are "counted in" - whether they would have it so or not.

It might be asked who are responsible? O'Mahony, Colonel Doheny, Colonel Corcoran (69th) and other officers of Irish companies are, to a moral certainty - the editors and writers of certain newspapers are, with a sprinkling of well circumstanced persons carrying on trade, or business of one kind or other, in New York – men who relish such work and are willing to devote a portion of their time to it and of their money. Such are the men and the class of men to

¹⁰² *Phoenix* (New York), 23 Mar. 1860; Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, pp.294-5.

¹⁰³ Pádraig Ó Macháin and Thomas F. Overlander, 'Michael Cavanagh of Cappoquin, 1822-1900' in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society* (2000), pp. 97-122; *Irish People* (New York), 22 Feb. 1868.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from O'Mahony, dated 19 May 1861 printed in the *Irish People* (New York) 14 Dec. 1867.

whom the parentage of the Phoenix Society belongs. It does not appear that there is a man of distinguished station or ability among them.¹⁰⁵

O'Mahony always retained the full confidence of the '48 leaders mentioned above especially Mitchel. In a letter from Mitchel to O'Mahony, dated 25 August 1859 and published in the *Irish News* (New York), Mitchel concluded:

Though not a member of your organization, you are well aware that I highly approve of all movements, whether open or secret, tending to the enfranchisement of Ireland; and I hope you are also aware that nobody reposes a stronger faith in your patriotism, integrity and devotion, than

Your friend, John Mitchel.¹⁰⁶

Unlike the other leaders of 'Young Ireland', Mitchel had no aversion to secret organizations.

In his report, dated 22 July 1859, Doyle had remarked that 'Whatever amount of success may await the future of this military organization, at the present time, it is literally "all officers and no soldiers". O'Mahony and Co. are now trying what they can do in this respect'.¹⁰⁷ O'Mahony's efforts in late 1859 were directed towards the organization of Irish-American military companies and regiments within the state militias throughout the United States. The *Phoenix* (New York) contains frequent references to the organization of these Irish military companies, among which were the Phoenix Brigade, the Sixty Ninth Regiment, and the Emmet Guards. Over the entire front page of the *Phoenix* (New York), of 19 November 1859, forty companies were enumerated as being connected with the Fenian Brotherhood in the different states. Establishing the pattern for organization, O'Mahony himself commanded the First Regiment of the Phoenix Brigade and called upon its captains, in the different parts of the state of New York, 'to make weekly returns to the Head Centre, No. 6, Centre street, New York' - the location of the Fenian Brotherhood's headquarters at this time. There was a crossover in membership between the Phoenix Brigade and the

¹⁰⁵ Doyle Report No. 45, 8 Oct. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Mitchel to O'Mahony, 25 Aug. 1859 cutting from the *Phoenix* (New York) in Doyle Report No. 41, 3 Sept. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

¹⁰⁷ Doyle Report No.33, 22 July 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

Sixty-Ninth Regiment of the New York State Militia. At a ball of the O'Mahony Guard Company C, Sixty-Ninth Regiment, in February 1860:

The toast of the company was spoken to by John O'Mahony, who observed that he had joined it with the view of discharging his duty as a citizen soldier, while he remained in America, and also for the still higher purpose of learning the military science that he might, at some future time, be in a position of serving his native country as a practical soldier. Mr. O'Mahony's remarks were received with enthusiastic applause.¹⁰⁸

Thousands of Irish Americans followed O'Mahony's example and enlisted as privates in the Sixty-Ninth Regiment to gain military training. In his report, dated 18 October 1859, Doyle wrote that:

It is very probable that O'Mahony has on paper a long list of members – men who might have been persuaded to subscribe their names and their dollars to “the cause” – men scattered over a vast extent of country and who are all the while carefully minding their business at their respective homes - men who though ready enough to go thus far with their enthusiastic friends, are not willing to go further and tempt at once the perils of the sea and of the sword: with the knowledge at the same time that there are no adequate resources available for so vast an enterprise and that therefore, not success but disaster, would await them.¹⁰⁹

When the Union and Confederate armies began to disband in June 1865, hundreds of Irish American veterans of American Civil War did, in fact, travel to Ireland to participate in the rising due to take place that December.

In his report dated 6 December 1859, Doyle wrote that after Doheny finished his lecture, to raise funds for the Fenian Brotherhood at Mozart Hall, New York, in November 1859:

¹⁰⁸ *Phoenix* (New York), 18 Feb. 1860

¹⁰⁹ Doyle Report No.46, 18 Oct. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

The audience shouted for John O'Mahony, he came forward, he said but little and that little with apparent emotion – He said that he adopted the sentiments just delivered by Doheny and, that he pledged himself he would not abandon the cause or relax his exertions until the green flag waved over his native hills or his cold body lay on the Irish shore! These are the words he used and he said no more.¹¹⁰

Throughout his reports Doyle consistently points to O'Mahony's strong mental resolve and seriousness of purpose. For example, in his report of 9 December 1859, Doyle wrote that:

Judging of John O'Mahony's intentions by the only medium through which they can be judged, his actions and his words; I cannot resist the impression that he, as chief of the Phoenix Society, has the intention to attempt an insurrection in Ireland! I believe he has the intention to associate his name in the history of Ireland with the names of Wolfe Tone, Emmett, and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, if he can do no more. I can infer no other intention from his solemn pledge before his friends, to plant the green flag on his native hills or to perish in the attempt.... It is to be observed that O'Mahony is no dictator and consequently if he be not supported by the council of the Phoenixites, he cannot hope to carry out any filibustering expedition or even to attempt it.¹¹¹

The validity of this observation - that 'O'Mahony is no dictator' - would have crucial implications for future events. O'Mahony was a consistent democrat.

In his report, dated 6 December 1859, Doyle refers to O'Mahony's fulfilment of his civic duty:

John O'Mahony appears to be a gloomy enthusiast who would not shrink from danger or responsibility. Those who know him say he is a man of integrity and honour in his capacity as a citizen. He appears to be about 40 [he was 44] years of age – he does not shave, but wears a profusion of long black beard

¹¹⁰ Doyle Report No. 52, 6 Dec. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

¹¹¹ Doyle Report No. 53, 9 Dec. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

and hair. It appears he is entirely dependent on his literary labours for a livelihood.¹¹²

From this report it would appear that Doyle had infiltrated the ranks of the Fenian Brotherhood.

Doyle never once doubts O'Mahony's sincerity and dedication in organizing the resources of Irish America for a revolutionary insurrection in Ireland. In his report, dated 9 April 1860, Doyle casts O'Mahony in a favourable light in comparison with some other (unnamed) Irish-American orators:

I think it quite probable that some of the orators in question aim at nothing more practical in result than popularity and notoriety – this observation does not apply to John O'Mahony whose mind is, I think, seriously engaged in working out his idea, however mistaken.¹¹³

From late 1857 to early 1861, the Fenian Brotherhood grew slowly but steadily. At first confined to New York City, it was gradually extended to other parts of the United States. O'Mahony proved himself to be second to none in moulding the Fenian movement. It was his magnetism that held the organization together through its difficult early years.

THE FENIAN BROTHERHOOD AND FOREIGN WAR

The Fenians' aims were openly advocated in the first issue of the *Phoenix* (New York) on 4 June 1859, where it is stated that:

Its efforts will be mainly if not exclusively devoted to inculcate the belief, and elevate it to a conviction, that it is the paramount duty of Irishmen:

First. – To disconnect themselves from all English associations.

Secondly. – To abstain from any participation in the farce of electing members to the English parliament.

¹¹² Doyle Report No. 52, 6 Dec. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

¹¹³ Doyle Report No. 64, 9 Apr. 1860 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

Thirdly. – To enter into an extensive, sincere and brotherly combination among themselves.

Fourthly. – To base that combination on a stern resolution; to use all honourable means, and seize on every feasible opportunity to extirpate, root and branch from Ireland, the English garrison, English government, English laws, English land tenure, and all the adjuncts of English usurpation; to restore the soil of Ireland to the Irish people; and for this end to make immediate and continuous preparation; and regard all legitimate weapons as fair, all aid acceptable, and every chance as a pre-ordained opportunity. In this will consist the first, last and chief object, duty, aim and ambition of the *Phoenix*.¹¹⁴

The *Phoenix* (New York) was the first Irish-American newspaper to advocate such action, which prefigures the policies later adopted by Arthur Griffith's Sinn Féin. The Fenians' aims could be viewed as Anglophobic, but only towards British institutions. O'Mahony firmly believed that all citizens had the right to have a voice in determining their own affairs. In this respect a union of Britain and Ireland could never be democratic. The Irish M.P.'s would always be outvoted in the British House of Commons, where their only lever of power lay in holding the balance of power. The force of events sometimes converts men who begin as constitutionalists into revolutionaries as in the case of William Smith O'Brien who after 1848 returned to the constitutional path. In a protest against British rule, which again anticipated Sinn Féin, John Mitchel stood as an abstentionist candidate and was elected M.P. for Tipperary in 1875.

O'Mahony's realistic policy was one of constant preparation until some external opportunity, which resulted in the military power of Britain being employed abroad, provided the circumstances favourable for revolutionary insurrection. In his commitment to the cause of Irish separatism, O'Mahony maintained the tradition of watching for an opportunity to ally with any potential antagonist of Britain. According to O'Mahony's reasoning, Britain's adversary in a foreign war was Ireland's potential ally. During his years in France and the United States O'Mahony consistently tried to obtain foreign assistance for a rising in Ireland. Such activity

¹¹⁴ *Phoenix* (New York), 4 June 1859.

involved serious negotiations, at various times, with the governments of France, Russia and the United States.

According to his own account, O'Mahony had been in contact with the French republican government regarding military aid for Ireland prior to Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* of 2 December 1851 (see chapter four). In 1859, O'Mahony placed his hopes on foreign aid for an Irish insurrection on Napoleon III, whom he had opposed in the *coup d'état* of December 1851. A justification of this position can be found in his letter to Charles J. Kickham, dated 19 October 1863, where O'Mahony wrote that:

An association of American citizens has a right to employ any person it pleases to transact its lawful business, and, the business of the Fenian Brotherhood being to free Ireland, its executive corps may be legitimately empowered to treat with all parties likely to forward that object, whether those parties be President Lincoln and his cabinet, the Emperors of Russia and France, or the members of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood in Ireland, or the Reds in Paris.¹¹⁵

O'Mahony was fully cognizant of the fluidity of international relations and did not pin his hopes for foreign aid exclusively on Napoleon III. He realised that in the event of war between France and Britain, Napoleon III would only consider an invasion of Ireland if it appeared to serve his interests. France had been Britain's ally in the Crimean War, during the course of which O'Mahony had sought Russian assistance for an insurrection in Ireland. In 1870, when there were again hopes of an immediate war between Britain and Russia, O'Mahony wrote in the *Irish People* (New York) that:

It behoves the directors of our Irish revolutionary movement, both at home and here, to put their respective organizations in an effective state of preparedness and watchfulness, so that an "opportunity" may not be allowed to slip away from them, as it did during the Crimean war. Our revolutionary leaders must not flatter themselves that Russia will be influenced to give them any aid against England through love of Ireland or her cause. The fact is, her

¹¹⁵ Letter from O'Mahony to Kickham, 19 Oct. 1863 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.).

ruler hates that cause as much as any English monarchist could desire. If we are to get any assistance from that quarter at all, it will be for the purpose of subserving for the time being the military and diplomatic interests of the Russian Empire, and for that alone. The future welfare of Ireland will not be taken into the slightest account. We will be expended in the contest, as so much war material, in order to embarrass Russia's rival by an attack in the rear, while the Russian forces assail her in the front. A speedy and favourable termination of the war is all that the Czar can expect from such a movement, and should the total disruption of the British empire be likely to ensue, contrary to his hopes and expectations, he would be among the first to prevent it, if he could. However, the getting of immediate assistance to enable us to begin our revolutionary operations in the first instance, is all that we are to consider in the case, and that without being in the slightest degree troubled as to the present or the ulterior intentions of the Russian in our regard. If we are enabled to make a good commencement by Russian aid, it must be our care, and ours alone, to make such good use of our time and opportunity as will place the British empire in so wretched and broken a condition before the threatened war can be far advanced, that all the power and all the resources of the autocrat of all the Russias can never put it together again, were he to try ever so hard.¹¹⁶

It would not have come as a surprise to O'Mahony that when a great European war broke out in 1914, the imperial powers of Britain and Russia became allies.

From its first issue, of 4 June 1859, the *Phoenix* (New York) raised the topics of international war and French invasion. A war did begin in April 1859 between France and Austria, but there was a sudden and unexpected conclusion of hostilities (by an armistice at Villafranca in July 1859) before a wider war could develop.¹¹⁷ The Fenians saw the potential crisis in Anglo-French relations, during 1859-60, as a realistic opportunity that could be exploited by them for revolutionary purposes. Mitchel sailed for France on 27 August 1859 (which was very likely O'Mahony's

¹¹⁶ Article by John O'Mahony entitled 'The Russian War Cloud' in *Irish People* (New York), 3 Dec. 1870.

¹¹⁷ Alfred Cobban, *A history of modern France, volume 2: 1799-1971* (Britain, 1981), pp.174-5 (Hereafter cited as Cobban, *A history of modern France*)

idea), with the belief and hope that an Anglo-French war was imminent, and approached the French government about support for an Irish insurrection.¹¹⁸ Years later it was written, in *Irish World* (New York), that Napoleon III had sent for Mitchel at this time.¹¹⁹ In his report, dated 29 November 1859, Doyle wrote that:

There is clearly an intention on the part of the chief actors to keep up the organisation [Fenian Brotherhood] if possible, and this intention is plainly connected with the idea of a war between England and France, and the vague expectation of a French invasion of England or Ireland at no distant period.¹²⁰

However, the signing of the Cobden-Chevalier Free-Trade agreement between France and Britain, in January 1860, lowered the duties on goods traded between the two countries and signalled that the possibility of war had receded.¹²¹

It is evident from letters to the *Phoenix* (New York) in early 1860 that there was a demand, among some Fenians in the United States, for action in the near future. In a letter of response 'To thirty-one very impatient correspondents – somewhere' printed in the *Phoenix* (New York) dated 10 February 1860, O'Mahony wrote that:

Now, more than ever, Ireland needs as a signal for her uprising, some impetus from without – from some embarrassment or difficulty of her foreign rulers, arising from some other source, besides any that could spring from any combination of her own sons upon the Irish soil. Whether that impetus shall be given by the event of a war between France and England – a scarcely avoidable contingency - by some action on the part of the three millions of expatriated Irishmen, who dwell in these United States, or by some internal political agitation, arising from causes independent of that to which we are pledged, it must at all hazards, and under all trials, be waited for patiently, but wakefully, persistently and untiringly.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Doyle Report No. 46, 18 Oct. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI); William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel* (2 Vols. London 1888) Vol II, pp.132-43.

¹¹⁹ *Irish World* (New York), 24 Mar. 1877

¹²⁰ Doyle Report No. 51, 29 Nov. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

¹²¹ Cobban, *A history of modern France*, vol. ii, pp.177-8.

¹²² Letter from John O'Mahony 'To thirty-one very impatient correspondents – somewhere', dated 10 Feb. 1860, printed in the *Phoenix* (New York) 25 Feb. 1860.

The above quotation epitomises O'Mahony's programme as an Irish nationalist leader. O'Mahony exhibited a thorough and consistent awareness of one of the principal lessons of 1848 and its aftermath for revolutionaries in Ireland and elsewhere - nothing, except disaster, would be the outcome of an insurrection in Ireland without the clear context of international complications – a perquisite, which he always insisted on.

In May 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi invaded Sicily with only 1,100 men. He faced 30,000 troops of the Neapolitan Bourbons. Against these overwhelming odds, Garibaldi's troops, aided by a peasant revolt, defeated the Bourbon's forces and gained control of Sicily.¹²³ In a report dated 23 June 1860, Doyle states his belief that 'If John O'Mahony could muster strength, he would, I am convinced, be willing enough to encounter risk, to hazard his own life in the attempt to become the Garibaldi of Ireland'.¹²⁴ The Fenians paid very close attention to international developments that could involve Britain in a foreign war. In the leading article in the *Phoenix* (New York), of 30 June 1860, the writer applauds the Sicilian insurrection and intimates that 'the means, agencies and hopes' of Garibaldi's success could provide 'a similar deliverance for Ireland'.¹²⁵

O'MAHONY BACK IN IRELAND 1860-61

In his *Recollections*, John O'Leary summed up the contrast between Stephens and O'Mahony, stating that 'Stephens was far the more active-minded and resourceful man, ever planning and pressing his plans on others, while O'Mahony was more slow, methodic and cautious'.¹²⁶ Stephens was a bureaucrat by nature; in building up the organization in Ireland, he had no concept of leadership. O'Mahony carried more authority than Stephens; people followed O'Mahony because of his leadership qualities while Stephens held authority by means of manipulation. Almost all informed accounts of O'Mahony make reference to his inherent caution: the one exception to this is Stephens's outrageous accusation dealt with later in this section.

¹²³ Duncan, Townson, *The new penguin dictionary of modern history 1789-1945* (London, 1995), p.301.

¹²⁴ Doyle Report No. 74, 23 June 1860 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

¹²⁵ *Phoenix* (New York), 30 June 1860.

¹²⁶ O'Leary, *Recollections*, Vol. I, p. 135.

O'Leary, like most observers who came into contact with O'Mahony (including Luby and Inspector Doyle) admired O'Mahony's idealistic character and disinterested nature.

Although they had been companions in arms in Ireland in 1848, and had shared exile in Paris for five years, a gradual strain became evident in the hitherto friendly relations between Stephens and O'Mahony. In his letters on the progress of the I.R.B. in Ireland, Stephens showed little understanding of, and no sympathy with, O'Mahony's difficulties in collecting funds. The Irish in America were short of cash as the economic downturn of 1857 had depleted their savings and they had little to send abroad. O'Mahony was exasperated as a result of Stephens's continual and often arrogant complaints of the inadequate funds that he was receiving so that gradually O'Mahony was forced to entertain doubts regarding Stephens's judgement. It is likely that his frequent demands for money, 'that would have infuriated a saint'¹²⁷, induced O'Mahony to cross the Atlantic in order to satisfy himself as to the disposition of the funds in Ireland.

In view of his letter of 1858 (referred to earlier in this chapter) ignored by Stephens, O'Mahony sent influential members of the Fenian Brotherhood as envoys to Ireland, to check on the truth of Stephens's accounts of the progress made. Stephens strongly resented this.¹²⁸ The first Fenian envoy sent to Ireland was Edmund Boyle; his report, dated 8 August 1860, confirmed the optimistic stories given out by Stephens.¹²⁹ Stephens had control over which I.R.B. centres and organizers the envoys from the Fenian Brotherhood met in Ireland.¹³⁰

In the *Irish People* (New York), of 25 January 1868, O'Mahony justified the sending of these envoys as follows:

I did this in order to render myself the more thoroughly certain with respect to the solidity of the basis whereupon I was building up and defending the Brotherhood in this country, by a comparison of the reports of my own agents with those received from my correspondents at home.

¹²⁷ Ryan, *Fenian chief*. p.202.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.167.

¹²⁹ Letter from Edmund Boyle to O'Mahony, 8 Aug. 1860 (Fenian Brotherhood Collection, C.U.A.); Ryan, *Fenian chief*. p.167.

¹³⁰ Comerford, *Fenians in context*, p.120-4.

In November 1860, I sailed to Ireland MYSELF for the purpose of making a personal examination into the state of the movement there, and of estimating its prospects and resources. I visited France and England on my route, and spent nearly six months on my mission¹³¹

This clearly implies doubts of Stephens's judgement. O'Mahony's visit to Ireland and the succession of envoys that he sent over during the next few years, indicates his awareness that a realistic assessment of the situation could not be relied on from Stephens. On his departure O'Mahony left Colonel Michael Corcoran in charge with Michael Cavanagh as his secretary.¹³²

No sooner had John D. Hearn (the Dungarvan leader in 1849) come to America in 1850 than he became involved with the 1849 leader, Joseph Brennan, in Irish-American military organizations in New York. Hearn was one of the co-founders of 'Mitchel Light Guards'. It was natural that he became a Fenian.¹³³ On O'Mahony's voyage to Ireland, via France, in the winter of 1860, Hearn accompanied him. O'Mahony first called on Stephens in Paris while Hearn proceeded alone to Dublin.¹³⁴ In early January 1861, O'Mahony put his foot on Irish soil again. He could not have then known that this visit would be his last. While in Dublin, O'Mahony stayed at the hotel owned by the '48 veteran from Dublin, James Cantwell - 'the Star and the Garter' in D'Olier street. Cantwell was a member of the Fenian Brotherhood in Philadelphia in 1858 and had subsequently returned to Dublin probably at O'Mahony's request.¹³⁵

O'Mahony spent a few days with Luby in the Dublin Fenian circles before travelling with him to Kilkenny City. Here Luby introduced O'Mahony to John Haltigan and other members of the I.R.B. in that city. After parting with Luby, O'Mahony proceeded alone to Tipperary where he met two veterans of '48 - Denis Dowling Mulcahy, of Redmondstown, Clonmel, and Charles Joseph Kickham, of

¹³¹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868.

¹³² Michael Cavanagh, *Memoirs of Thomas Francis Meagher* (Worcester, Mass., 1892), pp.59-60.

¹³³ *Ibid.* appendix, pp.17-18; David Power Conyngham, *The Irish Brigade and its campaigns* (New York, 1897), pp.481-91.

¹³⁴ Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 24 Mar. 1877

¹³⁵ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.60-62; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.13.

Mullinahone both of whom remained firm friends of O'Mahony thereafter. In fact, O'Mahony inducted Kickham into the Fenian movement on this occasion.¹³⁶

In his report dated 11 January 1861, Doyle wrote that 'O'Mahony is out of New York on some mission but where I have no means of knowing'.¹³⁷ The recipient in Dublin Castle wrote a note on the margin of Doyle's report, which stated that 'This person is at present in the county of Tipperary near Carrick-on-Suir'.¹³⁸ O'Mahony spent several weeks at the home of his sister, Jane Maria, and family at Ballycurkeen House, Ballyneale, near Carrick-on-Suir.¹³⁹ The authorities were anxious to find out where O'Mahony was and what he was up to but did not make any attempt to arrest him at this time. The threat of his arrest on 22 August 1848 had brought about the events surrounding the 'Reaping of Mullough' episode. This had signalled the commencement of six-weeks guerrilla warfare along the valley of the Suir.

O'Mahony next extended his inspection of the I.R.B. into South West Cork. Here, he met Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa for the first time, at Rosscarbery, in the spring of 1861.¹⁴⁰ It is evident in the report of Sub-Inspector Potter, of Skibbereen, O'Mahony next spent some time in the company of Fr Arthur O'Leary, the curate of Fr Robert Troy, parish priest of Castlehaven (the next parish to the south of Skibbereen).¹⁴¹ O'Mahony returned to Dublin in the late spring of 1861 where he proposed to Luby, in the presence of Cantwell, a modification in the I.R.B. plan of organization. Luby does not relate what these proposed changes were but one may surmise that they included a diminution of Stephens's powers. Luby refused to comply with O'Mahony's request without Stephens's approval. O'Mahony then insisted that Luby write to Stephens in Paris asking him to come to Dublin at once. Stephens left Paris for Dublin after receiving Luby's letter.¹⁴²

Shortly before Stephens's arrival in Dublin, Luby introduced O'Mahony to two '48 men, Limerick born Fr John Kenyon (curate and later parish priest of

¹³⁶ R.V. Comerford, *Charles Joseph Kickham: a study in Irish nationalism and literature* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 55-6

¹³⁷ Doyle Report No. 101, 11 Jan. 1861 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 24 Mar. 1877; O'Leary, *Recollections I*, p.138; Michael Coady, of Carrick-on-Suir is in possession of a copy of Buffon's *Natural history vol i* (1821) which contains the signature: Seaghan O Mathghamhna, 3adh Feabhra 1861 ag Baile Ui Chuircin (John O'Mahony, 3 February 1861, Ballycurkeen).

¹⁴⁰ *Rossa's recollections*, p.235.

¹⁴¹ Report of Sub Inspector Potter, of Skibbereen, 13 June 1861 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI); *Catholic Directory* (Dublin, 1861), p.200

¹⁴² Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 14 Apr. 1877; O'Leary, *Recollections I*, p.137.

Templederry, County Tipperary) and John Martin (of Lougherne, near Newry, County Down). Martin was transported to Tasmania in 1849; released with Smith O'Brien in 1854, and permitted to return to Ireland in 1856; he was elected M.P. for Meath in 1871 and re-elected in 1874.¹⁴³ O'Mahony won over the lasting support and esteem of Kenyon and Martin.

A meeting was arranged between O'Mahony and Stephens following the latter's return to Dublin from Paris. Peter Langan and Joseph Denieffe escorted O'Mahony to this meeting where, according to Denieffe's account:

Stephens reproached him [O'Mahony] in words of the most cutting sarcasm, telling him of his shortcomings, feebleness and insincerity and wound up by reminding him how he, Stephens, had dragged him out of obscurity and put him in a position he never dreamed of!¹⁴⁴

This can only have been a deliberate provocation and typical of a calculating bureaucrat. Denieffe left before the close of the scene. Luby later supplied O'Leary with the details of the rest of the scene (that O'Mahony gave to Luby immediately afterwards). According to this account Stephens agreed to a modification of the 'one-man' power claimed by him in favour of regional councils to look after the local affairs of centres in Ireland and the United States. O'Mahony's suggestion must have resulted from his tour of inspection.¹⁴⁵ In the *Irish People* (New York), dated 18 July 1868, he wrote that:

I had a wide-influence with a large portion of my fellow-countrymen at home outside of the Brotherhood, which had been used by me twice already for raising the fallen standard of Irish nationality - once in 1848, after the defeat of Smith O'Brien, and again in 1857, when the present revolutionary movement was inaugurated.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848* (Cork, 1949), pp. 82, 115 (Hereafter cited as Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848*); Ryan, *Fenian chief*, p.354.

¹⁴⁴ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.60-2; Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 14 Apr. 1877.

¹⁴⁵ O'Leary, *Recollections I*, p.139-40; Ryan, *Fenian chief*, p. 168.

¹⁴⁶ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in the *Irish People* (New York), 18 July 1868.

This makes a farce of Stephens's claim of having 'dragged him out of obscurity'. Police and magistrate's reports, during 1848, attest to the thousands of men that mustered to O'Mahony's mobilization orders in July (approximately 15,000) and again in September (see chapters two and three). Considering the influence that O'Mahony possessed both in Ireland and in the United States, it is hard to give Stephens's claim any attention.

O'Mahony and Stephens met again the following day at Luby's home and evidently came to some kind of accommodation.¹⁴⁷ The solidarity of the two men, forged during '48 and the Paris exile, was shaken as never before; although never quite broken it was to be buffeted by many stormier clashes in the subsequent years.

Before O'Mahony sailed for America he paid a second visit to his sister and her family in Ballycurkeen, County Tipperary, and took one last look at the country that he was never to see again. Following this he came back to Dublin for the final time. One night, in March 1861, before his departure for the United States, O'Mahony, Stephens and Luby attended a special meeting of the Dublin I.R.B. centres at Phibsborough. Luby later recalled that: 'The interest which John O'Mahony's presence inspired in some of the young men that night was intense'.¹⁴⁸ It would appear that O'Mahony was referring to this same meeting of the Dublin centres when he wrote that:

It was during my stay in Dublin on that occasion that I had my first definite understanding with James Stephens and the heads of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, with respect to the exact amount of foreign or American aid that would justify an uprising of the Irish people. At a meeting of the Dublin Centres, it was agreed upon that at least FIVE THOUSAND DISCIPLINED MEN, WITH COMPETENT OFFICERS AT THEIR HEAD, WERE REQUISITE, in the first instance, as a nucleus for the army of independence; and, in the second, a supply of at least fifty thousand rifles or muskets, with adequate munitions to put immediately into the hands of the raw insurgents. I thought it possible to procure that amount of assistance within a given time after the receipt of my personal report by my constituents in this country. I

¹⁴⁷ Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 14 Apr. 1877.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

stated this to James Stephens and the men there assembled with him. I promised to labour for it zealously and I hoped to succeed.¹⁴⁹

In early May 1861 O'Mahony left Ireland, via Liverpool, to return to America. The former 'Phoenix Society' prisoner, Daniel O'Sullivan, accompanied him. O'Sullivan had been sentenced to ten years penal servitude and was released in November 1859, on a 'ticket of leave', after spending six months in Mountjoy prison, Dublin.¹⁵⁰ On 8 May 1861, O'Mahony and O'Sullivan sailed from Liverpool to New York. They arrived in that city on 29 May 1861. John D. Hearn (who had travelled with O'Mahony from New York to Ireland) remained on in Liverpool. Some months later, Hearn threw up a good job, at a mercantile establishment in Liverpool, to return to the United States in order to join the staff of Meagher's Irish Brigade of the Union army.¹⁵¹

CONCLUSION

O'Mahony had not yet left Liverpool, on his way to the United States, when he heard of the outbreak of the American Civil War.¹⁵² Whatever may have been his thoughts on the prospects of insurrection in Ireland, when departing Liverpool for New York, they were now to be sidetracked by this development. While the Civil War opened up the prospect of an Anglo-American conflict as a consequence of British support for the Confederacy, it nevertheless was to absorb the attention and resources of the core of the Fenian Brotherhood in America for the next four years.

¹⁴⁹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868.

¹⁵⁰ *Phoenix* (New York), 1 June 1861; Luby, *Reminiscences in the Irish World* (New York), 14 Apr. 1877; O'Donovan Rossa, *Irish rebels*, pp.26-7.

¹⁵¹ *Phoenix* (New York), 1 June 1861; O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868; Cavanagh, *Memoirs*, appendix, pp.17-18.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 7

PART 1: FENIAN MOVEMENT IN THE ASCENDANT 1861-65

FUNERAL OF TERENCE BELLEW MCMANUS, JANUARY – NOVEMBER 1861

In the summer of 1848, Terence Bellew McManus had abandoned his position in a very successful shipping agency in Liverpool to join William Smith O'Brien's attempted rising. McManus was transported to Tasmania in July 1849 and escaped to the United States in 1852. He had subsequently been unable to make a success of his business life as a shipping agent in San Francisco, California, and died in poverty on 15 January 1861. McManus's first funeral procession was held the following day with the San Francisco Fenians (enrolled in 1860) in attendance. He was buried at Cavalry Cemetery, Lone Mountain. In January 1861, the Fenians were merely the newest of at least five Irish patriotic organizations in San Francisco. The senior Irish groups were the Hibernian Society and the Sons of the Emerald Isle, both respectively organized in the city in February and March of 1852. The Hibernian Society were in greatest evidence at the first McManus funeral; eight members of that group served as pall-bearers.¹

At a meeting, on 24 January 1861, members of the Hibernian Society (including its president and vice-president) and former friends and associates of McManus organized themselves as the McManus Monument Fund Committee of thirteen. In March 1861, the San Francisco Fenians, under the leadership of a machinist named Jeremiah Kavanagh, a native of that city, proposed that the funds collected originally for the erection of a monument to McManus should be used for the reburial of his remains in Ireland as a national gesture. There is no indication of any power struggle in San Francisco over the remains of McManus and the funds collected for the project. By mid-July 1861, the San Francisco Fenians had taken over from the Hibernians. The Fenians succeeded in establishing for the reburial project a broad-based support, including certain senior members of the catholic hierarchy and Irish-American groupings.²

¹ *Irish American* (New York), 23 Feb. 1861.

² Louis R. Bisceglia, 'The Fenian funeral of Terence Bellew McManus' in *Éire- Ireland*, (Autumn 1979), pp.45-53 (Hereafter cited as Bisceglia, 'The Fenian funeral of Terence Bellew McManus');

On 19 August McManus's remains were exhumed. At the conclusion of the religious ceremonies the following day a procession composed of at least 1,600 people followed the casket, watched by crowds numbered at 20,000, to the pier where the Pacific steamship *Uncle Sam* awaited. McManus's remains were placed on board, and the ship sailed towards New York. A San Francisco delegation consisting of Jeremiah Kavanagh and Colonel Michael D. Smith accompanied the remains, which arrived in New York, via Panama, on 13 September. 'Funeral' processions were also staged across the United States advocating the independence of Ireland.³ McManus was adopted as a nationalist icon because he had suffered the life of an exile as a result of his role in the 1848 rising.

John O'Mahony had first met Terence Bellew McManus at Ballingarry, County Tipperary, in July 1848. When O'Mahony returned to New York from Ireland, on 29 May 1861, much of his time during the succeeding months was taken up with the funeral arrangements of McManus. Michael Doheny, the closest of McManus's old comrades, formed a 'McManus Obsequies Committee'. Meetings were held in New York throughout the summer in preparation for the arrival of McManus's remains. In early September, O'Mahony organized an Executive Committee with himself as chairman. Thenceforth O'Mahony directed and co-ordinated the funeral arrangements. Thomas Francis Meagher was enlisted as chairman of a small group appointed to see County Tyrone born John Hughes, Archbishop of New York, with whom Meagher was on friendly terms.⁴

On 16 September 1861, there was requiem mass in St Patrick's Cathedral, New York, with Archbishop John Hughes presiding.⁵ In his funeral eulogy Hughes dwelt on the nature of lawful resistance to the state within the context of catholic doctrine. In this important address he upheld the right of an oppressed people to struggle for their liberation.⁶ Over the next month the McManus Obsequies Committee completed arrangements for a funeral procession to be held through the

Seán Ó Lúing, *Fremantle mission* (Tralee, 1965), p. 58 (hereafter cited as Ó Lúing, *Fremantle mission*).

³ *Irish American* (New York), 21 Sept. 1861; Michael Cavanagh, *Memoirs of Thomas Francis Meagher* (Worcester, Mass., 1892), pp.419-22. (Hereafter cited as Cavanagh, *Memoirs*); William D'Arcy, *The Fenian movement in the United States, 1858-1886* (Washington, 1947), p. 19 (Hereafter cited as D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*).

⁴ *Phoenix* (New York), 1 June 1861; Bisceglia, 'The Fenian funeral of Terence Bellew McManus', p.53.

⁵ *Boston Pilot*, 25 May and 21 Sept. 1861; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.18-20.

⁶ Cavanagh, *Memoirs*, pp.418-22.

city. On 18 October 1861, with O'Mahony as grand marshal leading the way, 32 pallbearers accompanied the casket through the streets of New York to the pier where the steamer *City of Washington* awaited and McManus's remains were placed on board. Designed both to create an awe-inspiring occasion and to garner as much publicity as possible for the Fenians, the McManus funeral in New York succeeded in all aspects.⁷

The following day, 19 October 1861, the *City of Washington* left New York for Ireland. Aboard, accompanying the remains, was an official delegation of the Fenian Brotherhood including Colonel Michael Doheny, Captain Francis Welply⁸ and Michael Cavanagh, all from New York; Colonel Michael D. Smith and Jeremiah Kavanagh from San Francisco; and John T. Mahony, from Philadelphia.⁹ According to Luby's account, Doheny had intended to use the occasion of the funeral for an Irish-American filibuster followed by a rising in Ireland.¹⁰

The *City of Washington* sailed into Cork harbour on 30 October 1861, and the casket was unloaded at Queenstown (Cobh).¹¹ The Bishop of Cloyne, William Keane, allowed the body to rest in the chapel of the hospital run by the Sisters of Mercy in Cobh.¹² On 3 November, about 8,000 people marched behind the casket in a procession a mile long, to the Cork train station (a distance of fifteen miles) for transportation to Dublin. Thousands of people lined the tracks as the funeral train made its way to Dublin.¹³

Following the arrival of the McManus remains in Dublin, on 4 November 1861, the casket was immediately taken by torchlight procession to the lecture hall of the nearby Mechanics' Institute, Lower Abbey Street, where it was prepared to lie in state until arrangements for the burial, scheduled for the following Sunday, could be completed. Archbishop Paul Cullen refused the request of the Fenian-dominated funeral committee in Dublin, that the remains should be placed in the procathedral. He also refused to allow any of his clergy to participate in the McManus funeral

⁷ Louis R. Bisceglia, 'The Fenian funeral of Terence Bellew McManus', pp.55-62.

⁸ Skibbereen born Francis Welply was a captain in the Phoenix Brigade and was killed at Ream's station in August 1864: Pádraig Ó Macháin and Thomas F. Overlander, 'Michael Cavanagh of Cappoquin, 1822-1900' in *Decies, Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society* (2000), p.111 (Hereafter cited as Ó Macháin and Overlander, 'Michael Cavanagh').

⁹ *Irish American* (New York), 23 Nov. 1861; *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868.

¹⁰ Thomas Clarke Luby's Recollections of Fenianism and the *Irish People* (N.L.I., MS 331)

¹¹ Bisceglia, 'The Fenian funeral of Terence Bellew McManus', pp.55-62.

¹² Oliver P. Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat, 1861-75* (London, 1999), p.30. (Hereafter cited as Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat*).

ceremonies, and debarred the use of all church buildings under his jurisdiction for these purposes.¹⁴

Cullen had been rector of the Irish College in Rome during the revolt against papal authority in 1848 when the Carbonari, under Giuseppe Mazzini, had stormed the Vatican and ousted Pius IX. Following Cullen's return to Ireland in 1849, he opposed any movement there which reminded him in any way of the Carbonari. He perceived in the I.R.B. an Irish adaptation of the secret societies on the continent. The Fenians claimed that Cullen's period in Rome had warped his outlook and attributed his opposition to a malady which they called 'Carbonari on the brain.' Although a moderate nationalist, Cullen was interested primarily in swinging the populace behind ecclesiastical authority.¹⁵ In other words, he was a churchman not a politician.

A contemporary police report indicates that, on 10 November 1861, 40,000 people assembled in Lower Abbey Street in Dublin at the beginning of the funeral and that the procession to Glasnevin cemetery numbered seven to eight thousand. Father Lavelle, from Partry, County Mayo, presided at the funeral of McManus, in defiance of the censure placed upon the proceedings by Cullen who proved unable to silence him. In his important political oration, Lavelle supported Fenian policies with theological arguments.¹⁶

The McManus funeral gave an enormous boost to Fenian morale in Ireland and America and was of major propaganda value to the organization. On their return to the United States, in January 1862, the American delegates lectured before enthusiastic crowds in the centres of Irish population.¹⁷

ANGLO-AMERICAN TENSION: THE TRENT INCIDENT (NOVEMBER 1861 – JANUARY 1862)

Up to September 1862 there was a strong possibility that Britain might recognise the Confederacy and break the Union sea blockade, an event that would

¹³ Bisceglia, 'The Fenian funeral of Terence Bellew McManus', pp.55-62.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.19; *The Oxford companion to Irish history* edited by S.J. Connolly (Oxford, 1998), p.129 (Hereafter cited as *Oxford companion to Irish history*).

¹⁶ Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat*, p.30; P.J. Corish, 'Political problems, 1860-78' in (Corish ed.), *A history of Irish catholicism, vol. v*, (Dublin, 1967-71) p.6 (Hereafter cited as Corish, 'Political problems, 1860-78'); E.R. Norman, *The catholic church in Ireland in the age of the rebellion 1859-1873* (London, 1965), p.112.

¹⁷ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.20.

probably have precipitated war between the two countries. The world shortage of cotton due to the blockade caused unemployment and economic dislocation in Britain. War always remained a possibility because Confederate commerce raiders were built and fitted out in British ports. This created widespread hostility towards Britain in the Northern States and created a climate of sentiment conducive to the successful propagation and acceptance of Fenian ideas.¹⁸

Outright war between the Union and Britain came close in late 1861. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, named two distinguished Southerners, James M. Mason of Virginia and John Slidell of Louisiana, as commissioners to represent Confederate interests abroad, Mason in England and Slidell in France. On 8 November 1861, a United States warship, *San Jacinto*, commanded by Captain Charles Wilkes, stopped the British mail steamer, *Trent*, in the Bahama channel and removed the two Confederate commissioners from the vessel. The prisoners were lodged at Fort Warren in Boston Harbour.¹⁹

The United States vessel had openly violated the freedom of the seas and the British government was highly incensed. Eleven thousand regular troops were sent to Canada, the British fleet was put on a war footing, and Earl Russell, the British Foreign Secretary, dispatched a sharp note to the United States, demanding the release of the prisoners and an apology. War seemed a possible, if not a likely, outcome. The Union forces had suffered a stunning defeat at the first battle of Bull Run, on 21 July 1861; the delusion of a thirty-day campaign to crush the Confederacy had vanished. Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, chose the policy of one war at a time, and after due deliberation an apology was made. On 1 January 1862, the prisoners were released.²⁰

The American Minister in London, Charles Francis Adams, and the British Minister in Washington, Lord Richard Lyons, had done all they could, in the absence of instructions from their Governments, to keep the 'Trent' affair from getting out of hand. Adams was clearly sympathetic to Britain but he did not reflect the feelings of the United States administration at this time. The 'Trent' affair put a heavy strain on

¹⁸ W. S. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America* (Pennsylvania, 1975), pp.10-11 (Hereafter cited as Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*).

¹⁹ Catton, *Penguin book of the American Civil War*, pp.114-16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

relations between the United States and Britain, and there would always be a danger that some unexpected occurrence would bring on a war.²¹

FENIAN INTEREST IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

The onset of the Civil War, on 12 April 1861, meant a general disruption of organizing efforts for the Fenian Brotherhood, absorbing Irish American energies for the four years of its duration. As a result, their focus was shifted to the Union armies and navy. Service in the American armies would allow Irish-Americans to get valuable military experience for the anticipated insurrection in Ireland. It has been estimated that between 150,000 and 175,000 men of Irish descent served in the Union armies and up to 40,000 in the armies of the Confederacy.²²

In October 1860, Colonel Michael Corcoran won much attention by refusing to parade his 69th Regiment as part of a ceremony welcoming the visiting foreign dignitary, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII). This disobedience involved Corcoran in a lengthy court-martial proceeding in early 1861. When the Confederates attacked Fort Sumter in Charleston harbour, 12 and 13 April 1861, Corcoran, in a public letter, called on all men to defend the Union. The court-martial was quashed, encouraging a rush of Irish into the armed forces of the Union. In August 1862, President Lincoln commissioned Corcoran as Brigadier General.²³

The 69th Regiment, an all-Irish unit of the New York State Militia, became part of the Irish Brigade that was formed by Thomas Francis Meagher later that year. It is clear in a letter from Corcoran to O'Mahony, dated 29 May 1861, that O'Mahony proposed to apply for active service at the war front, but was dissuaded from this course by Corcoran, who pointed out that his absence would leave the Fenian organization without active leadership.²⁴

After January 1862, there was a marked increase in the number of Irish regiments organized, staffed and manned mainly by Fenians. By the end of that year Fenian circles were active in the armies of the Potomac, the Tennessee, and the

²¹ Ibid.

²² Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, pp.10-11.

²³ *Irish American* (New York), 20 Oct. 1860; Savage, *Fenian heroes and martyrs*, pp.295-99; Holden Reid, *The American Civil War*, pp.63-4.

²⁴ Letter from Michael Corcoran to John O'Mahony, 29 May 1861, printed in Cavanagh, *Memoirs*, p.360; Ó Macháin and Overlander, 'Michael Cavanagh', p.114.

Cumberland. Thus, for a time the active organization of the Fenian Brotherhood ceased, as the leading officers had entered the armed forces of the Union.²⁵

O'Mahony saw the outbreak of the American Civil War as a calamity which would divert Fenian energies and ultimately cost thousands of Irish lives. At the battle of Fredericksburg, on 13 December 1862, Union losses were 12,600 to the Confederates' 5,300. In a letter to his nephew, Francis Mandeville, *circa* 1862, O'Mahony commented that:

The American war has taken a strange turn. Politically speaking, I am now glad that I kept out of it; though I was several times strongly tempted to take a hand in it. It has been sadly mismanaged, and the resources of the country have been so wantonly wasted by the northern government that I now see no chance of restoring the Union by any amount of fighting. Compromise is the only chance that remains; but neither party seems inclined for that. There must, then, be more blood and treasure thrown away for nothing.²⁶

This letter was written well before the crucial battle of Gettysburg, 1-3 July 1863, and the fall of Vicksburg, on 4 July 1863, which split the Confederacy in two and marked the turn of the tide of the Civil War in favour of the North.²⁷

In January 1864 the Phoenix Brigade, (composed entirely of Fenians) under the leadership of O'Mahony, was incorporated into the 99th Regiment of the New York National Guard (informally referred to as the New York Volunteers) thus entering the Civil War. O'Mahony was appointed its Colonel. Lieutenant-Colonel Patrick J. Downing, who served in Meagher's Brigade, was the *de facto* commander of the regiment, as O'Mahony was too busy building up the Fenian Brotherhood to give much attention to it. Several of the veterans who went to Ireland in 1865 to take part in the projected rising had served in this regiment.²⁸

Although O'Mahony's sympathies were unequivocally with the Union cause, he had grave concerns about the great loss of life the war would bring in its wake. In

²⁵ Michael F. Funchion (ed.), *Irish American voluntary organizations* (Westport, Connecticut, 1983), p.107 (Hereafter cited as Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*).

²⁶ John O'Mahony to Francis Mandeville, *circa* 1862, in James Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs: a John O'Mahony anthology* (Tipperary, 1957), pp.77-8 (Hereafter cited as Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*).

²⁷ Holden Reid, *The American Civil War* pp.116-24, 134.

²⁸ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.29; O'Leary, *Recollections*, p.195.

a letter to his sister, Jane Maria, dated 24 October 1864, O'Mahony remarked 'Let no one, then, who can live at all at home, come out. *Thousands* who left Ireland, hopeful and healthful, last year, are now whitening Virginia with their bones. This is a real blood-market'.²⁹ 1864 was the bloodiest year of the Civil War. On 5-6 May, the Confederate General Robert E. Lee, with an army of more than 60,000, engaged the United States General, Ulysses Simpson Grant, with an army of nearly twice that number at the Wilderness in Northern Virginia – which brought two days of frightful slaughter. In the month of the Wilderness campaign Grant lost 60,000 men – 17,000 of which had died in the two days fighting of 5-6 May, at the Wilderness.³⁰ In his address to the Fenian convention in Philadelphia, on 16 October 1865 (the American Civil War had ended that April), O'Mahony stated that fifty branches of the Fenian Brotherhood had become extinct through the military enlistment of their members.³¹

In that same letter, dated 24 October 1864, O'Mahony informed his sister, Jane Maria, that:

I have myself been doing a little soldiering here for the past few months; but the term of my service will soon be over unless I see reason for getting mustered in for a second term. So far it has served to relieve the monotony of office life and no risk involved. Whether from change of air, or sleeping under canvas, I am gaining in flesh and recovering my complexion. We are quartered in a very pleasant country – hilly like Ireland – and have not much severe work to do.³²

The 99th Regiment did not do any fighting in the war, but was called out for duty to guard Confederate prisoners for three months in 1864 at the Union prison camp at Elmira, Western New York State.³³ In a letter dated 27 December 1864, O'Mahony

²⁹ John O'Mahony to Jane Maria Mandeville, 24 Oct. 1864, in Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*, pp.87-8.

³⁰ Brian Holden Reid, *The American Civil War* (London, 2000), p.105 (Hereafter cited as Holden Reid, *The American civil war*); Bruce Catton, *The penguin book of the American Civil War* (America, 1967), pp.207-13 (Hereafter cited as Catton, *Penguin book of the American Civil War*).

³¹ *Irish American* (New York), 11 Feb. 1865.

³² John O'Mahony to Jane Maria Mandeville, 24 Oct. 1864, in Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*, p.87.

³³ John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (New York, 1929) p.268 (Hereafter cited as Devoy, *Recollections*); John O'Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, Vol.I* (London, 1896), p.195 (Hereafter cited as O'Leary, *Recollections*).

informed his nephew, Francis Mandeville, that 'I have been mustered out of the U.S. service, my term of three months having expired, but my regiment may be called out again next spring'.³⁴

POLITICAL OPPONENTS

Many of the leading military men who were O'Mahony's chief advisers, were now occupied with the war effort in America. Shortly after O'Mahony's return from Ireland to New York, on 29 May 1861, his friend Fr Edmund O'Flaherty, a catholic priest of Crawfordsville, Indiana, proceeded as a Fenian envoy to Ireland for the purpose of investigating 'the state of the national cause.'³⁵ O'Flaherty was one of the earliest and most ardent of the Fenians.³⁶ In a letter to O'Flaherty, dated 19 November 1861, O'Mahony confided that:

The weight of almost everything is thrown on my shoulders, so that I have not only to think, write and diplomatize for the organization, but I must in many instances do the duty of the subordinate officers, or the work will not be done or, if done, done badly. I feel this the more now, as vast numbers of my best men have gone to this infernal war, while not a few of them have gone home to Ireland.... I need men with me like yourself, who are anxious to see the work done as I am myself and who, if I should fail in my duty or die, the affair undecided, would carry it out themselves to its legitimate end. I have striven for this all along, but in very, very few instances have I succeeded. I attribute my failure to many causes such as the apathy, if no worse, of Young Ireland, and the hostility of its flunkies wherever they are – the opposition of many of the priests - the malignity and lies of the leaders of a certain body³⁷, powerful in numbers and brute force in this city, stabbing me and the I.R.B. in the dark, wherever their correspondence has reached. Now under these circumstances

³⁴ John O'Mahony to Francis Mandeville, 27 Dec. 1864, in Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*, p.89.

³⁵ Letter from Fr O'Flaherty to O'Mahony, 5 Oct. 1861 (Fenian Brotherhood Collection, C.U.A.); 'Fenianism – an exposition' by John O'Mahony in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868 (Hereafter cited as O'Mahony, 'Fenianism').

³⁶ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.22-23.

³⁷ O'Mahony may be alluding here to former members of the American Party ('Know Nothings'), which had disintegrated in 1856, now in the Republican Party.

my friends must be on the alert and prove at least as active as their enemies or we cannot go ahead.³⁸

O'Mahony had those leading figures of 'Young Ireland' in mind in the above letter to Fr O'Flaherty with the exceptions of Mitchel and Meagher, whose support he had, though neither were then identified with the Fenian Brotherhood. O'Gorman represented the 'lace curtain' element in Irish-American nationalism and never became associated with Fenianism, whose American support possessed more of a proletarian cast.³⁹ It speaks highly of O'Mahony's personal relations that he always remained on friendly terms with O'Gorman.

Added to the opposition encountered by O'Mahony in the United States, there were the constant demands of James Stephens for more money. As already quoted, Mitchel later recalled that upon meeting Stephens in Knoxville, Tennessee, in the autumn of 1858, he wanted Mitchel to 'publicly call on my fellow countrymen in America for money, and no end of money to be remitted to him for revolutionary purposes.'⁴⁰ On 7 April 1862, in acknowledging the receipt of money from O'Mahony, Stephens complained 'One hundred and thirteen pounds from the whole American organization in one year!'⁴¹ - indicating Stephens's insensitivity to a war situation.

POOR RELIEF IN IRELAND, 1862

During the early 1860s there was an agricultural depression in Ireland. The prosperity between the years 1853 and 1859 began to decline in the latter year as a result of severe drought; this was followed by three successive years of excessive rainfall. There was a dramatic decline in crop yields and large numbers of sheep and cattle were lost through hunger and disease.⁴² O'Mahony was keenly aware of the growing plight of the tenant farmers particularly in the west of Ireland that required

³⁸ Letter from O'Mahony to Fr Edmund O'Flaherty, 19 Nov. 1861 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.)

³⁹ Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian chief: a biography of James Stephens* (Dublin, 1967), p.360 (Hereafter cited as Ryan, *Fenian chief*)

⁴⁰ William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel* (London, 1888), II, PP.119-20.

⁴¹ Letter from Stephens to O'Mahony, 7 Apr. 1862 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.)

⁴² J.S. Donnelly, Jr., 'The Irish agricultural depression of 1859-64' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, iii (1976), pp.33-54.

urgent and remedial action. The Fenian Brotherhood raised over a thousand dollars for the relief of starving people in the parish of Fr Patrick Lavelle, of Partry, County Mayo.⁴³ The organizer of this charitable work was Fr Edmund O'Flaherty who in this way consolidated the Fenians' friendship with John McHale, the Archbishop of Tuam. In a letter printed in the *Irish American* (New York), of 7 June 1862, McHale wrote to O'Flaherty as follows:

Will you be kind enough to assure those persons who exerted themselves in making this collection that to them in a particular manner, and the charitable brotherhood, we tender our best thanks for the zeal and devotion in the cause of our starving people.⁴⁴

Although McHale took a more benevolent view of the Fenians than other members of the catholic hierarchy, there is nothing to suggest that he was ever anything other than a constitutional nationalist.⁴⁵

Thomas Clarke Luby arrived in the United States on 25 February 1863. Stephens had empowered him to suspend or even depose O'Mahony, if necessary. Luby visited camps of the Union Army, accompanied by O'Mahony and addressed large numbers of Fenian officers and men. On 6 July 1863, Luby departed on board a steamer at New York for Dublin, via Liverpool.⁴⁶

The clash between Stephens and O'Mahony had already opened when the latter visited Ireland in 1860/61. The relationship worsened between the two men, after Luby returned from his trip from America, with only £100 to sustain the work in Ireland. Dissatisfied with this small amount, Stephens determined to raise funds by starting a newspaper advocating Fenian principles.⁴⁷ The secrecy required by a political conspiracy is not compatible with the atmosphere of a newspaper. Yet, on 28 November 1863, Stephens launched the *Irish People* (Dublin), at No 12 Parliament Street, across the road from Dublin Castle, in an office manned by his principal

⁴³ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.29.

⁴⁴ *Irish American* (New York), 7 June 1862; *Irishman* (Dublin), 16 Aug. 1862.

⁴⁵ Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat*, p.28.

⁴⁶ Thomas Clarke Luby, 'The Father of Fenianism: Personal reminiscences of Colonel John O'Mahony' in the *Irish World* (New York), 14 Apr. 1877 (hereafter cited as Luby, 'Personal reminiscences'); John O'Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, Vol.I* (London, 1896), pp.207, 224; O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868.

⁴⁷ Thomas Clarke Luby's recollections of Fenianism and the *Irish People* (MS 331, N.L.I.).

followers. By way of justification for his abandonment of secrecy, he laid the blame on O'Mahony. In a letter dated 4 October 1863, Stephens tells O'Mahony 'Had you been able to supply the necessary funds, I should never have had anything to do with it'.⁴⁸ These remarks may have finally broken O'Mahony's patience and decided him to declare the independence of the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States. In a letter to Charles Joseph Kickham (who was in America at this time), dated 19 October 1863, O'Mahony wrote that:

I am discontented with Stephens' treatment of myself. Having long used my name and my person as a shield against his private enemies and the enemies of the organization, he has been for sometime past making a scapegoat of me among his partisans and blaming me for shortcomings that were inevitable consequences of his own desertion of me during the trying crises of the American organization. Lately, moreover he has given countenance, if not instructions, to certain parties in this city, who have interfered with my action and maligned my motives and my character, thus doing all that in him lay to prevent me from accomplishing the very results for whose non-performance I am blamed by him. To this interference with my functions I can no longer submit. Neither can I submit to dictatorial arrogance on his part.... As chief officer of the American organization, my powers must be put upon an even keel with his authority over the Irish. I will no longer consent to be accountable to him for my official conduct. We must treat as equal to equal, when it is necessary for us to treat at all, and as the presiding officers of equal and independent organizations - organizations mutually aiding each other and closely allied, through their respective executives, but still distinct in their government and internal management.⁴⁹

Stephens did not dare to challenge O'Mahony openly. It shall be seen that he undermined O'Mahony's position by dealing with others in the United States behind his back.

⁴⁸ Letter from Stephens to O'Mahony, 4 Oct. 1863 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.)

⁴⁹ Letter from O'Mahony to Kickham, 19 Oct. 1863 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.)

THE CHICAGO CONVENTION, 3 NOVEMBER 1863

O'Mahony now had to face dissension among the American Fenians and, on 5 September 1863, he yielded to a request from twenty officers of the Fenian Brotherhood, in the mid-west, for a general convention ostensibly to settle difficulties which had arisen. The leading men that made this request were James Gibbons, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Michael Scanlan of Chicago, Illinois.⁵⁰ These two men, had been members of the Fenian Brotherhood since 1859, and now had ambitious schemes for increasing their own influence therein.

The first national convention of the Fenian Brotherhood was summoned by O'Mahony to meet in Chicago, Illinois, on 3 November 1863. Each circle would send its center as well as one additional delegate. The convening of such a representative body was in itself an attenuation of the unlimited authority which O'Mahony had hitherto exercised in the Fenian Brotherhood. Eighty-two delegates representing twelve states, the District of Columbia and the three armies of the Union - the Cumberland, Potomac and Tennessee - (perhaps half of the delegates were in the Union armies) assembled in Chicago for the convention.⁵¹

By late 1863, the time had come to reorganize: to clarify the Fenians' purpose, and to establish it firmly on a foundation in keeping with its American environment. One of the resolutions adopted at the Chicago convention proclaimed that:

WE THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FENIAN BROTHERHOOD IN THE UNITED STATES, DO HEREBY SOLEMLY DECLARE, WITHOUT LIMIT OR RESERVATION, OUR ENTIRE ALLEGIANCE TO THE CONSTITUTION AND LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.⁵²

This would help to preserve growing American approval and support. O'Mahony welcomed the opportunity, presented by the convention, to make the institution of the Fenian Brotherhood more open, democratic and in tune with the American scene. He

⁵⁰ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.32.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.36.

set about drafting a constitution that would put the organization on a basis firm enough to ensure its survival until it had achieved its aim. One of the resolutions adopted at the convention resolved that 'The Fenian Brotherhood be declared hereby A FIXED AND PERMANENT INSTITUTION in America and that it continue its labours without ceasing until Ireland shall be restored to her rightful place among free nations'.⁵³

Within six years of its foundation in 1857, the Fenian Brotherhood had grown far beyond the limits of its New York City inception. It was to be found in the twelve states of the Union and in the United States' armed forces. In short, Irish American nationalism had come of age and, now ready to assert itself, Fenianism was to become its first mature expression.⁵⁴

STRUCTURE OF THE BROTHERHOOD

The eighty-two delegates at the Chicago convention adopted a constitution that provided for the election of the head centre and central council by annual convention.⁵⁵ Since the new constitution required that the head centre be elected democratically by convention, O'Mahony resigned the position of absolute authority he had held for nearly five years. His resignation was accepted, and he was unanimously re-elected head centre under the new constitution. The head centre would be responsible to the convention, and to no other party, for all his official acts. He was to have the assistance of a five-man central council nominated by him and subject to ratification by the delegates at the convention. The central council formed the cabinet, which the head centre was to consult in important matters.⁵⁶ The five men nominated by O'Mahony, and ratified by the delegates, were General Michael Corcoran, Colonel Mathew Murphy (both of the Union army and close friends of O'Mahony), Richard Doherty, of Lafayette, Indiana, James Gibbons of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Michael Scanlan of Chicago, Illinois.⁵⁷ Scanlan and Gibbons were

⁵² The Chicago resolutions, Nov. 1863 reproduced in the *Irish American* (New York), 21 Nov. 1863; *Irish People* (New York), 25 July 1868 (Hereafter cited as The Chicago resolutions, Nov. 1863)

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*, p.108.

⁵⁵ The Chicago resolutions, Nov. 1863.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.37; *Irish American* (New York), 21 Nov. 1863

among those who had requested the convention and subsequently benefited from it by being appointed central councillors.

A corresponding secretary, private secretary, treasurer and assistant treasurer completed the organizational structure of the Fenian Brotherhood. Michael J. Heffernan, who had joined the 14th United States infantry after his arrival in the United States from Ireland, became the corresponding secretary. Michael Cavanagh, a revolutionary associate of James Fintan Lalor and Joseph Brennan in 1849, became O'Mahony's private secretary. Cavanagh had been O'Mahony's only assistant at the central office during the early years of the Fenian Brotherhood. Patrick O'Rourke (a former member of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society and later a member of the 'Irish Revolutionary Committee' in New York in the autumn of 1857) acted as treasurer.⁵⁸

The elite of the Fenian Brotherhood, including Generals' Corcoran and Meagher signed the series of resolutions unanimously adopted at the convention as the 'Declaration of Irish Independence.'⁵⁹ In September 1861, Meagher had participated with O'Mahony and Doheny in the McManus obsequies. On 11 July 1863, O'Mahony formally inducted Meagher into the Fenian Brotherhood at its headquarters at 6 Centre Street, New York.⁶⁰ It would appear that it was at the request of O'Mahony that Meagher had finally agreed to join the Fenians.

Up to the Fenian convention at Philadelphia, in 1865, the Chicago resolutions would serve as the basis of the whole action and policy of the Fenian Brotherhood. Without them, O'Mahony believed that:

The entire movement in Ireland and America would have been nothing broader or better than a huge Ribbon or Molly Maguire conspiracy, driven on blindly by passion and instinct rather than guided by reason and intelligence. As for the American branch, it would have been beneath contempt - a mere draw-farm for James Stephens.⁶¹

⁵⁸ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 29 Feb. 1868.

⁵⁹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 22 Feb. 1868.

⁶⁰ Roster of Military Officers of the Fenian Brotherhood in New York, 1856-65 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.); D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.32; Thomas Keneally, *The great shame: a story of the Irish in the old world and the new* (London, 1998), p.400 (Hereafter cited as Keneally, *The great shame*)

⁶¹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 22 Feb. 1868.

O'Mahony knew what he was doing, and what was appropriate for the American context, and time would show to have been very shrewd politically.

SECRET RESOLUTIONS

The publication of three resolutions endorsed by the delegates at the convention, were withheld. The first (No. XII) of these declared that:

We...do hereby proclaim the Republic of Ireland to be virtually established; and moreover, that we pledge ourselves to use all our influence, and every legitimate privilege within our reach to promote the full acknowledgement of its independence by every free government in the world.⁶²

The convention treated the Irish republic as having been established for all practical purposes, and the nature of the Fenian Brotherhood was changed from a singularly military organization to a civic and social one as well. In this sense it reflected features of its immediate predecessors, the Emmet Monument Association and the Irishmen's Civil and Military Republican Union. This is what gave them the base necessary for the subsequent negotiating with the United States government. The other two secret resolutions, passed at Chicago:

(No. XIII), recited the services and sacrifices of James Stephens as an organizer of Irish revolution, and expressed our gratitude to him and our confidence in his honesty, talents and patriotism.

(No. XIV), appointed the said James Stephens as Central Executive and Chief Organizer of the Irish Republic.⁶³

The publication of these resolutions was withheld probably out of consideration for Stephens, as their publication would publicly humiliate him. Resolution No. XIV effectively reduced Stephens to the rank of organizer of the Irish people. It is clear in O'Mahony's letter to his friend Kickham, of 19 October 1863 (already quoted) that

⁶² *Report of the Proceedings at the first sitting of the special commission for the county of the city of Dublin, held at Green Street, Dublin, for the trial of Thomas Clarke Luby and others for treason felony, 'the Fenian conspiracy', commencing November 27, 1865* (Dublin, 1866), pp.219-20.

O'Mahony had been determined to procure this at the convention. It was appropriate that O'Mahony entrusted the secret resolutions, Kickham, for delivery to Stephens.

The policy proposed by O'Mahony and adopted by the Chicago convention was opposed by a group of dissident Fenians in the Mid-West. Ironically, these so-called 'men of action' had been the ones to request the convention in the first place. From now on O'Mahony's doctrine of continued preparation until the moment of opportunity (exactly in tune with Mitchel), was referred to by them as a 'drag chain policy'.⁶⁴ Stephens aligned himself with, and encouraged, the so-called 'men of action'. O'Mahony had managed, for the present, to prevent them from placing any serious constraints on his authority. Some years later, in the *Irish People* (New York), of 25 January 1868, he wrote:

My whole policy was, however, endorsed by the above mentioned convention [Chicago], by the unanimous adoption of a series of resolutions which I drew up myself and laid before it, in exposition of my conception of the principles and policy upon which our movement ought to be conducted. They were, in my opinion, the only ones that could lead to success. Sustained by them, I had been able to steer clear of all serious mistakes, and had beaten back every enemy that had ventured openly to attack the Organization, which I directed. But their promulgation gave great offence to James Stephens and his personal admirers in Ireland; and, upon after (sic) consideration to the partisans of immediate action here. Both conspired and finally effected the overthrow of the system of which the said resolutions were the exponents. James Stephens and the "Men of Action" triumphed over my principles for a short time, though they split up into two jarring factions soon after. Both of them adopted immediate war, or dissolution, as their banner cry.⁶⁵

O'Mahony's realistic policy was one of constant preparation until some external opportunity provided the circumstances favourable for revolution. He knew that nothing, except disaster, would be the outcome of an insurrection in Ireland without

⁶³ Resolutions xiii and xiv are paraphrased by O'Mahony in *Irish People* (New York), 25 July 1868.

⁶⁴ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 5 Dec. 1868

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 Jan. 1868.

prior international complications. Stephens's rhetoric of 'immediate war, or dissolution' to him was nonsense.

CLERICAL OPPOSITION

In the letter to Kickham (already quoted), dated 19 October 1863, O'Mahony outlined his recommendations for changes to be made in the machinery of the Fenian Brotherhood. He envisaged that:

Becoming an American association and basing our right of action upon the privileges of American citizens and keeping within the laws of these states, we can place ultramontane plotters against human freedom in a very awkward predicament and a very unsafe one for them, if they presume to assail us. The pretext of "Secret Society" being taken away from them, they will be forced to assail us as a political organization. They must avow that the Papacy has made common cause with the tyrants of Europe to put down republican propagandism and that even Catholic Ireland must be sacrificed to Protestant England, lest the recoil of her resurrection might shake the despotisms of the old continent and among them that of Rome.⁶⁶

Underlining the Fenian doctrine of separating church and state, O'Mahony considered that the papacy had allied itself with those 'tyrants of Europe,' which included all Imperial powers. O'Mahony argued that the Irish catholic hierarchy, acting in the British interest, was influencing the American catholic hierarchy to take measures against Fenianism and that this constituted intervention in American politics. The catholic hierarchy opposed the Fenians because the movement was beyond its reach of control. The fact that the catholic church had condemned Fenianism in the years before 1863, meant that they could not now with any credibility join or openly support it. When the Fenians became a serious threat as a revolutionary movement, in the mid-1860s, a new intensity was added to clerical opposition.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Letter from O'Mahony to Charles Joseph Kickham, 19 Oct. 1863 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.).

⁶⁷ Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, p.12; D'Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, p.39.

The Chicago convention went on record as denying any notion that the Fenian Brotherhood was a secret or oath-bound society. One of the resolutions adopted at that convention declared:

The Fenian Brotherhood IS NOT A SECRET SOCIETY, inasmuch as no pledge of secrecy, expressed or implied, is demanded from the candidates for membership thereof; neither is it an Oath-bound Society, for NO OATH whatever is required in order to entitle a man to the privileges of the association.⁶⁸

In doing so it simply formalized O'Mahony's earlier assertions (from as far back as 1855 when the Emmet Monument Association was still in existence) that the organization was an army, not a secret society.

Despite the fact that the proceedings of the Chicago convention were published in the *Irish American* (New York) of 21 November 1863, Bishop James Duggan of Chicago issued a circular letter to the clergy of his diocese, dated 3 February 1864, condemning the Fenians as a secret society in the sense understood by the catholic church. These criticisms levelled against the Fenian Brotherhood, on account of their alleged secrecy, made little sense in view of the open and undisguised conduct of Fenian affairs.⁶⁹ In a letter of response to Duggan, dated 19 February 1864, O'Mahony refuted the latter's criticisms stating that 'Neither before, during, nor after its [Chicago convention's] session, was any pledge of secrecy demanded of or given by the participators in its deliberations'.⁷⁰ Consequently, O'Mahony did not feel that the strictures of the catholic church applied to the Fenian Brotherhood.

In that same letter, O'Mahony denounced Duggan for the stance he had taken on the object of Fenianism, the overthrow of British rule in Ireland. O'Mahony argued that the issue was a purely political question and one on which catholics might legitimately disagree, and still remain good catholics. He also objected to Duggan

⁶⁸ The Chicago resolutions, Nov. 1863.

⁶⁹ Mabel Gregory Walker, *The Fenian movement* (Colorado, 1969), pp.25-6; D'Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, p.39; Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, p.12.

⁷⁰ 'Reply of John O'Mahony to the Bishop's objection to the Brotherhood', dated 19 Feb. 1864, printed in *The Irish Canadian*, 2 Mar. 1864.

condemning in an *ex cathedra* fashion a political organization, in a manner, which he believed to be outside the ecclesiastical competence of any one bishop.⁷¹

STEPHENS IN THE UNITED STATES MARCH - AUGUST 1864

The 'men of action' had failed at the convention to make any serious headway at O'Mahony's expense, but they were far from being defeated and next took steps towards holding a fund-raising fair in Chicago, where their faction was strongest. Without consulting O'Mahony, they dispatched Henry O'Clarence McCarthy, of Chicago, Illinois, to Ireland to purchase and collect goods for the fair.⁷² While in Ireland, McCarthy invited Stephens to attend the Chicago fair, which he accepted.

Stephens, accompanied by McCarthy, arrived in the United States on 23 March 1864. They attended the Fenian fund-raising fair in Chicago, which opened for a week on 28 March. It was judged a great financial success though no report was given of the proceeds, which was estimated to have amounted to \$50,000.⁷³ Immediately after the fair Stephens made an extensive tour through the United States visiting the circles of the Fenian Brotherhood for which purpose O'Mahony gave him a letter of introduction.⁷⁴

During his American tour of 1864, Stephens proclaimed that, irrespective of the international situation, the I.R.B. would either fight or dissolve their organization within the coming year. 'War or dissolution in sixty-five' became his watchword. Stephens was blinded to the necessity of thorough preparation. His short-term policy was reckless in the extreme. O'Mahony recalled later that 'I believed the proposition ['War or dissolution in sixty-five'] to be impracticable as matters stood, and discouraged it as far as I could without coming to an open rupture with its originator'.⁷⁵ O'Mahony considered that to do so would have broken up the whole organization.

Stephens also made a tour of the Union armies recruiting for the Fenian Brotherhood from the Irish soldiers therein, as Luby had done the year before, but on a much larger scale. Armed with passes from high-ranking officers (procured by

⁷¹ Ibid; Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat*, pp.65, 81.

⁷² O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868.

⁷³ Kevin Quigley, 'American financing of Fenianism in Ireland, 1858-67' (M.A. thesis, NUI Maynooth, 1983), pp.45-50.

⁷⁴ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868.

O'Mahony's influence) he devoted much time to the army of the Cumberland. Stephens' slogan of 'war or dissolution in 1865' naturally had appeal for Irish Americans who were impatient for action no matter how ill advised.⁷⁶ To these recruiting drives of Stephens may be attributed the many officers of the Union army who made their way to Ireland at the close of the Civil War, ready for the action that Stephens never delivered.

Although Stephens's American tour had been undertaken after gaining O'Mahony's support (he had provided Stephens with a letter of introduction) it undoubtedly undermined O'Mahony's authority within the Fenian Brotherhood. This was probably what Stephens and the 'men of action' had calculated upon from the outset. O'Mahony later justified his continued support of Stephens as follows:

I had largely contributed to raise Stephens to the position where he then stood. His influence was built upon mine. The natural leaders of our people having held aloof from the movement, I knew of no man connected with us who was qualified to take his place in Ireland, should he have to succumb. I knew of no man at once willing and competent to take mine in this country should I retire from the contest.⁷⁷

The 'natural leaders' referred to by O'Mahony included the prominent 'Young Ireland' leaders, such as Smith O'Brien, Dillon and Martin (in Ireland) and Mitchel, Meagher, O'Gorman and D'Arcy Magee (in America).

From this time onwards difficulties tended to accumulate for O'Mahony. It would appear that the most significant factor influencing his action at this time was the imminent end to the American Civil War. O'Mahony recalled later that:

As the American Rebellion was seemingly near its close, I deemed it not at all improbable that a favourable opportunity might be presented to us within the time specified. Our second general convention was fast approaching also, and I trusted that the action of the coming year would be determined thereat, according to the information, which I should be able to place before it. I

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.40-3.

⁷⁷ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868.

therefore thought it wisest to avoid a rupture, and to trust to events for a solution of the difficulty wherein I was placed.⁷⁸

In other words O'Mahony decided to hang in. The 'favourable opportunity,' referred to above, was the hoped-for conflict between Britain and the United States possibly leading to war.

DOCUMENT OF AGREEMENT, AUGUST 1864

Prior to his departure for Ireland, Stephens elicited the agreement of O'Mahony, in New York, to a document outlining his 'plan of action'. Stephens drew up this document, dated 2 August 1864, and it is in his handwriting. The document laid the groundwork for the undermining of O'Mahony's authority in the Fenian Brotherhood. In it Stephens submitted a number of points for the endorsement of O'Mahony, with the approval of the central council; the first of which provided for the appointment of a 'deputy head centre'.⁷⁹ Stephens proposed the appointment of Henry O'Clarence McCarthy, of Chicago, Illinois, to this position. O'Mahony acceded to this request and recalled later that:

I did this in order to satisfy the 'Men of Action' here on the one hand, and, on the other, to show to Stephens that I meant to act squarely with him in all things by my readiness in taking a partisan nominee of his own into my office. I hoped to find in McCarthy a means of warding off the discord that was then impending over the organization from the conflicting opinions of its leaders.⁸⁰

The second article of the agreement drawn up by Stephens stated that the 'deputy head-centre' would have the assistance of similar full-time paid organizers at state level termed 'deputy state centres'. They were in effect shadow American centres just as McCarthy was a shadow head centre. It can be assumed that the 'men of action' would fill the positions of 'deputy state centres'. O'Mahony was to be by-passed even in the matter of transmitting money to Ireland which, it was proposed, would be

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Agreement signed 2 Aug. 1864, printed in D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.42-3.

⁸⁰ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868

sent directly by the district and state centres.⁸¹ For the present, O'Mahony was able to prevent the enforcement of most of these arrangements, but it was now becoming evident how his position had been undermined. In the *Irish People* (New York), of 25 July 1868, O'Mahony wrote that:

Their [Chicago resolutions] acceptance by the Chicago convention, and their promulgation to the organization was one of the primary causes why Mr, Stephens raised up Henry O'Clarence McCarthy and his henchmen [Michael] Scanlan and P.W. Dunne [from Peoria, Illinois], as founders of that faction in the Brotherhood whose primary object was to secretly circumvent me in his name – to stab me in the back – and to substitute for the policy of “The patents dint and powder shock” that of “Immediate war or dissolution.” But these resolutions live today, and are acted on by the Brotherhood, even in spite of itself, though the Stephenite factionists first destroyed me, then Stephens himself, and lastly the whole Brotherhood as an organized body. His pupils in the art of secret poisoning of men's characters at last turned their lethiferous knowledge against himself and the movement at large.⁸²

Through his scheming with the dissidents in the Fenian Brotherhood, Stephens was clearly conspiring against O'Mahony.

FENIAN ENVOY SENT TO IRELAND, AUGUST 1864

Shortly after the departure of Stephens for Ireland in August 1864, O'Mahony sent Captain Philip Coyne (of the Confederate army), of St. Louis, as his envoy to Ireland.⁸³ O'Mahony did so out of a desire to procure more accurate information on the state of revolutionary preparedness there. Captain Coyne, a prisoner of war, had been allowed to return to St. Louis through the influence of General Corcoran (before his death in December 1863), who interceded for him with the northern military authorities.⁸⁴ The fact that the United States government had acceded to Corcoran's

⁸¹ Agreement signed 2 Aug. 1864, printed in D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.42-43.

⁸² O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 July 1868.

⁸³ In referring to military title we consistently use the rank held in the America armies (Union or Confederate) – not to the alternate ranks held in the Fenian Brotherhood.

⁸⁴ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.43-4.

request shows the high regard in which they held the Fenian Brotherhood. O'Mahony postponed the forthcoming Fenian convention from November 1864 till the following January, in order to give Captain Coyne ample time to investigate and report back on his findings in Ireland.⁸⁵

Almost immediately after O'Mahony had issued the summons for the general convention of the Fenian Brotherhood, to be held on 17 January 1865, in Cincinnati, Michael Scanlan issued a printed circular in the name of the Fenian Brotherhood which he designated a 'final call.' He issued it without authorization from the head centre or central council. Scanlan's circular demanded of the circles to make a final effort to collect money and to send it to the upcoming convention by their several delegates. O'Mahony denounced Scanlan's call in another circular, which he forwarded to all the offices of the Fenian Brotherhood. According to O'Mahony his second circular had the desired effect in most instances.⁸⁶

Captain Coyne returned to the United States from Ireland, in mid December 1864, and reported to O'Mahony. Coyne brought a forty-page letter from Stephens, dated 11 December 1864, which proclaimed 'Brothers, I ask you in the name of God, to believe that no others, after us, can bring the cause to the test of battle and that our battle must be entered on sometime in the coming year'.⁸⁷ This nonsensical rhetoric was totally at variance with O'Mahony's policy of continued preparation until the moment of opportunity.

O'Mahony was caught between the 'men of action,' on both sides of the Atlantic, both working on false presumptions. While thus disposed O'Mahony received a letter from a P. T. Sherlock, of Chicago, informing him of the formation of a conspiracy for O'Mahony's overthrow, which had been devised by Stephens during his stay in that city, in conjunction with H. O'C. McCarthy, Michael Scanlan, both of Chicago, Illinois and P.W. Dunne, of Peoria, Illinois. Shortly before this, Scanlan had expelled Sherlock from the Chicago circle, for having dared to differ with him on some local arrangements.⁸⁸

Recognising the utter stupidity of Stephens's pledge of 'war or dissolution in 1865,' O'Mahony recalled that:

⁸⁵ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Jan. 1868.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 Feb. 1868.

⁸⁷ Letter from Stephens to O'Mahony, 11 Dec. 1864 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.)

Having felt that open discord was inevitable between Stephens and myself, I was convinced that our only chance of success lay in the united counsels, and that any one programme, however desperate, if honestly worked out, was better than two conflicting ones; I had resolved to resign, and thus allow Stephens and the Men of Action, who were sure to bring with them the impatient and unreasonable rank and file in any case, a clear field for their operations.⁸⁹

The so-called 'men of action,' through Stephens's subterfuge, had finally gained ascendancy over O'Mahony's more deliberate and gradual policy. O'Mahony's resignation was not to come just yet.

THE CINCINNATI CONVENTION, 17 JANUARY 1865

By January 1865 the Civil War was coming to an end, and the 'final call' to raise the funds required to finance an insurrection in Ireland seemed at hand. In a mood of confident optimism the Fenians convened in national convention in Cincinnati, on 17 January 1865. The convention numbered 348 delegates, representing 273 circles, an increase of approximately 210 circles since the Chicago convention. Altogether twenty-one states and the territories of Oregon, Utah, Nevada and Idaho were represented.⁹⁰ In his address to the convention O'Mahony proclaimed that 'The Fenian Congress⁹¹ acts the part of a national assembly of the Irish Republic. Our organized friends in Ireland constitute its army'.⁹² Captain Coyne attended the convention and submitted his report of the state of the home organization. O'Mahony recalled later that 'It was full, and far more satisfactory than I expected; but yet it was not deemed to be altogether such as would justify the assembly in making a "Final Call" upon the Brotherhood so soon'.⁹³ The opinion of the assembled delegates confirmed O'Mahony's assessment.

⁸⁸ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ D'Arcy, Fenian movement, p.47; Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*, p.109.

⁹¹ O'Mahony uses the terms 'convention' and 'congress' interchangeably when speaking of the Fenian's annual general meetings. This could be deliberate in order to forestall the misuse of such terms by the dissident faction.

⁹² *Proceedings of the second national congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, January, 1865* (Philadelphia, 1865), pp.42-45; *Irish American* (New York), 11 Feb. 1865.

⁹³ *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868.

A tax was imposed upon the Fenian Brotherhood at large for the purpose of meeting the immediate needs of the I.R.B., indicating that the level of preparations in Ireland were far short of making the 'final call'. Power was given by a unanimous vote to the incoming head centre and central council to make the 'final call' and to issue the 'bonds of the Irish Republic,' as soon as they should feel convinced that, the time for such action had come. At the Cincinnati convention the central council was increased in membership from five to ten members and included their own 'president.'⁹⁴ This title of 'president' was clearly meant to undermine O'Mahony as head centre by confusing the whole structure of the Fenian Brotherhood. Seven men, including their 'president', were elected to the central council at the Cincinnati convention, the other three, required to make up the stipulated ten members, were co-opted the following month. It would appear that the central council had been authorised by the Cincinnati convention to do so.

O'Mahony was re-elected head centre and Henry O'Clarence McCarthy, of Chicago, Illinois (now resident in New York) was elected 'president' of the central council. The seven men elected to the central council, at the convention, were William Sullivan, of Tiffin, Ohio; Patrick Bannon, of Louisville, Kentucky; James Gibbons, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Michael Scanlan, of Chicago, Illinois, P.W. Dunne, of Peoria, Illinois; William Griffin, of Madison, Wisconsin and P. Doody, of Holyoke, Massachusetts. Scanlan and Gibbons had been members of the central council since the Chicago convention. According to O'Mahony, Scanlan, McCarthy, Dunne and Bannon belonged to the party of 'war or dissolution in 1865' and 'professed a blind and uncompromising worship of James Stephens in all things.'⁹⁵ Although some, like Gibbons and Sullivan, feigned support for O'Mahony at this time, the real agenda of the plotters against his authority was now becoming evident. The intriguers' preordained plan appears to have been first to isolate O'Mahony and then to undermine him completely. It was necessary for their purposes to distort the governing structure of the Fenian Brotherhood. All the pieces were now being put into place -- including a packed central council with its own alternative 'president' - for the total undermining of O'Mahony.

⁹⁴ *Proceedings of the second national congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, January, 1865* (Philadelphia, 1865), pp.42-45; *Irish American* (New York), 11 Feb. 1865; O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868.

⁹⁵ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868.

As at the previous year's convention in Chicago, growing clerical opposition was discussed in Cincinnati. It was now dismissed as posing no serious danger to the Fenian Brotherhood. In his address to the Cincinnati convention O'Mahony stated that 'The principal opposition encountered by the Brotherhood during the last year, came from certain catholic clergymen; however, they do not seem to have done us much material injury, considering the great progress we have made in so short a time'.⁹⁶ This progress is evident in the *Irish American* (New York), of 29 November 1864, which listed twenty-one new circles. Fenians were, at times, able to claim that opposition from the catholic church actually helped rather than hindered their cause, owing to the indignation generated by, what appeared to be, the political prejudices of the clergy.⁹⁷

CENTRAL COUNCIL SESSION, NEW YORK FEBRUARY 1865

Soon after the Cincinnati convention, the new central council convened in New York City and held their first regular meeting. At this February 1865 meeting Patrick J. Meehan was sworn in a Fenian and co-opted to the central council by the influence of 'president', H. O'C. McCarthy. Meehan had been considered an enemy of the Fenians since 1859. The plot was now unfolding. O'Mahony consented to Meehan's admission, at the unanimous request of the central council, and later recalled that 'I did so for the sake of conciliation; for, in the actual state of the organization, we needed the aid and good will of all sections of the Irish national party'.⁹⁸ O'Mahony would appear to have had very little, if any, choice in Meehan's admission. His *Irish American* (New York) now became the acknowledged organ of the Fenians.⁹⁹ The *Phoenix* (New York) had apparently ceased publication in 1861.¹⁰⁰ The old dilemma which had been there since the days of the Emmet Monument Association, is apparent in O'Mahony's address to the Cincinnati convention where he states that:

⁹⁶ *Irish American* (New York), 11 Feb. 1865.

⁹⁷ Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat*, p.81.

⁹⁸ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868.

⁹⁹ *Irish American* (New York), 25 Feb. 1865.

¹⁰⁰ No issues of the *Phoenix* (New York) beyond 10 Aug. 1861 are known to be extant.

It were, indeed, more conducive to success, if no publicity whatever were given to the existence of our organization, until all our preparations for an uprising of the Irish people were completed. I have myself no such objection to absolute secrecy in revolutionary associations, provided their objects be just, and their mode of attaining them pure and honest. But secrecy would militate against the extension of the Fenian Brotherhood, and prevent it from gaining an amount of popular support sufficient for successful operations.¹⁰¹

O'Mahony had been opposed to newspaper publicity as detrimental to advancing the Emmet Monument Association's plans for an expedition to Ireland in 1855. Yet newspaper support had allowed their rival, the Emigrant Aid Society to gain more widespread support and rapidly expand their organization at that time. Now, in 1865, publicity in Meehan's *Irish American* (New York) would enhance the opportunities open to the Fenians for gaining 'popular support'. Nevertheless the admission of Meehan proved to be another significant step taken by the central council towards undermining O'Mahony's authority.

Most significantly for future events, William Randall Roberts, of New York, was sworn in a Fenian and co-opted to the central council on the same occasion as Meehan. Roberts was born in Mitchelstown, County Cork, in 1830. It would be interesting to know whether or not O'Mahony had known the Roberts family during the years he lived near Mitchelstown. In 1849 Roberts, at the age of nineteen, left Ireland for New York City where he built up a business as a dealer in dry goods. This business was so successful that by 1869 he could retire as a millionaire.¹⁰² John Devoy described Roberts as 'a successful dry goods merchant, who was vain and shallow, but showy'.¹⁰³ It is significant that both Meehan and Roberts were covertly admitted to the central council at this session in New York rather than by election at the Cincinnati convention. Roberts, who was motivated largely by ambition in the American political system, would soon spearhead the rebellion against O'Mahony's authority in the Fenian Brotherhood by the so-called 'men of action'.

¹⁰¹ *Irish American* (New York), 11 Feb. 1865.

¹⁰² *The encyclopedia of the Irish in America*, edited by Michael Glazier (Indiana, 1999), pp.809-10.

¹⁰³ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.268.

FENIAN ENVOYS SENT TO IRELAND, MARCH – APRIL 1865

It was resolved, at that February 1865 meeting of the central council, to send out to Ireland an experienced military officer, as a special representative of the Fenian Brotherhood, with as little delay as possible. O'Mahony, with the approval of the central council, delegated Captain Thomas J. Kelly, of the United States army, to proceed to Ireland and make a thorough investigation of military preparedness there. Captain Kelly a native of Mount Bellew, county Galway, had fought in the Tenth Ohio Regiment during the Civil War. At the end of three months he was to render to O'Mahony a full written report, of the state of the I.R.B, without consulting Stephens. On 25 March 1865, Captain Kelly left for Ireland with a letter of introduction to Stephens.¹⁰⁴

Captain Kelly's departure was to be followed by the sending of other military officers to Ireland to aid in the organization of the I.R.B. and to provide them with expert military assistance. The selection of these men was left to O'Mahony subject to the approval of a 'standing committee', consisting of Henry O'Clarence McCarthy (president of the council), William R. Roberts and P. J. Meehan, all three residents in New York.¹⁰⁵ In a letter dated 17 March 1865, O'Mahony wrote to Stephens that:

Matters here are not now as they were when you and I were as one. An element has been brought into our councils, though by no agency of mine, that must be perfectly satisfied on the points in question. Satisfy the C[entral] C[ouncil] fully and your wishes shall be promptly attended to, otherwise they will not.¹⁰⁶

O'Mahony's feeling of increasing powerlessness, resulting from a gradual erosion of his authority, is palpable here as is his implicit, though underplayed, pointing to Stephens's responsibility for this through his support for the intriguers.

¹⁰⁴ Letter of instructions from O'Mahony to Captain T.J. Kelly, 17 Mar. 1865, printed in Joseph Denieffe, *A personal narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood* (Shannon, 1969), pp.186-7 (Hereafter cited as Denieffe, *A personal narrative*).

¹⁰⁵ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868.

¹⁰⁶ O'Mahony to Stephens, 17 Mar. 1865, printed in Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.188.

At the end of April 1865 another military man, Francis Frederick Millen, was sent over to Ireland with similar instructions as those given to Captain Kelly - to inspect and report back on whether the I.R.B. was in as good shape as Stephens maintained.¹⁰⁷ Millen, a soldier of fortune, had held the rank of general in the Mexican army prior to becoming a member of the Fenian Brotherhood. On 10 March 1866 he would offer his services as an informer to Edward Archibald, the British Consul in New York.¹⁰⁸

ANGLO-AMERICAN TENSION – POST CIVIL WAR

On 9 April 1865, General Robert Edward Lee was forced to surrender the Army of Northern Virginia to General Ulysses Simpson Grant at Appomattox Court House. The prospect of an early rising in Ireland now acquired enhanced plausibility, even inevitability; the long-awaited demobilisation of the Irish-American veterans was at hand. Sworn Fenians were numerous among the officers and men, especially those serving in the Union armies, as Fenian agents had been allowed to recruit in the Union army during the civil war. As the Union and Confederate armies began to disband, in June 1865, Irish-American officers were soon making their way, across the Atlantic, to Ireland.¹⁰⁹ According to O'Mahony, many of them went at their own expense and without being asked.¹¹⁰

In his retrospective narrative, O'Mahony wrote that when the Fenian Brotherhood reached its culminating point at the end of 1865 'Its enrolled members must have amounted at that time to some two hundred thousand men, who represented the predominant wishes of four millions of Irish born citizens and of at least six millions of American of Irish-blood and Irish feelings'.¹¹¹ O'Mahony's estimate of 200,000 Fenians would have included the enrolled Fenians within the American armies.

The bravery and success of Irish soldiers in the Union armies went far to dispel nativist antipathy. The Famine Irish won a new level of self-confidence and

¹⁰⁷ *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868.

¹⁰⁸ Roster of Military Officers of the Fenian Brotherhood in New York, 1856-65 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.); Leon Ó Broin, *Fenian fever: An Anglo-American dilemma* (London, 1971), pp. 91-5 (Hereafter cited as Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*).

¹⁰⁹ Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, pp.10-11; Holden Reid, *The American civil war* pp.176-7.

¹¹⁰ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb.1868.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18 July 1868.

acceptance by the sacrifice of their sons in defence of the American Union. Furthermore, resentment towards Britain had grown widespread in the Northern States. The damage done to the resources of the Union by the ships built in England and sold to the Confederacy, infuriated the North and brought Anglo-American relations close to breaking point following the war.¹¹² The possibility of an Anglo-American conflict could present the opportunity which O'Mahony, Mitchel and others had awaited for so long, and, in fact, it had already been the stimulus for Meagher's initiation into the Fenian Brotherhood by O'Mahony already mentioned.¹¹³

CENTRAL COUNCIL SESSIONS, NEW YORK, MAY AND JUNE 1865

Shortly before the session of the central council, which took place in May 1865, Henry O'Clarence McCarthy left New York City in order to try and improve his declining health; he died in St. Louis the following September. The May session of the central council was presided over by William R. Roberts, who was chosen as acting 'president' due to McCarthy's leave of absence. A series of letters were read from Stephens, F.F. Millen and Captain Kelly. They were of so urgent a nature that it was determined by O'Mahony and the central council to send over as many experienced officers to Ireland as possible without further delay.¹¹⁴ One hundred and twenty Irish American officers arrived in Ireland during June and the three following months.¹¹⁵

Colonel William G. Halpin¹¹⁶ was commissioned to the headquarters of the I.R.B. in Dublin as the official representative of the Fenian Brotherhood, to act as a special agent, independent of the I.R.B. A report from Colonel Halpin was received in time for the session of the central council held in June 1865. It was as pressing as the previous reports received from Kelly and Millen. O'Donovan Rossa arrived in New York, from Ireland, in time for the June session in order to impress upon them

¹¹² Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, pp.10-11; Thomas N. Brown, *Irish-American nationalism, 1870-1890* (Philadelphia and New York, 1966), p.40 (hereafter cited as Brown, *Irish-American nationalism*).

¹¹³ Roster of Military Officers of the Fenian Brotherhood in New York, 1856-65 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.).

¹¹⁴ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868.

¹¹⁵ R.V. Comerford, *The Fenians in context: Irish politics and society 1848-1882* (Dublin, 1998), p.122 (Hereafter cited as Comerford, *Fenians in context*)

¹¹⁶ Colonel Halpin had been president of the Irish Emigrant Aid Society of Ohio in 1855.

the necessity of issuing the 'final call'. He did not convince O'Mahony, or the majority of the central council, that the time had yet come for this.¹¹⁷

At that June session, O'Mahony and the central council resolved to send two members of that body to Ireland as plenipotentiaries to make a thorough and final investigation of the strength of the I.R.B. The suspicion implicit in this move must have irritated Stephens. The plenipotentiaries were to verify the amount of arms and ammunition, as well as the numbers, discipline, and determination of the revolutionary masses in Ireland and England. The nomination of the two men to be chosen lay with O'Mahony. He selected P. W. Dunne and Patrick J. Meehan. Dunne was known as the most ardent advocate of the 'immediate war or dissolution' bloc, while Meehan claimed to be for war when they were prepared, but not before. They set sail, at the end of June, accompanied by O'Donovan Rossa and Colonel Halpin who had arrived in New York shortly before. The group landed in Ireland on 22 July 1865.¹¹⁸

In a twenty-eight page letter, dated 24 June 1865, Stephens criticized O'Mahony and the central council for their delay and suspicions and pleaded for immediate action.¹¹⁹ That July Stephens appointed an advisory committee consisting of John O'Leary, Charles Joseph Kickham, David Bell, Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa and F.F. Millen. This was followed up in September by the setting up of a military council most likely due to pressure from the increasing numbers of Irish-American officers in Dublin, and other parts of Ireland, eager for action. Stephens did not allow any real power or influence to either of these bodies, which were put in place for show in order to placate the Irish-Americans.¹²⁰

A serious incident for the Fenians occurred in Ireland in July 1865. The last set of Fenian envoys, Dunne and Meehan, had on the very day of their arrival in Dublin lost some vital documents, including a letter from O'Mahony introducing them as plenipotentiaries to Stephens. Meehan had pinned the documents in his underwear from which they became detached and fell in the street unobserved by him. The documents were found by a messenger boy, near Kingstown railway station, and

¹¹⁷ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 and 8 Feb. 1868.

¹¹⁹ Letter from Stephens to the F.B. Central Council, 24 June 1865 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.).

¹²⁰ Comerford, *Fenians in context*, p.123; General Millen's account of Fenianism as from April 1865 to April 1866 (N.L.I., S.L. Anderson papers, MS 5964)

were placed in the hands of a police inspector who took them to Dublin Castle.¹²¹ O'Mahony wrote later that 'Their acquisition put the bloodhounds of the tyrants on the track of the Irish revolutionary leaders.'¹²² O'Mahony was not aware of the existence of informers in prominent positions in the Fenian Brotherhood at this time or even later when he wrote about these events. Meehan's loss of the documents did not reveal anything that the government did not already know through the work of police and informers. However, the loss of five hundred pounds, enclosed with the accompanying documents, probably convinced the authorities that more money was coming.¹²³

ISSUANCE OF 'FINAL CALL', 5 AUGUST 1865

The report that Meehan and Dunne sent to O'Mahony at the end of July, corroborated the consecutive and unanimous reports of Captain's Coyne and Kelly, F.F. Millen, Colonel Halpin and O'Donovan Rossa. It confirmed the readiness of the I.R.B. and asked for three hundred experienced officers to be sent to Ireland, as well as money to buy arms in England, in order to commence the rising with a good chance of success. They recommended that the 'final call', for money in the United States, be issued immediately as well as the 'bonds of the Irish Republic'. On 5 August O'Mahony issued the 'final call' (after first consulting with 'president' Roberts).¹²⁴ He did so reluctantly knowing what an unpredictable undertaking it was without Britain being at war and recalled later that:

I felt that the Fenian Organization was about to barter a system of action, which promised certain victory in the future for what was almost a forlorn hope in the present. The odds were then fearfully against the success of any attempt at an immediate uprising in Ireland.¹²⁵

O'Mahony by nature was very cautious and methodical in his approach and would always have at least some reservations regarding the right moment to strike. Yet

¹²¹ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.102-3; *Irish People* (New York), 8 Feb. 1868.

¹²² O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 8 Feb. 1868.

¹²³ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.73.

¹²⁴ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 8 Feb. 1868.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

when the time for action came he threw himself in unreservedly and did all in his power to do what was requested of him. In a letter to his nephew, Francis Mandeville, dated 4 December 1866, O'Mahony wrote:

In fact from the time when, contrary to my own opinion, but in compliance with the reports of six successive envoys, I consented to the "Final Call" in August 1865, the organization here under me was like a wild unbridled horse. I had no longer any direction or control of it, further than to ply whip and spur until it either reached the goal or fell down in the course. I unfortunately drove too hard, and the courser fell under me!¹²⁶

After the 'final call' had been issued O'Mahony's first duty was to forward to Stephens its immediate financial product, as fast as it came in, so that the arms and ammunition might be made available without delay; and next to see to the fitting out of a military and naval expedition from the United States to Ireland. In his retrospective narrative, O'Mahony wrote that:

As soon as the latter could be made ready for sea, I had made up my mind to resign the Head Centreship and join it as a volunteer. I rejoiced at the near prospect of being able to throw off an official mantle, which had so long clung to me – burning into my soul and poisoning my existence.¹²⁷

O'Mahony's statement is an accurate reflection of how he felt at the time. The conspiracy against O'Mahony in the Fenian Brotherhood in 1865, combined with the constant pressure from Stephens in Ireland and the 'men of action' in America, undoubtedly resulted in his being under enormous mental strain. O'Mahony's statement is also consistent with his reluctance to take overall leadership of the insurgents prior to the insurrection of 1848. Then and now, he wished to act as a 'volunteer' in an Irish revolutionary army. However, it is highly unlikely that the rank and file of any Irish revolutionary organization would permit O'Mahony to refuse, let alone resign, the leadership. No other Irish leader proved as capable as

¹²⁶ John O'Mahony to Francis Mandeville, 4 Dec. 1866 (N.L.I., MS 5018).

¹²⁷ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 8 Feb. 1868.

O'Mahony in holding together the disparate elements of the revolutionary movement in Ireland or in the United States.

FENIANISM IN THE BRITISH ARMY

In the *Irish People* (New York), of 8 February 1868, O'Mahony recalled that:

There was, according to my judgement, in all the evidence received from home but one item that could justify an insurrection just then, to wit: the large portion of the English army of occupation that had sworn fealty to the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood.... If any considerable number of this army could be got to join the insurgents at their first rising out, so as to form a nucleus of military organization, the effect would be contagious; it would paralyse the power of the British Empire. This was but a chance, and I would trust to it, if I had nothing else left.¹²⁸

An uprising in Ireland at the end of 1865 or the opening weeks of 1866 would have found the I.R.B. in a strong military position mainly as a result of Fenian infiltration of the British garrisons. The most dangerous achievement (if proper use had been made of it) was the swearing in of large numbers of Irish soldiers serving in the British army and militia.¹²⁹

Canvassing of Irishmen serving in the British army in Ireland had been initiated in an organized fashion in late 1863, or early 1864, by Patrick ('Pagan') O'Leary – a veteran of the American/Mexican war of 1847 - who took up this project in spite of Stephens's opposition to the initiative. After 'Pagan' O'Leary's arrest in Athlone in November 1864, another Fenian organizer, William F. Roantree - who had served in the United States navy and fought in Nicaragua - took his place.¹³⁰ Roantree was arrested and was succeeded by John Devoy, who held that position from October 1865 to February 1866, when he too was arrested. Devoy had gained his military experience in the French Foreign Legion. In his published *Recollections*, Devoy

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, p. 32.

¹³⁰ Michael Kenny, *William Francis Roantree (1829-1918)*, (Dublin, 1996)

claims that during his period in charge 8,000 of the regular soldiers in British service in Ireland almost one third were enrolled as Fenians.¹³¹ These trained and disciplined soldiers from the British army, along with experienced officers from the American armies, had the very real potential to transform the I.R.B. into a formidable fighting force.

In Captain Kelly's report of his three months' investigation into the state of the I.R.B in Ireland, dated 21 June, he reported that half the militia was Fenian minded.¹³² Kelly's optimistic report was intended to remove all doubts in the minds of the Fenian Brotherhood about the readiness of the I.R.B. to take the field. It can be said with certainty that whatever prospects existed for a successful revolutionary insurrection in Ireland during the years of Fenian ascendancy (1861-65), they were at their most promising in late 1865. The I.R.B. had by then reached its greatest numerical strength and its morale had, as yet, not been seriously damaged by large-scale arrests and heavy prison sentences.¹³³ O'Mahony wrote later that:

The first products of the "Final Call" and the "Bonds" would have enabled us to commence creditably at home in any case, and have insured us, at worst, one good stand-up fight on Irish soil. It would have put our first homeward-bound expedition afloat on the high seas manned with veteran soldiers and sailors, immense numbers of whom were available by reason of the recent disbanding of a large portion of the Army and Navy of the United States. That is, if nothing occurred to mar the desired effect.¹³⁴

Events that unfolded in the American organization would prevent the sending of a sizeable 'expedition' to Ireland. According to O'Mahony, within the space of one fortnight after the issuance of the 'final call' (on 5 August), several drafts were forwarded to Ireland, amounting in all to about six thousand pounds sterling. He sent the money to addresses in Dublin provided to him by Stephens. O'Mahony was

¹³⁰ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.128; A.J. Semple, 'The Fenian infiltration of the British army in Ireland, 1864-67' (M. Litt. Thesis, T.C.D., 1971), pp. 31, 47-54 (Hereafter cited as Semple, 'The Fenian infiltration of the British army in Ireland, 1864-67').

¹³¹ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.128.

¹³² Report from Thomas O'Reilly (pseudonym for Captain Thomas J. Kelly) to John O'Mahony, 21 June 1865, (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.)

¹³³ Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, p.32.

¹³⁴ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 8 Feb. 1868.

unaware of an arrangement between Stephens and Henry O’C McCarthy by which sums exceeding one thousand pounds sterling were to be sent to an address in Paris. This circumstance led to the seizure of the six thousand pounds sterling by the authorities in the Dublin post office.¹³⁵

ARRESTS IN DUBLIN, SEPTEMBER 1865

In the early autumn of 1865, O’Donovan Rossa wrote to O’Mahony from Dublin, expressing the frustration of the I.R.B.:

We are holding together at much personal and other sacrifice on the expectation of a fight this year, and on the promise of it. There are now but three or four months time, there are no arms from America or means to buy them up to this. If instead of sending us the means to fight, they only send men to enquire into our condition, and report thereon the thing will never be done. There is no time for delays of such a nature, etc., etc. This is what is said, and I cannot help seeing matters in this light myself. I am almost certain the government will shortly take alarm. I am sure of arrest myself with many others, and it is a terrible thing to have the country unarmed. This is private for yourself. If there isn’t a fight this year, you will be held largely responsible and I fear inestimable harm will be done.¹³⁶

O’Donovan Rossa’s prediction that the authorities in Ireland would ‘shortly take alarm’ would be proved true in a few weeks. Dublin Castle knew virtually every step in the I.R.B.’s plans for insurrection, due to its efficient detective force along with its network of spies. Pierce Nagle (a former national schoolteacher at Powerstown, near Clonmel) had access to the offices of the *Irish People* (Dublin). Since March 1864, he had been giving detailed information to the authorities in return for money.¹³⁷

The increasing numbers of Irish-American Civil War veterans arriving in Ireland (distinguished by their square toed boots and felt hats) hardened the government’s determination to strike first by raiding the *Irish People* (Dublin) offices

¹³⁵ *Irish People* (New York), 1 Feb. 1868; *Irish People* (New York), 8 Feb. 1868.

¹³⁶ O’Donovan Rossa to O’Mahony, autumn of 1865, printed in Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.197.

¹³⁷ Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, pp.4, 16.

on the night of the 15 September 1865. The newspaper was suppressed, and three prominent Fenians connected with it, O'Leary, Luby and O'Donovan Rossa, were arrested. They were put on trial at a special commission, which began on 30 November, and sentenced to long terms of penal servitude.¹³⁸ Stephens managed to remain free in Dublin. From his hiding place he got a message to O'Mahony, dated 16 September 1865, in which the only thing he concentrates on is money - herein lies the whole problem:

An agent should be at once sent to Paris and placed in communication with us. To this agent all large sums of money should be made payable. Should John Mitchel be available (and an effort should be made to have him so) he is the man. This may cause some delay, but it should be short as possible. At the same time a thoroughly trustworthy man should be sent over to me, bringing with him a sum of money not much short of, but not exceeding 5000 pounds. This should be in notes, enclosed in an envelope. The bearer need not necessarily know what he is bringing. Uncertain as I am just now, as to who may be free tomorrow, I can give you no address. But a true man is sure to turn up here soon. Let him divest himself of the American as much as possible. Well, long as I am free, I answer for everything. But once you hear of my arrest, only a single course remains to you. Send no more money from the States. Get all you can, though, and with it purchase all the war material you can. Gather all the fighting men about you, and then set sail for Ireland. The heads here may be in the hands of the enemy, and much confusion may prevail; but with a Fenian force to rally them, be sure that overwhelming numbers shall be with you. But this must be done before next Christmas, after which date I would have no man risk his life or his money.¹³⁹

This damning letter alone condemns Stephens as a 'leader' because it is a prescription for maximum confusion. Stephens's letter makes no sense if he did not give the word for action. His only concern was that he must be in sole control of whatever money came from America.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.12-15.

¹³⁹ Stephens to O'Mahony, 16 Sept. 1865 (Fenian Brotherhood Collection, C.U.A.)

In a letter to O'Mahony, dated 6 October, Colonel Halpin (American representative on the Irish Military Council in Dublin) wrote that the determination to strike was as strong as ever but added that many of the Irish-American officers had spent their money and were impoverished and discouraged.¹⁴⁰ A considerable number of these men were now applying to the American Consul in Dublin to send them home with a free passage.¹⁴¹ Everything would have been solved if Stephens gave the word.

CENTRAL COUNCIL SESSION, NEW YORK SEPTEMBER 1865

On 22 September 1865, P. W. Dunne arrived in New York from Ireland. O'Mahony summoned a meeting of the central council to hear Dunne's report and to plan new moves. At this meeting O'Mahony issued an address on the matter of the 'bonds of the Irish Republic' and consulted the council on the selection of a financial agent to reside in Paris, to whom money would be sent for the I.R.B. The central council acquiesced to O'Mahony's proposal to send one thousand pounds to Dublin under the care Captain Laurence O'Brien, a Civil War veteran. John Joseph Corydon,¹⁴² a Fenian since 1862, was sent across the Atlantic one week after Captain O'Brien's departure, with six thousand five hundred pounds more. Both men fulfilled their assignments as directed. O'Mahony later recalled that 'This was the last act the central council performed in good faith either towards the "men at home", the Fenian Brotherhood or myself'.¹⁴³

It is worth noting here O'Mahony's later statement that:

The SUM-TOTAL collected in America for Fenian purposes from the winter of 1858 to the summer of 1866 was but FOUR HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS. Of this there was expended in America for organizing purposes, official salaries, rent and all other local-objects, amounting in all to about EIGHTY SEVEN THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED

¹⁴⁰ Letter from William G. Halpin to O'Mahony, 6 Oct. 1865, (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.);

¹⁴¹ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.99.

¹⁴² Corydon would be revealed as an informer in 1867: O Broin, *Fenian fever*, pp.127-9.

¹⁴³ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 8 Feb. 1868.

AND SEVENTY DOLLARS, or nineteen per cent of the total amounted collected. This includes the sums squandered by the "Senate".¹⁴⁴

The remainder of \$375,030 (81% of total) collected between 1858 and 1866 fell far short of what Stephens had demanded from the Fenian Brotherhood. The organization raised \$228,000 in 1865.¹⁴⁵ It has been estimated that about \$100,000 of this sum was sent to Ireland. However since the authorities seized much of it, Stephens may have received less than half.¹⁴⁶ The sum total of money that passed into the keeping of Killian during his period as secretary of the treasury, from 30 October 1865 to 1 January 1866, was \$147, 819 51 cents.¹⁴⁷

At the September 1865 session, Michael Scanlan, a member of the central council, was appointed 'provisional secretary of war' and a general convention of the Fenian Brotherhood was summoned, *in spite of O'Mahony's strong opposition*, to meet at Philadelphia, on Monday, 16 October 1865.¹⁴⁸ The decision of the central council to call one in Philadelphia was an indication of a serious internal division over matters of direction and procedure.

In the *Irish People* (New York), of 8 February 1868, O'Mahony recorded that:

At this time [September 1865] our Treasurer, Patrick O'Rourke, was in receipt of sums averaging SEVEN THOUSAND DOLLARS A DAY. The British authorities were striking at our Irish Brothers right and left with such fearful effect. Under such circumstances the summoning of a convention *without the signature of the Head Centre*, astounded and disheartened the Brotherhood throughout the United States. All felt that action, not DELIBERATION, was needed. A presentiment of coming evil pervaded our circles; the receipts began to fall off perceptively, and they never after averaged anything like so

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 4 July 1868. It is not clear whether or not O'Mahony included the \$40,000, spent on the Campo Bello fiasco (see chapter eight), in the \$87, 970 spent in America: D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.139.

¹⁴⁵ *Irish People* (New York), 9 June 1866; O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 2 May 1868.

¹⁴⁶ Hereward Senior, *The Fenians and Canada* (Toronto, 1979), p.78.

¹⁴⁷ *Irish People* (New York), 9 June 1866; O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 2 May 1868.

¹⁴⁸ *Irish American* (New York), 7 Oct. 1865; O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 8 Feb. 1868.

high a figure in the legitimate and original Organization for the home movement. Three weeks were lost without recall, and this at a time when ALL OUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS DEPENDED UPON OUR PROMPTITUDE.¹⁴⁹

The means employed for raising money were special demands on the circles, mass meetings and picnics. With the growth of the Fenian Brotherhood came a substantial increase in the funds received by the central treasurer. The initiation fee was one dollar with dues of ten cents a week. A financial statement was issued monthly listing the contributions of the circles.¹⁵⁰

PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION, 16 OCTOBER 1865

On 12 or 13 October a special envoy from Dublin, Captain James Murphy (an officer of the Twentieth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers) arrived in New York with letters from Stephens. Captain Murphy had been instructed to urge the transmission of military men and supplies without delay. According to his personal testimony the organization in Ireland was still essentially intact and the recent arrests had, in fact, made the I.R.B. men more impatient than ever to commence the intended insurrection. O'Mahony was at this time forced to discontinue sending any more officers to Ireland through the intrigues of the central council.¹⁵¹

The third convention of the Fenian Brotherhood, which convened at Fenian Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 16 October 1865, was attended by 600 delegates and attested the growth of the organization since the close of the Civil War. The delegates included Civil War veterans as well as political refugees from Dublin where the authorities had struck the previous month.¹⁵² The principal demands of Stephens and the military council of the I.R.B. were read at the convention. O'Mahony later summarised these demands as follows:

¹⁴⁹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 8 Feb. 1868.

¹⁵⁰ D'Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, pp, 51, 73.

¹⁵¹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 8 Feb. 1868.

¹⁵² D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.79.

First - the immediate forwarding to Ireland of all the funds – the product of the ‘Final Call’ – that were then in the Fenian Treasury, by his own envoy, Captain Murphy, or by such other trustworthy messenger as we might select.

Second – The sending home of Irish-American officers without further intermission.

Third – The issuing of the “Bonds of the Irish Republic” with all the haste possible.

Fourth - the sending of John Mitchel to Paris as “Financial Agent” of the movement, if that gentleman could be released from prison, and if he would accept the office; but if not, that some other trustworthy man should be chosen for the position without delay.

Fifth - that immediate and energetic steps should be taken towards fitting out a naval and military expedition to Ireland, so that it might reach that country either shortly before or soon after the opening of the insurrection, which it had already been decided to commence before the close of the year then current. All present at the Philadelphia convention took a solemn oath swearing to fulfil these requirements.¹⁵³

O’Mahony believed that the fulfilment of these demands was then undoubtedly within their reach. A resolution was proposed by the central councillor, P.W. Dunne, endorsing the policy of Stephens and pledging to comply with all the requirements, contained in his several letters and was passed unanimously.¹⁵⁴ Dunne’s conduct appears hypocritical as shall be seen.

The Philadelphia convention was a stormy one. It became evident to O’Mahony early on in the proceedings that the convention was about to be packed by a group of forty or fifty supporters of the central councillors, Scanlan and Dunne.¹⁵⁵ The central council had decided on a drastic revision of the constitution in order to shackle the authority of the head centre. The most important transactions were the abolition of the title of head centre and the replacement of the central council by a ‘senate’ with their own ‘president’. In effect the ‘senate’ was the old central council

¹⁵³ O’Mahony, ‘Fenianism’ in *Irish People* (New York), 22 Feb. 1868.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 15 Feb. 1868.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

increased in size from ten to fifteen members.¹⁵⁶ A ‘house of representatives’, whose powers were to be co-equal with those of the senate,’ was also instituted at the convention. O’Mahony believed that this was a premeditated fraud by the ‘senators’.¹⁵⁷

Because the intriguers could not get their own way by the United States system they confused matters by having a distorted version of that system with their own ‘president’. Roberts was appointed to the position of ‘president’ of the ‘senate,’ which was the equivalent of ‘vice-president’ of the Fenian Brotherhood. The Vice President of the United States (as the chairman of the Senate) always supports the wishes of the President and looks after his interests in the Senate. Instead of supporting his president, Roberts worked against him in an attempt to undermine his authority. This clearly shows the pretence of the Fenian ‘senate’ being modelled on the United States Senate.

O’Mahony was unanimously elected to the position of President, but the extent of his administrative powers was extremely limited. He could summon the senate and elect his cabinet but he could make no appropriations of money. According to the Philadelphia constitution, the Fenian ‘senate’ could at all times overrule the President of the Fenian Brotherhood by a ‘two-third vote’ of its members.¹⁵⁸ With the benefit of hindsight, O’Mahony concluded that:

Better were it for me had I refused the nomination then and there and been the first to commence that “Secession”, which treason had really rendered inevitable in any case. But the universal cry for harmony, the thought of our brothers at home and the hope that the Senators would keep the sacred vow of the Congress, effectually prevented me from yielding to my instincts and consulting for my personal interests on the occasion.¹⁵⁹

These were the reasons for O’Mahony’s acceptance of the position of President at that time. The ‘sacred vow,’ mentioned by O’Mahony above, was the oath taken by all present at the Philadelphia convention to fulfill the demands of Stephens and the

¹⁵⁶ *The Fenian progress: a vision, also the constitution of the Fenian Brotherhood* (New York), pp.70-91, quoted in D’Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.79-80 (Hereafter cited as *The Fenian progress*)

¹⁵⁷ O’Mahony, ‘Fenianism’ in *Irish People* (New York), 22 Feb. 1868.

¹⁵⁸ *The Fenian progress*, pp.79-80; O’Mahony, ‘Fenianism’ in *Irish People* (New York), 22 Feb. 1868.

¹⁵⁹ O’Mahony, ‘Fenianism’ in *Irish People* (New York), 22 Feb. 1868.

I.R.B. military council. Stephens's envoy, Captain James Murphy, was waiting for O'Mahony's acceptance of office in order to deliver the seventy thousand dollars then in the treasury's hands to the I.R.B. O'Mahony realised that any protracted opposition of his would be looked upon as an attempt to renew the quarrel with which the session had opened, and also to restore his 'drag-chain policy'.¹⁶⁰ In his retrospective narrative, O'Mahony wrote that:

The chief design of the instrument which had been introduced on the present occasion [Philadelphia convention] was obviously TO DEPRIVE THE CHIEF OF THE EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT OF ALL POWER, WHILE LEAVING HIM SUBJECT TO THE ENTIRE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ACTS OF A CERTAIN BODY CALLED THE SENATE, IN WHICH WAS VESTED THE SUPREME AUTHORITY AND OVER WHOSE PROCEEDINGS HE HAD SCARCELY ANY CONTROL.¹⁶¹

The 'senate' made these constitutional changes because it was necessary for their agenda to do so. In summary the revision of the constitution left O'Mahony with shorn powers and a hostile senate with which to contend. In such a case, in normal circumstances, resignation would be the only option: but still unaware of the agenda O'Mahony continued to struggle for unity of purpose and action. In the *Irish People* (New York), of 22 February 1868, O'Mahony wrote that:

By this time the greater part of the experienced officers who had been long and intimately conversant with the workings of the Fenian Brotherhood were in Ireland. Moreover, Generals Corcoran and [Michael D.] Smyth, as well as Colonel Mathew Murphy and others, who had been my chief support and my great hope in military matters, were, unfortunately dead. Michael Doheny and Fr. Edward [Edmund?] O'Flaherty, who were for a long time towers of strength in sustaining me in the political management of the Brotherhood, were dead also. Hundreds of the brave and devoted men who had been my staunch associates in founding the Brotherhood were lying in their graves on the red battlefields of the Republic. It was the vacancy caused by the loss of

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

these men that had made room for the small political intriguers who were at this time plotting my destruction; but none of them had, as yet, acquired sufficient prestige in Irish affairs to step into my place. General Sweeny soon became the stalking horse on whose back my enemies rode into power.¹⁶²

Michael Doheny's death, on 1 April 1862, had removed a co-founder and early leading spirit of the Fenian Brotherhood in its early years. It was through Fr O'Flaherty's efforts that Indiana, up to his death in August 1863, was known as the banner state of Fenianism. General Michael Corcoran and Colonel Mathew Murphy (both of the United States army) had been elected members of the central council at the Chicago convention but their role therein was cut short by their untimely deaths. Murphy was killed in action in 1863 and Corcoran died from a fall from his horse on 22 December that same year.¹⁶³

APPOINTMENT OF 'CABINET'

The Fenian convention of Philadelphia had been in session for some days when Thomas William Sweeny, born at Dunmanway, County Cork, made his first appearance in Fenian affairs. Sweeny had a long and distinguished career in the United States army. In 1846 he became second lieutenant of the New York volunteers in the Mexican War (1846), in which he lost his right arm and became popularly known as the 'hero of the armless sleeve'. He also saw service in the Indian wars and in the Civil War. On 20 May 1861, Sweeny was commissioned brigadier-general of the Missouri Volunteers and was honourably discharged from the volunteer's service in August 1865.¹⁶⁴ In his retrospective narrative O'Mahony wrote that:

Immediately after the adjournment of the Philadelphia Congress, the new-made "Senators" transferred the scene of their labours to the city of New York. Here they declared themselves in "Executive Session," a thing which covered, as far as I could judge from its results, the transaction of some

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp. 23, 61.

species of official business, which was to be concealed both from the Brotherhood at large and from me, who had been recently elected its responsible head.... In my anxiety to procure immediate aid for the "Men at Home" I had to submit to this outrageous imposition also. An open rupture with the Senate at that time, when the fighting appeared on the point of commencing in Ireland, seemed to me to be equivalent to the utter destruction of the whole movement.¹⁶⁵

This was O'Mahony's subsequent justification for not openly condemning the clique of 'senators' (as he had done in the case of the Emigrant Aid Society in 1855) at this time. O'Mahony was now officially notified by the 'senate' that he could make his nominations for his cabinet¹⁶⁶ and recalled later that:

At the recommendation of several parties whose patriotism and judgement I had no reason to distrust I unfortunately named General W. Sweeny "Secretary of War". Though he had come on from Philadelphia in the train of the new "Senators" I too hastily believed that he could not have associated so long with the officers of the regular army of the United States without having the sentiments of a gentleman and a soldier. He had, moreover, participated in the "vow" of the late Congress. He was well liked by the organization at large. He was at once accepted and duly appointed by the "Senate"¹⁶⁷

O'Mahony would soon regret having made General Sweeny's nomination. The latter's support would prove to be of considerable psychological and military advantage, not to O'Mahony, but to the ambitious William R. Roberts. Fifty thousand dollars were appropriated to Sweeny at the Philadelphia convention (after he was made secretary of war) for the purchase of arms. This sum was not demanded immediately. A sum of five thousand dollars was paid at once to him for the fitting out and equipping of his military staff. Sweeny replaced Lieutenant Colonel Patrick J. Downing who had previously been in sole charge of the military department.

¹⁶⁴ Entry for 'Thomas W. Sweeny' in *Dictionary of American biography XVIII* (1936), pp.242-3.

¹⁶⁵ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 29 Feb. 1868.

¹⁶⁶ The secretaries of civil affairs, of the treasury, of war and of naval affairs were supposed to constitute the cabinet.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Downing, one of the Phoenix prisoners of Skibbereen in 1858, was one of the earliest and most active of the Fenians. He had returned to New York as an envoy of the I.R.B. in 1860 and served as Lieutenant Colonel of the 42nd York Volunteers in the American Civil War.¹⁶⁸

O'Mahony had some difficulty to nominate 'senator' Bernard Doran Killian (an able lawyer who had been active in Fenian circles in St Louis since 1860) for secretary of the treasury.¹⁶⁹ Several days were spent before O'Mahony could get Killian appointed and then only on the condition of his resigning his position as 'senator,' to which he had been elected at the convention. O'Mahony was required to nominate Edward L. Carey, of New York City, an adherent of Roberts, to the vacancy thus made. 'Senator' Patrick O'Rourke, of New York City, retained his position as treasurer, no successor to him having been appointed. Captain W.F. Meehan, of the Irish Brigade, retained the office of assistant treasurer. Six thousand dollars were paid immediately to Killian, secretary of the treasury, for fitting out and furnishing the treasury department.¹⁷⁰

Patrick A. Collins, of Boston, was appointed as bond agent whose functions were to superintend the issue of the bonds and keep an exact account thereof. On the recommendation of some members of the 'senate', O'Mahony, for harmony's sake, named Patrick Keenan, of New York, as 'agent of the Irish Republic' (who had for his sole duty the signing of the bonds) subject to the approval of Stephens.¹⁷¹ The right to appoint the agent of the Irish Republic was vested in Stephens and required the approval of the 'senate'.¹⁷²

O'Mahony's nominations for secretary of civil affairs and for the position of treasurer were rejected by the 'senate'. It was an abuse of the powers given to the 'senators' by the delegates at the Philadelphia convention, not to ratify O'Mahony's nominees. Their actions were inconsistent with the American system, which they modelled themselves on. Of O'Mahony's former staff, Michael J. Heffernan (resident in New York) was the only officer whose nomination was accepted; he was reappointed corresponding secretary. The secretariat of civil affairs remained vacant

¹⁶⁸ Roster of military officers of the Fenian Brotherhood in New York, 1856-65 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.); D'Arcy, *Fenian Movement*, p.124.

¹⁶⁹ This officer had the privilege of appointing his own staff subject to the approval of the President of the Fenian Brotherhood.

¹⁷⁰ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 22 and 29 Feb. 1868.

¹⁷¹ This could only have been done with Stephens's acquiescence.

¹⁷² O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 22 Feb., 7 and 14 Mar. 1868.

after the Philadelphia convention; O'Mahony placed Colonel Patrick J. Downing (former secretary of war) provisionally at its head, under his own immediate supervision.¹⁷³

PART 2: FENIAN HIGH POINT, NOVEMBER 1865

John Mitchel held himself aloof from the Fenians, largely due to the negative impression made on him by Stephens. Nevertheless, Mitchel was prepared to involve himself in revolutionary activity whenever prospects seemed realistic to him. When the Fenians began to look like a genuine threat to British power in the mid-1860s, Mitchel, at the request of O'Mahony, agreed to act as financial agent for the Fenian Brotherhood in Paris, from where he could supervise the disbursement of money to the I.R.B. This arrangement lasted from November 1865 until June 1866.¹⁷⁴

Mitchel had supported the Confederacy during the Civil War through ambulance work, writing and sacrificing two of his three sons to the Confederate cause. Mitchel's reiteration of his support for the Confederacy, in the *Daily News* (New York), resulted in his arrest, on 14 June 1865, and subsequent imprisonment at Fortress Monroe by the victorious Yankees.¹⁷⁵ On Wednesday 10 October 1865, Bernard Doran Killian approached O'Mahony with a suggestion that he (Killian) be sent to Washington to seek the release of Mitchel. Killian had already made some tentative steps in this direction. On Friday 12 October Killian arrived in Washington, as O'Mahony's official agent. The following day Killian obtained an interview with President Andrew Johnson and the Secretary of State, William H. Seward (well known for his pro-Irish sympathies¹⁷⁶), and again, on Thursday 18 October, when he obtained an official assurance that Mitchel would be released.¹⁷⁷ This clearly indicates the goodwill of the United States government towards the Fenians at this

¹⁷³ Ibid., 22 Feb. 1868.

¹⁷⁴ William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*, 2 vols. (London, 1883), vol. ii, pp. 215-17. 227-44 (Hereafter cited as Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*)

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations during reconstruction* (Ithaca, 1969), p.44, 125 (Hereafter cited as Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations*)

¹⁷⁷ Killian's letters to O'Mahony written from Washington on the progress of his interviews with President Johnson, dated 14 and 20 Oct. 1865, printed in *Irish People* (New York) 16, 23 Jan. 1869; See also O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 8 and 15 Feb. 1868.

time and their influence with that administration. During the Civil War they had allowed Fenian agents to travel unimpeded among the Union armies.¹⁷⁸

Killian next proceeded to Philadelphia, where the third convention of the Fenian Brotherhood was in session, and acquainted O'Mahony that the unconditional liberation of Mitchel had been officially promised by the United States administration. The rest was a mere formality. Killian moved the motion that a deputation of three be appointed by the convention to visit President Johnson and tender him the thanks of the Fenians. 'Senators' William R. Roberts (resident in New York) and Clare born Stephen J. Meany¹⁷⁹ (resident in Toledo, Ohio) were selected to accompany Killian for this task. Both Killian and Meany were strong supporters of O'Mahony. The American government formally promised this Fenian committee that Mitchel would be released some days after the adjournment of the convention at Philadelphia in order that he might act as their financial agent in Paris.¹⁸⁰

O'Mahony now lost no time in making an official demand for the funds then in the possession of the acting treasurer, Patrick O'Rourke, for the purpose of forwarding them to Stephens by Captain James Murphy, in compliance with the unanimous vote of the Philadelphia convention. The 'senate' informed O'Mahony that the funds in question would not be forwarded to Ireland until Mitchel should be ready to take charge of their safe transmission to Stephens. Mitchel was still in prison at this time, and it was not at all certain that he would accept the mission of financial agent in Paris for the Fenians. Notwithstanding this disappointment Captain James Murphy sailed from New York with high hopes. According to O'Mahony's account, the result of Captain Murphy's report to the I.R.B. was that Stephens and his military council fixed the time of the projected uprising for the last week of December 1865.¹⁸¹ A letter from Millen to Stephens (in mid-November) corroborates the fact that a decision had been made to stage the rising for this time.¹⁸²

On 30 October Mitchel was released from Union confinement at Fortress Monroe as President Johnson had promised. The Fenian Brotherhood had been able

¹⁷⁸ Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, p.30.

¹⁷⁹ Meany, a journalist and veteran of 1848, had been a sub-editor of the *Tribune* (Dublin), of which John Savage and Dr Thomas Antisell were joint-proprietors. In the early 1860s he went to the United States and settled in Toledo, Ohio. Here he joined the Fenian Brotherhood and represented the Toledo 'circle' at the Philadelphia convention in 1865. See Joe Power, 'Stephen Joseph Meany' in *Dal gCais: the Journal of Clare*, pp.39-48; Michael Doheny, *The Felon's track* (Dublin, 1849), p.141.

¹⁸⁰ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 8 and 15 Feb. 1868.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 29 Feb. 1868.

¹⁸² Referred to in Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, p.24.

to bring to bear their considerable influence with the American administration to ensure the granting of this request. Mitchel returned to New York after a few days with his family at Richmond and presented himself at Fenian headquarters at 22 Duane Street; joined the Fenian Brotherhood and agreed to go to Paris and manage the safe conveyance to Ireland of funds sent to him from America.¹⁸³ O'Mahony was now enabled to secure sixty thousand dollars from the acting treasurer Patrick O'Rourke. This money, voted to Stephens by the Philadelphia convention, should have been forwarded to Ireland a fortnight sooner with Captain Murphy.¹⁸⁴

On 10 November (less than a fortnight after his release from Fortress Monroe) Mitchel sailed from New York to France on board of one of the French line of steamships for Brest and Havre.¹⁸⁵ The manner in which he was to act under certain contingencies is explained in O'Mahony's letter, dated 10 November 1865, sent or given to him, when about to proceed to France. In this letter Mitchel was instructed that:

Your diplomatic duties with the French or other European governments are left to your own judgement. You have in this respect a *carte blanche*. I know that you will let no opportunity be lost in advancing the interests of Ireland and injuring those of her tyrant. The practicability of our invasion of Ireland from America must claim your most anxious attention. Reliable information must be sought by you and conveyed to me of the amount of land and marine force of our enemies available for the defence of their domination of Ireland. The possibility of procuring any quantity of arms and munitions of war in France previous or during our Irish insurrection is a thing most useful to be well informed on. Leonard can find out parties who may be able to give you information on this subject.¹⁸⁶

The Leonard referred to O'Mahony above was most certainly J.P. Leonard who had gained the friendship of O'Mahony during his years in Paris.

THE FENIANS AND CANADA: ACKNOWLEDGED *FAIT ACCOMPLI*

¹⁸³ Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel* vol.ii, pp. 225-26; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.82.

¹⁸⁴ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 29 Feb. 1868.

¹⁸⁵ Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel* vol.ii, p. 229

The idea of annexing British Canada was popular in the United States at this time particularly among military men. Senator Zachariah Chandler of Michigan had worked out a plan for an invasion of Canada, which was backed by thirty leading Senators.¹⁸⁷ Public opinion in the United States had not forgotten British support for the South during the Civil War and could be expected to show sympathy.¹⁸⁸ In that same letter of instruction to Mitchel (quoted on the previous page), dated 10 November 1865, O'Mahony wrote that:

I consider a revolutionary organization in Ireland to be absolutely essential to her liberation. It is the first grand requisite of success. Without it even an American or a French war might fail to free her. With a strong home organization even our contemplated raid upon Canada, followed up by the landing of a few thousand filibusters with arms, ammunition etc., might effect all that we desire. To keep up the home organization must then be our chiefest and greatest care. The supplies of money for that purpose should be ample and unfailling even though some of our remittances should run the risk of going astray. The Canadian raid I look upon as a mere diversion, as far as regards our present action. Unless it drag the United States into a war with England it can only end in defeat to those that engage in it. But it is worth trying in the hope that it may lead to such a war.¹⁸⁹

That is O'Mahony reluctantly accepted the projected invasion of Canada for a time, only if it led to war between the United States and Britain.

The Philadelphia convention, of October 1865, exposed what may well have been the fault line in the Fenian Brotherhood: the shift of a section of the Fenian Brotherhood's attention from Ireland to Canada. It was at this convention that the idea of a Fenian invasion of Canada was first introduced. This would have serious implications for the unity of the Fenian Brotherhood as it provided the 'men of action'

¹⁸⁶ O'Mahony to Mitchel, 10 Nov. 1865, printed in Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.201-3.

¹⁸⁷ Ó Lúing, *Fremantle mission*, p.11; Brendan Ó Cathaoir, 'American Fenianism and Canada, 1865-1871' in *Irish Sword* Vol.8 (1967-1968), p.78.

¹⁸⁸ Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations*, pp.40-1.

¹⁸⁹ O'Mahony to Mitchel, 10 Nov. 1865, printed in Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.201-3.

with grounds for a shift of strategy - making an invasion of Canada the priority. The sequence of events leading up to this appears as follows.

On 12 October 1865, Killian had (as explained earlier) travelled to Washington to negotiate for the release of Mitchel. O'Mahony probably appointed Killian as his emissary for contact with the United States administration, through Seward, in order to bring the United States Senate on board and to save the American government from any potential embarrassment. In the *Irish People* (New York), of 15 February 1868, O'Mahony wrote that during his meetings with the United States administration:

Killian had sounded both these gentlemen with respect to "the probable action of the Government of the United States in case a Fenian army were to seize upon and hold some portion of the British territory lying north of the Maine frontier, *simultaneously with the expected uprising of the Irish people on their native soil*, with a view, in the first instance, to the proclamation of an Irish Republic, and, in the second, to the making of the river St. Lawrence the northern frontier line of the United States."¹⁹⁰

After a confidential discussion of the case laid before them, President Johnson and Seward gave Killian to understand that if Canada were successfully invaded 'THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS COUNTRY WOULD, IN SUCH A CONTINGENCY, ACKNOWLEDGE ACCOMPLISHED FACTS'.¹⁹¹ In other words the American administration led Killian to believe that the United States administration would not condemn, and would view with interest, a Fenian invasion of British Canada.

When Killian returned to Washington in late October (accompanied by Meany and Roberts), to thank President Johnson for the release of Mitchel, the proposed seizure of British territory north of the Maine frontier was brought up again by the Fenian delegation. According to O'Mahony, full power had been delegated to this deputation of three to make with the American authorities whatever arrangements they might deem conducive to the success of the Fenian movement. Both Johnson and Seward repeated the answer to them, which they had previously given to Killian

¹⁹⁰ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 15 Feb. 1868.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

alone 'ACCOMPLISHED FACTS WOULD BE ACKNOWLEDGED BY THEM'.¹⁹² The Fenian delegation was led to believe that the American government would not interfere with the Fenians if they chose to invade Canada. In his retrospective narrative written in 1868, O'Mahony wrote that:

It [Killian's mission] was a virtual and most significant acknowledgement by the regular Government of the most powerful country in the world of the Fenian Brotherhood as an ESTABLISHED POLITICAL ORGANIZATION, and consequently, from its actual position, a MOTIVE POWER among the ruling nations of the earth.... The whole of the transactions clearly pointed to an approaching war between America and Britain – a war to be brought about by Fenian pressure here and in Europe. No man, with the slightest pretension to a knowledge of international diplomacy, can explain this extraordinary and, all circumstances considered, unprecedented action on the part of the heads of the United States government towards the Fenian Congress at that time on any other supposition. It is true that Messrs. Johnson and Seward soon after changed their tone in our regard. But this was not until after the "Secession"¹⁹³ of the "Senate" and the consequent disruption of the Fenian organization.¹⁹⁴

The sympathy that the United States administration were now showing towards the Fenians must have been irresistible for O'Mahony particularly when one considers that similar overtures made by him in the past towards Russia and France had not progressed to this level. Nobody else, before O'Mahony, had ever got such strong support from the United States administration. Perhaps the best example of this is the immediate and unconditional release of Mitchel from prison in order to assist the Fenian Brotherhood. Killian's negotiations were ongoing with the United States administration during the remainder of 1865.¹⁹⁵

O'Mahony was greatly encouraged by the goodwill of the administration in Washington. In speaking of the hopes and prospects of the Fenians, he wrote later that 'The American government had practically acknowledged our organization as an

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ See chapter eight for account of the Fenian 'secession'.

¹⁹⁴ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 15 Feb. 1868.

established political power and had all but detailed an officer of its regular army to command our forces'.¹⁹⁶ General Sweeny (a commissioned officer of the army of the United States) had his leave of absence extended indefinitely, though informally, to enable him to assume the direction of the Fenian War Department.¹⁹⁷

The Fenian Brotherhood under O'Mahony's leadership was a very significant factor in Anglo-American relations in the years during and immediately following the American Civil War. Relations between the United States and Britain were so strained during and for a few years after the Civil War. An Anglo-American war was a distinct possibility, something that would have completely changed the fortunes of the Fenians. In the *Irish People* (New York), of 7 March 1868, O'Mahony acknowledges the fluid political situation that existed at this time in Anglo-American relations:

There can be only one explanation of the conduct of the American authorities during this period. They were not averse to war with Great Britain in her then crippled condition, and they expected that the Fenians would have commenced it. But whatever were the real feelings of the members of the American government, the Fenians might have precipitated them into an English war before they knew where they were.¹⁹⁸

CONCLUSION

The Fenians negotiated with the United States administration in the final months of 1865, and were led to believe that once hostilities with Britain had commenced, they would have the support, open or otherwise, of the American government. This achievement – the direct interest of a major power in Irish independence – was O'Mahony's ultimate aim from the first day of his exile and may be considered the high point of Fenianism. Everything that O'Mahony had worked for was now coming together although it was dependent on Stephens giving the word in Ireland. O'Mahony later claimed that at this time:

¹⁹⁵ For further details see D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.85.

¹⁹⁶ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 28 Mar. 1868.

¹⁹⁷ 'Thomas W. Sweeny' in *Dictionary of American biography XVI II* (1936), pp. 242-3; O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 28 Mar. 1868.

¹⁹⁸ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 7 Mar. 1868.

We [the Fenian Brotherhood] could command the services of almost any amount of competent naval and military men. It seemed impossible to prevent the immediate uprising of our brothers in Ireland. In New York, Boston and Philadelphia we had offers from generous American shipowners, promising to fit out privateers for our cause as soon as we could raise the flag of our country over an Irish army capable of defending it even for a short time. We had elevated our National character to a far higher standard in the estimation of the American nation than it had ever attained before.¹⁹⁹

O'Mahony was the first person to unite the Irish nation in the United States as an effective auxiliary to the struggle for Irish independence. It was his harnessing of the strength of the Irish-American community that gave the Fenian movement its formidable character.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 11 Apr. 1868.

CHAPTER 8: FENIAN BROTHERHOOD SPLIT 1866

BACKGROUND: CAUSES OF DISUNION

From as early as 1863, friction had existed between O'Mahony and members of the central council, some of whom later constituted the 'senate'. Michael Scanlan, Henry O'Clarence McCarthy, both of Chicago, Illinois, and P.W. Dunne, of Preoria, Illinois, had been the leading figures in this opposition. The root of the divisions lay in the growing dissatisfaction with what was perceived, by these self-styled 'men of action,' as O'Mahony's dictatorial and over-cautious direction of the Fenian Brotherhood. Stephens was largely responsible for these difficulties by his own complaints against O'Mahony and his encouragement of the so-called 'men of action' in bypassing the head centre's authority. As O'Mahony fought for the unity of the movement he felt that he had no choice but to let slip his control of it. In late 1865 a crisis was reached in the affairs of the Fenian Brotherhood; the friction within the leadership had spread to the entire organization.

Some years later, O'Mahony outlined how he believed an Irish revolutionary organization should be led:

It will be remembered that the entire "War Department" had been placed under the complete control of the "Secretary of War" by the Philadelphia Constitution; while the whole Executive of the Fenian Brotherhood should have been on the footing of a War Department, and such it must ever be until we can establish and defend with an army an Irish legislative department upon the soil of Ireland. Till then Fenian legislation is sheer delusion and humbug, and the strictest Martial Law is the only law that accords with reason, or that can lead to success. The Chief Officer of the Fenian Brotherhood must be a Commander-in-Chief, invested with dictatorial power. If the Fenians cannot find amongst them a man worthy of so great a trust, then let them have no Head Centre or President at all.¹

¹ 'Fenianism – an exposition' by John O'Mahony in *Irish People* (New York), 14 Mar. 1868 (Hereafter cited as O'Mahony, 'Fenianism').

Many Fenians failed to realize that any effort to organize for revolutionary activity could not be carried out by diffuse leadership, which inhibited any kind of executive action. O'Mahony emphasised that there should be no curbing of the head centre's authority to enable the organization to function effectively. This policy was not intrinsically anti-democratic and there is certainly no inconsistency in his posture. O'Mahony himself was no dictator; such people never advocate dictatorial power – they take it. As an unwavering democrat, O'Mahony's instinct was to stick to the rules constitutionally determined even when it went against his own interests. The 'democratisation' of the structure of the Fenian Brotherhood, which O'Mahony willingly acceded to, allowed the usurpation of his office to occur. There is certainly a tragic element in the fact that one who always obeys the democratic rules is undermined. In fact, O'Mahony made himself available for deposition by the 'senate' who would finally force his hand.

Although the agenda of the 'senate' only revealed itself gradually, a crisis had already been in incubation waiting to unfold. The erosion of the executive power of the office of head centre, begun at the Cincinnati convention of January 1865, was completed at the Philadelphia convention of November 1865.

STEPHENS'S ARREST IN DUBLIN, 11 NOVEMBER

Stephens remained free in Dublin for two months after the September *Irish People* arrests. On 11 November 1865, the police finally arrested him along with Charles J. Kickham, Hugh F. Brophy and Edward Duffy, who were staying at his hideout in Fairfield House, Sandymount, Dublin. At once the military council of the I.R.B., still at large in Dublin, met to deal with the emergency and to fill the leadership vacuum that had thus been created. Present at the meeting were William G. Halpin, Michael Kirwin, Denis F. Burke (all three of whom held commissions in the United States army with the rank of colonel) Captain Thomas J. Kelly and Francis Frederick Millen. At this meeting Millen was appointed 'President of the Irish Military Council'.²

Stephens was rescued from prison on the night of 23 November. Two members of the I.R.B. in the prison service, John F. Breslin and Daniel Byrne,

escorted him to an outer wall, where Captain Thomas J. Kelly, John Devoy and other Fenians brought him to safety.³ Stephens's dramatic rescue, though it alarmed the authorities, did not in the event prove of much practical value to the Fenian movement and was perhaps even a hindrance. At the end of 1865 the I.R.B. was still intact and confidently expected an expedition from America, despite the widening split in the Fenian Brotherhood.⁴

MOFFAT MANSION

From at least June 1864 onwards the headquarters of the Fenian Brotherhood was located at 22 Duane Street (prior to this time it had been at 5 Centre Street). At the Philadelphia Convention William Randall Roberts, 'president' of the 'senate', General Thomas William Sweeny, secretary of war, and Bernard Doran Killian, secretary of the treasury, were appointed by the 'senate' as a committee for the leasing of a suitable building as a new Fenian headquarters. They leased the Moffat Mansion, an impressive and expensive building located near Union Square, New York, at a rent of a thousand dollars per month, for eighteen months.⁵ In a defence of his own actions at this time, O'Mahony recalled later:

I refused to visit the concern before it was hired, disgusted at this lavish expenditure by the "Senators", and well knowing the uselessness of my contending against their TWO-THIRD VOTE, in addition to which, they, under their new constitution, claimed for each of the four "Chief Secretaries"⁶ THE RIGHT TO MAKE ORDERS FROM THE TREASURY FOR THEIR SENATORIAL APPROPRIATIONS WITHOUT MY SANCTION OR SIGNATURE.⁷

² Desmond Ryan, *Fenian chief; a biography of James Stephens* (Dublin, 1867) pp.206-16 (Hereafter cited as Ryan, *Fenian chief*); *Irish People* (New York), 7 and 14 Mar. 1868.

³ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.208-11; John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (New York, 1929), pp. 77-87 (hereafter cited as Devoy, *Recollections*).

⁴ Letter from William G. Halpin to O'Mahony, 14 Nov. 1865 in Joseph Denieffe, *A personal narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood* (Shannon, 1969), pp.203-5 (hereafter cited as Denieffe, *A personal narrative*); Leon Ó Broin, *Fenian fever: an Anglo-American dilemma* (London, 1971), pp. 28-29 (Hereafter cited as Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*).

⁵ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 29 Feb. 1868.

⁶ They were the secretaries of civil affairs, of the treasury, of war and of naval affairs. The secretaries of war and naval affairs were amalgamated into one for the time being.

⁷ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 29 Feb. 1868.

In using the term ‘chief secretary’ to describe the members of his cabinet, O’Mahony may be implicitly equating the oligarchy put in place by the new Fenian constitution, with what he perceived as the oligarchic system of British rule in Ireland. The new Fenian regime was not an Irish government-in-exile but an assertion of the power of the oligarchy. In his retrospective narrative, O’Mahony wrote in justification of his passive attitude in November 1865:

The Fenian “Headquarters” were removed to the “Moffat Mansion” a few days after the adjournment of the “Senate”. During the whole of the affair I remained entirely passive. A presentiment of coming evil came upon me when I first entered the new building, and I even remarked to one of my friends, who accompanied me, that *I feared it might prove the tomb of the Fenian movement*. ... I had, as I thought, no choice left to me between the ruin of the Brotherhood and absolute self-sacrifice. I preferred the latter, in the vain hope that coming events would save the movement, if not myself, from destruction and disgrace before the 2 of January, 1866, until which time the senatorial plotters could not again meet in constitutional session without a summons from me. Nor were my hopes altogether groundless. I knew that our financial affairs were well managed; the circles were fast recovering from the want of confidence caused by the shock of the late congressional call, and the money receipts were daily and rapidly on the increase.⁸

The extent to which the Fenian Brotherhood had been undermined by these recent developments did not appear at once and it continued, for the present, to extend and to gather strength. Having been elected secretary of the treasury, Bernard Doran Killian (who supported O’Mahony) was the first of the new appointees to assume the duties of his office. A glimmer of hope still remained for O’Mahony that Stephens would call for action. Stephens’s failure to do so meant that O’Mahony’s hope for ‘coming events’ did not materialize.

With the support of a majority of the ‘senate’, General Sweeny had far more power and authority than O’Mahony, though the latter had been elected the nominally

⁸ O’Mahony, ‘Fenianism’ in *Irish People* (New York), 7 Mar. 1868.

responsible head of the Fenian Brotherhood. The entire duty of planning and conducting military and naval operations, together with the purchase of arms, munitions, ships and stores was entrusted to Sweeny. O'Mahony had accepted the final stripping away of his powers at the Philadelphia convention in order to preserve unity in the movement. He had no choice but to accept the dominance of the 'senate'. In the event O'Mahony's reluctant acceptance of this situation was to disrupt the organization and derail it from its purpose.

SWEENY'S WAR PLANS UNMASKED

By the end of November 1865 all of the military officers had been placed under General Sweeny's command. By O'Mahony's orders he had been put in communication with Fenian circles throughout the United States, and was enrolling their fighting men in the 'Army of the Irish Republic'. O'Mahony believed Sweeny was preparing to fit out an armed expedition to Ireland.⁹ Events would prove he had been deceived in this.

Apart from the leadership issue, a fundamental cause of dissension now emerged in the Fenian Brotherhood. O'Mahony and the senators had differing targets: for O'Mahony the focus of action was British rule in Ireland; the senators looked to the softer (and nearer) target of British North America. This divergence provoked the first rift in the ranks of the Fenian Brotherhood. The sequence of events unfolded as follows.

During the last week of November, Sweeny presented to secretary Killian an order on the Fenian treasury for fifty thousand dollars, signed by William R. Roberts. This would appear to have been the sum appropriated (but not paid immediately) to Sweeny at the Philadelphia convention (see chapter seven). Sweeny stated that he wanted the money for the purchase of arms in Philadelphia in order to invade Canada.¹⁰ This was a direct rebuff of O'Mahony's authority. The different agenda of Sweeny, backed by the majority of the 'senate,' had now been fully unmasked, with the result that all trust had gone between O'Mahony and Sweeny. It is difficult to accept that O'Mahony did not have any prior knowledge, or at least suspicion, of the intriguers' new agenda. But up to the time of Sweeny's admission, O'Mahony

⁹ Ibid.

(whatever he may have suspected) had no hard evidence. The chief backer of Sweeny's Canadian venture was the 'president' of the 'senate', William R. Roberts.

CABINET COUNCIL MEETING – 26 NOVEMBER 1865

On being informed by Killian of General Sweeny's order on the Fenian treasury, O'Mahony summoned Sweeny along with Killian and Colonel Patrick J. Downing (provisional secretary of civil affairs) to meet him in cabinet council, to consider the situation. At this meeting, on 26 November, O'Mahony read out a letter that he had just received from Stephens, drawing Sweeny's special attention to it. The letter notified O'Mahony that the military council of the I.R.B., with Stephens's approval, had fixed upon the last week of December for the projected rising.¹¹ According to O'Mahony, Sweeny expressed utter disbelief that the I.R.B. was prepared for insurrection and his conviction that it would fail, adding that he was prepared to go to Ireland at once for the purpose of preventing it.¹² This was directly at odds with Stephens's request.

Knowing he had the backing of the majority in the 'senate', and hell-bent on the Canadian adventure, Sweeny insisted that all the resources of the Fenian treasury should be placed at his disposal for the purpose of buying arms and fitting out a military force for an invasion of Canada. This was, in effect, an abandonment of the I.R.B. as well as a tacit admission by a section of the Fenian Brotherhood that they served their own agenda rather than the needs of the home country. Finally, Sweeny stated that he did not consider himself bound to obey O'Mahony's orders as his superior officer. This must have been a blow to O'Mahony's self-esteem as well as to his overall authority within the Fenian Brotherhood. Immediately after the break up of the council meeting, O'Mahony and Killian came to an understanding that no more funds were to be dispensed to Sweeny without O'Mahony's endorsement.¹³

According to O'Mahony, the 'senate' faction immediately propagated, throughout the circles of New York, the falsehood that himself and Killian had refused to pay out money to Sweeny for the purpose of buying arms to assist the I.R.B.. The Fenian rank and file as yet knew nothing of Sweeny's admission to

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The letter does not seem to have survived.

¹² O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 7 Mar. 1868.

O'Mahony at the cabinet council meeting of 26 November.¹⁴ O'Mahony chose, for the present, not to issue a statement revealing the true intentions of the 'senators'. He was still striving to preserve the unity of the organization – but all trust between O'Mahony and the 'senate' had now been destroyed.

'BONDS OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC', 27 NOVEMBER

O'Mahony's plan for dealing with the pending showdown was to initiate no measures of actual opposition towards the malcontents, until after the crucial question of the 'bonds of the Irish Republic' had been resolved. The purpose of the bonds was to raise money on the credit of an independent Irish state. When they had been put in the market, he was determined to send their proceeds to Ireland as fast as they came into the treasury, without further consultation with the 'senate'.¹⁵ The bonds became the crunch issue between O'Mahony and the 'senate', led them to fall apart and, in effect, precipitated the actual split in the Fenian Brotherhood. The crisis was reached through the following sequence of events.

At the Philadelphia convention, of October 1865, Patrick Keenan, of New York, had been appointed 'bond agent of the Irish Republic' with power to issue the bonds. On 27 November he visited O'Mahony to tender his resignation as 'bond agent' and to request that the bonds which had been already printed with his signature attached, should not be put in circulation. Keenan appears to have acted at the behest of Roberts and his backers in the 'senate'.¹⁶ His resignation provided the technicality by which the issuance of the bonds could be stalled.

O'Mahony's high sense of honour saw no other course open to him except to sign the 'bonds of the Irish Republic' himself. He then sent his own signature to the Continental Bank Note Company, New York, to be engraved on them.¹⁷ This was the only route by which he could make the movement in Ireland the beneficiary of the bonds. O'Mahony later justified his action in claiming that 'I would have betrayed

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 21 Mar. 1868.

¹⁷ The 'Bonds of the Irish Republic' were printed in valuations from \$5 to \$500 and were redeemable at an interest rate of six percent per annum six months after the Irish Republic was formally and legally established.

my trust had I not signed them in such an emergency'.¹⁸ The consequence of Keenan's action was a delay of at least a week in the issue of the bonds. In the meantime O'Mahony sent a request to Stephens, to forward him a formal commission as 'bond agent of the Irish Republic', in order to meet any technical objections to his signing the bonds.¹⁹ It would take some weeks before O'Mahony could receive Stephens's reply.

Although O'Mahony's issuance of the bonds without authority from the 'senate' had brought about the crisis, he had no choice in the matter. His position had been the standard one faced by a chief executive against an attempt to subvert the organization from within through the instigation of a faction. O'Mahony had deliberately provoked a crisis because if he could not issue the bonds then he had no power at all. Furthermore, if O'Mahony had not taken this action, his position would have been totally compromised, as he would thereafter have been identified with the action of Roberts's clique in Canada and would have been unable to extricate himself from it.

The appointment of a new 'bond agent of the Irish Republic' could be made only with the approval of the 'senate', and the 'senate' was quick to assert its rights. Although it stood adjourned by its own record until 2 January 1866, Roberts and ten of his colleagues met in special session at 10 West Fourth Street, in New York City, on 4 December 1865. In a letter dated 5 December, Roberts's clique summoned O'Mahony to appear before them.²⁰ O'Mahony's rejoinder, on 6 December, was to brand any action of the 'senate' as that of an 'illegal assembly'.²¹ One of the first moves made by the clique of 'senators' at this session was to pass a resolution forbidding the issue of the bonds until their body should appoint a new 'bond agent of the Irish Republic' in place of Keenan.²²

O'Mahony felt that he now had no choice but to make a stand and so he threw down the gauntlet to the 'senate.' On 7 December he issued a circular to the secretary of each executive department under him telling them, on pain of suspension, to comply with no orders coming from the 'senate'.²³ O'Mahony's notification was

¹⁸ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 14 Mar. 1868.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7 and 21 Mar. 1868.

²⁰ William R. Roberts to O'Mahony, 5 Dec. 1865, printed in *Irish People* (New York), 21 Mar. 1868.

²¹ O'Mahony to William R. Roberts, 6 Dec. 1865, printed in *Irish People* (New York), 21 Mar. 1868.

²² O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 21 Mar. 1868.

²³ Circular from O'Mahony to the secretary of each executive department of the Fenian Brotherhood, 7 Dec. 1865, printed in *Irish People* (New York), 21 Mar. 1868.

obeyed by all with the one exception of General Sweeny. As a consequence, O'Mahony gave instructions to have Sweeny and his staff barred from the Fenian headquarters at the Moffatt Mansion.²⁴ In a circular to the Fenian Brotherhood, dated 8 December, O'Mahony declared that the meeting of the 'senate' (now in session) was 'precipitate, unconstitutional and of no force or validity.'²⁵

The Philadelphia constitution stipulated that the President of the Fenian Brotherhood alone had the authority to summon either a meeting of the 'senate' or a general convention of the Fenian Brotherhood (see chapter seven). On 8 December O'Mahony issued, throughout the circles of the Fenian Brotherhood, his official summons for a general convention, to meet in New York City on 2 January 1866 (the same date on which the 'senate' had been due to meet again), where he intended to refer all the points in dispute between himself and the 'senators' for adjudication to this supreme body. It was O'Mahony's 'earnest desire to arrange all our internecine difficulties within the organization, without having recourse to the newspaper press'.²⁶ He had some bitter experiences of engaging in public controversy in the 1850s, firstly with John McClenahan, editor of the *Citizen* (see chapter five), and later with P.J. Meehan, editor of the *Irish American* (see chapter six). In his retrospective narrative, O'Mahony recalled:

I decided upon holding no further communication with them [the intriguers in the 'senate'], collectively or individually, till the appointed time for the adjourned meeting of their body, when I hoped to be able to counteract their destructive schemes constitutionally by a contemporaneous convocation of the other "House," that is, the "House of Representatives," whose powers were co-equal with those of the "Senate".²⁷

The 'senate' issued a proclamation declaring O'Mahony's call unconstitutional and forbidding the Fenian Brotherhood to send any delegates to the New York convention. This document was immediately forwarded to all the circles of the Fenian Brotherhood. In the event a majority of the circles responded positively to

²⁴ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 21 Mar. 1868.

²⁵ Circular from O'Mahony to the Fenian Brotherhood of America, 8 Dec. 1865, printed in *Irish People* (New York), 28 Mar. 1868.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 21 Mar. 1868.

O'Mahony's summons.²⁸ On 12 December O'Mahony, for the first time, publicly denounced the machinations of Roberts's clique. He did this at a gathering of the New York based Fenians in their hall at 814 Broadway, the meeting place for the military council of the Fenian Brotherhood.²⁹ In a letter to his nephew, Francis Mandeville, dated 4 December 1866, O'Mahony expressed his disdain for the intriguers in the Fenian 'senate', stating that 'There is not a single man of patriotic antecedents, respectable position, liberal education, or high talent in the whole gang'.³⁰ As an egalitarian democrat O'Mahony believed that it was one's ability that counted. In his judgement the 'senators' had no ability in terms of leadership and commitment.

While the preparations for the forthcoming New York convention were in progress, Roberts's clique was doing all that they could to prevent its taking place. In the New York *Daily News* of 18 December, they published an 'order' formally deposing O'Mahony and Killian from their positions in the Fenian Brotherhood.³¹ As a natural consequence of the dissensions in New York, the Fenian circles, with few exceptions, ceased to forward their financial contributions to headquarters. O'Mahony wrote later that 'During the last week in December, the receipts at the treasury department had nearly fallen off altogether, and this at a time when there was still a possibility that our brothers at home had taken the field against British rule in Ireland'.³²

By mid-December 1865, I.R.B. men began to arrive in New York from Ireland in increasing numbers and by almost every steamer.³³ This was farcical given the lack of preparations for a rising in Ireland. O'Mahony recalled later that:

Waiting for the expedition, they hung around Headquarters, and after some time, when their numbers had multiplied, they not only became a source of serious inconvenience and expense to the brotherhood, but they also afforded

²⁸ Ibid., 4 Apr. 1868.

²⁹ Ibid., 28 Mar. 1868.

³⁰ John O'Mahony to Francis Mandeville, 4 Dec. 1866 (N.L.I., MS 5018).

³¹ *Daily News* (New York), 18 Dec. 1865; O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 28 Mar. 1868.

³² O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 11 Apr. 1868.

³³ Ibid., 28 Mar. 1868.

my maligners one of the pretexts for charging me with extravagance, because, forsooth, I had supplied them with the means of subsistence.³⁴

O'Mahony had an inherited sense of responsibility for anyone that had joined the movement.

On the 15 December F.F. Millen, 'president of the Irish military council', landed in New York bringing letters from Stephens and Captain Kelly. Millen's personal instructions were to report to O'Mahony for further orders. Colonel Halpin, followed Millen on 20 December. O'Mahony at once installed him in the bureau left vacant by General Sweeny. Millen was to make immediate preparations for sending an armed expedition to Ireland, but was not invested with Sweeny's unlimited authority. Soon afterwards, by special orders from Stephens, O'Mahony was to request Millen's resignation from the expeditionary bureau.³⁵ Stephens's action may have been the precipitating factor that caused Millen to offer his services as an informer to Edward Archibald, the British Consul in New York on 10 March 1866.³⁶

STEPHENS AS 'SUPREME ARBITER'

Stephens had retrieved his aura of invincibility by escaping from the clutches of the authorities and, this caused a dramatic increase in confidence in him. The plans for immediate insurrection, which had been derailed as a result of Stephens's arrest, were now restored after his escape.³⁷ According to O'Mahony, the intriguers in the 'senate' continued to recognize Stephens as the undisputed leader of the whole movement and instructed 'paid emissaries' to disseminate the information that Roberts would resign the 'presidency' of the 'senate' to Stephens as soon as he arrived in the United States, and that he (Roberts) only held that position temporarily and in trust till then. Roberts's clique also allegedly sent an envoy (whose identity O'Mahony did not know) to Stephens in Ireland at this time.³⁸

The growth of a faction in the Fenian Brotherhood, which had been encouraged by Stephens, led to a breakdown of trust between Stephens and

³⁴ Ibid., 4 Apr. 1868.

³⁵ Ibid., 4 and 11 Apr. 1868.

³⁶ Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, pp. 47-49.

³⁷ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp. 16-18.

³⁸ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 4 Apr. 1868.

O'Mahony. This was not due to any action on O'Mahony's part. He recalled later that he had hoped for Stephens's immediate compliance to a request he sent by letter to him to come to America at once and to take absolute control of the movement.³⁹ In his retrospective account, O'Mahony wrote that:

The letter containing this invitation of mine was received by him [Stephens] previous to 29 December, and was read by him at the military council convened in Dublin at that date. In it I insisted on the fact that the Brotherhood had received a fearful blow, and that I was convinced that nothing could save it from fatal consequences but HIS PERSONAL PRESENCE IN THE UNITED STATES.... Fresh from prison, with all his *prestige* unimpaired, and appealed to by the leaders of both of the contesting parties as SUPREME ARBITER of the quarrel between them, there could have been no appeal at that time from his decision, and he might have assumed the absolute control of the two "wings" and declared from a moral vantage ground to the partisans of each, that he could make no forward movement either in Ireland or America until they became reunited in one body, perfect harmony of counsel and concert of action being restored. This would have been nothing more than taking Roberts and his "Senators" at their own words.⁴⁰

It was not unreasonable for O'Mahony to believe that Stephens had the potential to heal the divisions in the Fenian Brotherhood at this time. Some of Stephens's old allies – the so-called 'men of action' – now constituted Roberts's clique. A reconciliation would have been possible only if they gave up their designs on Canada, as Stephens would never have supported such action. However, with the acquisition of General Sweeny's military weight to bolster their schemes, the intriguers were not inclined to do so. In a detailed defence of his leadership, written with the advantage of hindsight, O'Mahony wrote:

With the spirit that pervaded the Irish citizens of the United States and their American sympathizers during and immediately after the Congress of

³⁹ This letter appear to have been preserved.

Philadelphia, they could have realized a larger amount of money and war material than had been calculated upon by the “Men at Home”, and done so within the appointed period, if the “Senators” had not wasted their time in frivolous disputes and trifled with the enthusiasm of the Brotherhood upon false pretences during several weeks.⁴¹

These ‘false pretences’ refer to the fact that Roberts’s clique were ostensibly working towards a rising in Ireland, while secretly preparing for an invasion of Canada up to the time of their exposure at the New York convention, on 2 January 1866 (as will be seen).

STEPHENS’S LETTER CONDEMNING THE ‘SENATE’

After receiving from O’Mahony the news of the disruption in New York about 22 December, Stephens promptly wrote a scorching letter condemning Roberts’s clique and their proposed movement on Canada and, with it, another letter formally appointing O’Mahony to the long disputed position of ‘representative and financial agent of the Irish Republic in the United States of America’. This gave O’Mahony power to issue the bonds. Captain W. O’Brien, of Chicago, was sent from Ireland with this important letter from Stephens. Captain O’Brien reached New York on the day after the adjournment of the New York convention in mid-January.⁴²

In his letter Stephens urged O’Mahony to take action against Roberts’s clique and advising him to ‘Cut and hack the rotten branches around you without pity’.⁴³ The monster created by Stephens was now clearly beyond his control. If Stephens had gone directly to America and assumed over-all control, as requested by O’Mahony, the breach might have been healed. Instead Stephens made a major contribution to turning the American split into a bitter personal quarrel, with the his invective against the ‘senators’. It was only after the publication of Stephens’s denunciation in the *Irish People* (New York) on 20 January 1866, and its repudiation by Roberts and his accomplices that the Fenian split became complete. The result

⁴⁰ O’Mahony, ‘Fenianism’ in *Irish People* (New York), 4 July 1868.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 16 May 1868.

⁴² Stephens to the Members of the Fenian Brotherhood, 23 Dec. 1865, in *Irish People* (New York), 20 Jan. 1866; Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp.27-8; O’Mahony, ‘Fenianism’ in *Irish People* (New York), 16 May 1868.

was that the Fenian Brotherhood was henceforth divided into two rival sections: the Irish or 'O'Mahony wing' led by O'Mahony and the Canadian or 'senate wing' dominated by Roberts. O'Mahony wrote later that:

Thenceforward, though not till then, it was well understood by the majority of the Brotherhood that the factious senators had revolted against the authority of the Chief Executive of the I. R. B. as well as against mine, and that their aims and programme of action were in direct antagonism to those of the "Men in the Gap", upon whose name and by pretending to act for whom they had gained all their influence.⁴⁴

At the very moment when the concentration of all efforts for Ireland was more necessary than ever, the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States had split into two rival factions.

I.R.B. MILITARY CONVENTION, 29 DECEMBER 1865

In his retrospective narrative, O'Mahony wrote that a possibility (aside from Stephens's immediate arrival in New York), which would have prevented the disintegration of the Fenian Brotherhood, was the beginning of a 'brave stand-up fight' in Ireland at this time:

Whether successful or unsuccessful, this would have utterly crushed the secessionist faction ere they had time to consolidate their counter organization and to systematize their policy of false pretences, lying and double-dealing. As neither of these two events took place, and as the previous cry of immediate war or dissolution was kept up at both sides of the Atlantic with as furious an intensity as if there had been no disruption at all, the Brotherhood was fated to pursue its headlong and ruinous career to the end.⁴⁵

⁴³ Stephens to O'Mahony, 23 Dec. 1865, in *Irish People* (New York), 20 Jan. 1866.

⁴⁴ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 9 May 1868.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 July 1868.

With neither an Irish-American expedition nor an Anglo-American war in prospect, the revolutionary programme, founded upon the rhetoric of 'war or dissolution in 1865,' reached a crunch point. Stephens was determined to temporise in direct violation of his oft-repeated dictum – 'war or dissolution in 1865'. He finally convened the I.R.B. military council in Dublin on 29 December. It was decided by a majority of one (Stephens probably had the casting vote), that the fight be further postponed on account of the small amount of arms and ammunition that was available. The arrests in Ireland provided Stephens with another pretext for postponement.⁴⁶ For all his bluster, Stephens failed to deliver on his hollow promises of 'immediate war' in 1865. In his retrospective account O'Mahony wrote that:

Such was the end of the policy inaugurated by Stephens of "WAR OR DISSOLUTION IN 1865." It is remarkable that it was defeated by the machinations of the very same party, in the Fenian Brotherhood, which had produced its most hot-headed and headlong supporters up to the hour when it stood most in need of their aid....They really had no valid reason that I could conceive, for so suddenly changing their opinion respecting the practicability of fighting in Ireland. On the contrary, both they and I had every reason to believe that it had become almost inevitable, even without our co-operation. As it was, Stephens experienced very great difficulty in getting it postponed and confidence in his leadership suffered considerably thereby.⁴⁷

Among the I.R.B. there was some support for a rising at the end of 1865 or in the opening days of 1866, before what was left of the American officers were arrested, and while the Fenian elements in the British army could be used to seize the Dublin barracks and hand over their military contents. This was considered preferable to a delay that would leave the initiative with the Government, and would make success dependent on a problematic expedition from the United States.⁴⁸ The decision to postpone the rising was a particular disappointment to John Devoy, who believed that

⁴⁶ Ryan, *Fenian Chief*, pp.227-28; O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 16 May 1868.

⁴⁷ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 16 May and 4 July 1868.

⁴⁸ Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, p.31.

the Fenians held a trump card in the disaffection that he and others organizers had spread among Irishmen in the British army.⁴⁹

NEW YORK CONVENTION, 2 JANUARY 1866

On 2 January 1866, the Fenians who had remained loyal to O'Mahony, and they were the majority in New York, held a convention of their 'wing' at New York City's Clinton Hall. This convention, attended by approximately 400 delegates, readopted the Chicago constitution of 1863 and made plans for war in Ireland.⁵⁰ Three former members of the 'senate', namely Stephen J. Meaney⁵¹, of Ohio, B.F. Mullen, of Tennessee, and Patrick A. Sinnott, of Massachusetts, declared their loyalty to the 'O'Mahony-wing' by attending the convention. Ten of the fifteen 'senators' eventually sided with Roberts.⁵²

The 'senate-wing,' under Roberts's leadership boycotted the New York convention and disclaimed its legitimacy. O'Mahony presented a formal impeachment to the convention against the schismatic 'senators,' embodying in it their alleged crimes against the Fenian Brotherhood. The delegates at the New York convention, by a unanimous vote, declared the 'senate' abolished. Roberts and his ten seceding colleagues were deposed from their position as 'senators' and consequently expelled from the Fenian Brotherhood. Colonel Halpin and F.F. Millen attended the convention and presented reports in writing, wherein they detailed the straits to which the I.R.B. had been put as a result of the failure of the Fenian Brotherhood to fulfil the promises made at Philadelphia - to send immediate military aid to Ireland.⁵³

The New York Fenian constitution prescribed that the chief executive of the Fenian Brotherhood should be designated by his original title, 'head centre' and that an advisory and controlling body of five, to be known as the 'central council,' should assist him. This five-man council, which had originally been instituted at the Chicago convention in November 1863, was to be elected by the general convention, in whom supreme power was vested. It would appear that the 'O'Mahony-wing' had a more

⁴⁹ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.65.

⁵⁰ W. S. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America* (Pennsylvania, 1875), p.33 (Hereafter cited as Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*); Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*, p.110.

⁵¹ As may be remembered Meaney had accompanied Killian and Roberts to Washington to meet members of the United States administration in November 1865.

⁵² *Irish People* (New York), 20 Jan. 1866.

⁵³ *Ibid.*; O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 25 Apr., 2 and 9 May 1868.

democratic structure and flavour than the 'senate-wing'.⁵⁴ O'Mahony was re-elected head centre by a unanimous vote of the assembled representatives of his Fenian constituents. The five men elected to the central council at the New York convention were the former 'senator' Patrick A. Sinnott, James J. Rogers, Patrick Corbett, James McGrath and John M. Tobin.⁵⁵

The New York convention declared for war in Ireland and not against British Canada as was now being advocated by the 'senate-wing'.⁵⁶ O'Mahony recalled later that the predominant sentiment of the delegates of the New York convention of January 1866, was a desire to ascertain and carry out the wishes and requirements of James Stephens so that:

In reality, though nominally the leader of the Fenian Brotherhood, I had no power of independent action in shaping its projects or directing its movements. I was, in fact, but the agent of James Stephens on this continent, and my sole business was to act as his Commissary General and to furnish him with war materials and men.⁵⁷

This demonstrates O'Mahony's belief that the reliance of the two leaders upon each other was crucial as well as his invariable inclination to respect the rules as determined by the constitutional procedures. By his own admission, O'Mahony's consent to the democratisation of his 'wing' of the Fenians at the New York convention, left him with no more 'power of independent action' than during the period when the oligarchy of the 'senate' held sway over the entire Fenian Brotherhood.

O'Mahony valued his name and character more than anything in the world. In the *Irish People* (New York), of 2 May 1868, he wrote that:

The address which the Congress adopted was a triumphant vindication of my personal and political character, and also a guarantee for the immediate safety and integrity of the organization; on the other hand, by raising extravagant

⁵⁴ *Irish People* (New York), 20 Jan. 1866; *Herald* (New York), 11 Jan. 1866.

⁵⁵ Tobin was an early member of the branch of the Fenian Brotherhood in Boston: *Phoenix* (New York), 30 July 1859.

⁵⁶ *Irish People* (New York), 20 Jan. 1866.

⁵⁷ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 9 May 1868.

hopes which were founded upon reports furnished before the news of the disruption in America had reached our Brothers in Ireland, it committed the organization and me to a blind-fold and head-long course of political action that was destined to be the cause of our overthrow before many months.⁵⁸

The ill-advised action at Campo Bello Island, in April 1866, would result in the near-destruction of the 'O'Mahony-wing' some months later (as will soon be seen).

One of the features of the New York convention was the presence of an armed guard of members of the Ninety-Ninth New York National Guard of which O'Mahony was honorary colonel. They were delegated to secure the secrecy of the deliberations by preventing interlopers from entering, whether British spies or uninvited adherents of the 'senate wing'.⁵⁹ Although the schismatic 'senators' failed to appear for the convention, General Sweeny presented himself and was admitted.⁶⁰ O'Mahony appears to have given orders to admit Sweeny in the hope that he could still get him on his side or at least to induce him to leave the 'senate-wing'. If O'Mahony could detach General Sweeny from the 'senate-wing' it would be defunct. O'Mahony also saw value in Sweeny that he did not see in the schismatic 'senators' and undoubtedly recognised and respected his honest straightforward manner.

According to O'Mahony's account, Sweeny complained of having been obstructed in the discharge of his duty to the Fenian Brotherhood by Killian's refusal to provide him with money for his arms scheme for which he first needed O'Mahony's approval. When cross-examined, Sweeny acknowledged that he wanted the arms in question for an invasion of Canada. Pressed still further, he stated his disbelief in the state of preparedness of the I.R.B., and in the practicability of any attempt at an uprising in Ireland, until after securing a base for military operations against Britain by the establishment of an Irish Republic on Canadian soil. After Sweeny had finished his statement, Colonel Halpin was called on to reply. He denounced Sweeny's proposal as a breach of the solemn obligations which the Fenian

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2 May 1868.

⁵⁹ William D'Arcy, *The Fenian movement in the United States, 1858-1886* (Washington, 1947), p.109. (Hereafter cited as D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*); *New York Times*, 11 Jan. 1866; *New York Herald*, 11 Jan. 1866.

⁶⁰ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 2 and 9 May 1868.

Brotherhood had contracted, not alone with the I.R.B., but with the Irish-American soldiers who had gone to fight in Ireland.⁶¹

In his retrospective narrative, O'Mahony wrote that:

It was not in the nature of things that any assemblage [the New York convention] convened by me could have repaired the almost deadly injury which had been inflicted on the whole Fenian movement, both by the "Senatorial" cabal and by the complete exposure not alone of our general revolutionary policy but of the programme of the immediate war operations then contemplated by James Stephens – an exposure which resulted necessarily from the Congressional investigation. My triumph over my enemies was as thorough as it could have been. All circumstances considered; but nothing that could have been said or done either by myself or by any party or parties then in America could have restored that general confidence of the Brotherhood at large in the honesty and ability of its leaders which had hitherto been the great bond of its union and strength.⁶²

In their public meetings during 1855 the Emigrant Aid Society had heralded the revolutionary policies of the Emmet Monument Association. Now, in 1866, a ten-day investigation by the New York convention, while vindicating O'Mahony's policy, exposed the supposedly secret plans of a revolutionary organization.⁶³

SUPPORT FOR THE TWO RIVAL FENIAN 'WINGS'

Roberts and his adherents now openly advocated the direction of all Fenian efforts in an indirect attack on British power and prestige by invading the more easily accessible territory of Canada from the United States. The 'senate-wing' could count on a good deal of American sympathy, as well as newspaper support, and an even moderately successful invasion of Canada might have brought with it serious diplomatic complications between Britain and the United States.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 4 July 1868.

⁶³ *Irish People* (New York), 20 Jan. 1866.

⁶⁴ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp. 110-14; Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, p.52.

Perhaps the most important factor in the senate-wing's favour was the support given by the editors of Irish-American newspapers to a Canadian invasion. O'Mahony recalled later:

The American newspapers, with scarcely an exception, favoured my enemies during the first days of the disruption. Their conductors knew nothing of the real merits of the points at issue, nor did they much care. It was enough for them to know that eleven men were pitted against one, and they backed what they thought the stronger force.⁶⁵

An important factor in newspaper support for the Canadian expedition was the influence in the United States of 'Manifest Destiny' - a phrase used by the New York editor, John L. O'Sullivan, in 1845 to justify United States control of the whole North American continent. The phrase was used to justify the Mexican War and several 'filibusters' (private military expeditions) in the Caribbean and Central America. Idealism was mixed up in greed in Manifest Destiny, as there was a genuine conviction that as American territory spread so would democracy.⁶⁶

The 'senate-wing' enjoyed the advantage of having the influential *Irish American* (New York) advocating their cause as one of their members, P.J. Meehan, was its editor. The *Irish American* (New York) along with James Gordon Bennett's *Herald* (New York) and Charles G. Halpine's *Citizen* (New York) looked with scepticism on the project of a filibustering expedition to Ireland.⁶⁷

The first issue of the *Irish People* (New York) appeared on 20 January 1866. It was founded and edited by a Denis O'Sullivan and recognized by O'Mahony as the organ of his 'wing' of the Fenian Brotherhood. The paper was designed to counteract the influence of Meehan's *Irish American*, which was enjoying an undisputed monopoly in the dissemination of Fenian news at this time. In an article entitled 'The Canadian Invasion' published in the *Irish People* (New York) of 20 January 1866, it was announced that:

⁶⁵ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 4 Apr. 1868.

⁶⁶ Duncan Townson, *The new penguin dictionary of modern history 1789-1945* (London, 1995), p.513.

⁶⁷ *Herald* (New York); *Citizen* (New York), 3 Feb. 1866; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.112.

Some of our political quacks would expel the Saxon from Ireland by invading the free people of Canada. We must confess this appears to us a very round about way of doing it. In our opinion the Canadians are able to take care of themselves. If they want to establish a free republic, or become annexed to the United States, there is no true Fenian but would assist them. An invasion of Canada would be treated as a filibustering expedition, not only by the Canadians themselves, but likely by the government of the United States.⁶⁸

This prediction would soon be proved true in May/June 1866 (as will be seen).

The split in the Fenian Brotherhood had been caused by the factor of personal ambition typified by Roberts⁶⁹ was the driving force against O'Mahony's authority. There was now also the crucial question of control of funds and the strategic use to which they would be put. But most of all the split resulted from the deception involved in the 'senators' nurture of the 'Canadian' war policy and the consequent evaporation of trust between O'Mahony and the 'senate'.

The idea of a Fenian invasion of Canada had first been broached by Killian with the United States administration in November 1865. Unfortunately for O'Mahony, Roberts had accompanied Killian and 'senator' Meaney (both of whom consistently supported O'Mahony) on a subsequent visit to the United States administration (see chapter seven). After this the 'senators', manipulated by Roberts, went ahead with their plans believing that they had the United States Government behind them.

In an account written over two years later, O'Mahony wrote that 'The old and tried members of the Brotherhood remained faithful to me with very few exceptions, even when outward appearances were most against me. The circles of New York City stood by me almost *en masse*'.⁷⁰ As had been the case with the Emmet Monument Association, support for the 'O'Mahony-wing' was concentrated mainly in New York, where O'Mahony lived and where his personal influence was strong. In the *Irish People* (New York), of 9 May 1868, he wrote that:

⁶⁸ *Irish People* (New York), 20 Jan. 1866.

⁶⁹ Roberts was later involved in American party-politics. His Fenian record was a useful foundation for a career in the politics of the Democratic party in New York City; in 1870 he was elected to the United States Congress, as representative of the fifth congressional district, and re-elected in 1872.

⁷⁰ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 4 Apr. 1868.

“Fighting Tom Sweeny, as they called him, was now their [the senate-wing’s] sole rallying point. His name alone saved their party from utter and immediate dissolution in the Eastern States. In the Western States a considerable portion of the organization gave in their adhesion to the disruptionists. In these localities the Circles had been long prepared for revolt by means of the secret conspiracy of the ‘Men of Action’, founded as heretofore stated, by the late H. O’C McCarthy, and manipulated since his death by “Senators” Scanlan and Dunne.⁷¹ The latter individuals, together with “Senator” Patrick Bannon, of Louisville, Kentucky, were in reality the only parties among the seceding “Senators” who had gained any considerable following or influence in the immediate localities where they resided. None of the “senators” Meehan, Roberts, O’Rourke or Carey, could command any personal weight among the Irish revolutionaries of New York. “Senator” Fitzgerald was not held in any high estimation by his Irish neighbors in Cincinnati. “Senator” Gibbons was not much prized as a man of pure and disinterested patriotism by his Irish fellow-citizens of Philadelphia, who had known him long as a veteran, and recently a rather “played-out” intriguer in the local politics of that city.⁷²

O’MAHONY’S DUTIES IN THE CRISIS

In a letter dated 27 January 1866, Mitchel, who was then in Paris disbursing the funds sent him by the Fenian Brotherhood, told O’Mahony that ‘The rupture in America has greatly injured our friends in Ireland, who were expecting, if not an armed expedition, at least large supplies of money to purchase war material.’⁷³ Experienced officers, having years of service in the American Civil War, were forthcoming in adequate numbers in 1865, but not arms, largely as a result of the split in the Fenian Brotherhood, which impeded the collection of money. It was the lack of promised arms from America that gave justification to Stephens’s repeated failure to give the lead he so bombastically promised.⁷⁴ In his retrospective account, O’Mahony wrote that:

⁷¹ The adherents of the ‘senate-wing’ in Chicago had actively promoted Stephens’s rhetoric of ‘immediate war or dissolution’.

⁷² O’Mahony, ‘Fenianism’ in *Irish People* (New York), 9 May 1868.

⁷³ Mitchel to O’Mahony, 27 Jan. 1866, Fenian Brotherhood collection (C.U.A., Washington, D.C.).

⁷⁴ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, p.217-26.

All the plans which had been based upon the policy of "Immediate war or dissolution" were practically defeated by the very fact of the "secession". Still, with the exception of that postponement of the Irish rising for a few weeks, which was determined on in Dublin by Stephens and his Military Council on the preceding 29th of December, no change was made in the previous war policy of Stephens, nor was the programme of his proposed revolutionary operations in any manner altered so as to meet the altered aspect of Fenian affairs. We were still told that the fight was to take place without delay. The pressure upon the American Brotherhood to prepare and send off an armed expedition from this country so as to reach Ireland in time for that fight was extreme. But to meet the requirements of that pressure I had an almost exhausted treasury, but few arms and no ships.⁷⁵

Furthermore, an expedition to Ireland would have to contend with the British navy. Nevertheless the *Erin's Hope* expedition in 1867 would prove that it was possible to evade the cordon of ships around Ireland with comparative ease.⁷⁶

BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S CONTAINMENT OF THE FENIAN THREAT – USE OF SPIES

A professed Fenian who made his appearance in late 1865 was Godfrey Massey (who went under the name of Patrick Condon). Massey, a native of Limerick, was a former corporal in the British army and had served in the Crimea before emigrating to America. Posing as a former lieutenant colonel in one of the Virginia regiments of the Confederate army, Massey had been appointed a central organizer of the Fenian Brotherhood in the states of Louisiana and Texas in November 1865.⁷⁷ The following year the Fenians in New Orleans checked on his supposed military record. Correspondence with former Confederate officers convinced them that Massey (going by the name of Condon) was a fraud.⁷⁸ O'Mahony's comrade from

⁷⁵ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 4 July 1868.

⁷⁶ Mabel Gregory Walker, *The Fenian movement* (Colorado, 1969), pp.143-6.

⁷⁷ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.152.

⁷⁸ Letter from "A Southern Fenian Informant" to James Stephens, 20 Oct. 1866, Fenian Brotherhood collection (C.U.A., Washington D.C.); D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.152-3.

1848, John Savage, the leading editorial writer of the *New Orleans Times* from June 1864 to March 1867, may have ordered the investigation on Massey.⁷⁹

In an open letter published in his *Irish Citizen* in February 1866, Mitchel described the divided Fenian Brotherhood to John Martin his fellow Young Irelander as ‘two sets of leaders holding wolves by the ears’.⁸⁰ In retrospective narrative, O’Mahony described the situation on the ground:

Again the mad spirit of factious rivalry, which had set in urged the partisans of both “wings”, as they were designated, to hold public meetings for the purpose of swelling their respective numbers by the enrolment of new recruits. This led to a hurried and indiscriminate reception of candidates for membership, which necessarily afforded very great facilities to any spy or secret agent of the British police who might feel disposed to get himself enrolled a Fenian “in good standing”. Then the relative merits of the conflicting war programmes of Stephens and Sweeny were freely and openly canvassed not alone in the Circles but at these public meetings. Thus the English enemy became as thoroughly cognizant not alone of the general outline of the plans of the rival leaders but of the exact manner in which it was proposed to execute them. This fact alone must have ensured an all but certain defeat for the original brotherhood had we been able to initiate that aggressive movement against England which Stephens had laid out for us.

The war-fever, too, continued to rage with greater intensity than ever, as well among the partisans of the “Seceders” as among those of the true organization. They maddened each other with taunts as who were the “men of Action” and who were not. The feeling soon grew to be general, that the “wing” that should strike the FIRST BLOW anywhere should be that which would receive universal support. No Fenian would pause to consider whether it was any longer possible to strike any successful blow at all, now that the British government must have known quite as much of both the rival war plans as the very leaders who had devised them. Such being the state of the Brotherhood, it was obviously in the interest of the British government to

⁷⁹ Entry for ‘John Savage’ in *Dictionary of American biography XVI* (1935), pp. 388-89.

⁸⁰ Quoted in William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan (ed.), *Devoy’s post bag* Vol. I, 1871-1880, (2 vols, Dublin, 1948 and 1953), p.3.

force the Fenian leaders into some aggressive movement, without allowing them time to reconsider their positions and close up the breaches in their ranks. It was not surprising, then, that the loudest shouters for immediate action should be those secret agents of the enemy, whom our disorder and demoralization had enabled to insinuate themselves into many of our Circles.⁸¹

O'Mahony had already experienced the 'mad spirit of factious rivalry' between rival groups of Irish-American nationalists during the period of the Crimean War. The bitter rivalries between the two 'wings' of Fenianism in the United States, combined with Stephens's failure to give the word in 1865, as he had repeatedly promised to do, provided British spies with a unique opportunity to infiltrate the revolutionary organizations on both sides of the Atlantic.

'RED JIM' McDERMOTT – AGENT PROVOCATEUR

Just as important as the penetration of the I.R.B. by informers was the fact that very close to O'Mahony in the United States were professed Fenians who were working for the British secret service. In the *Irish People* (New York, of 18 July 1868, O'Mahony wrote that:

While the leaders of the Fenian Brotherhood here remained harmonious in their councils and united in their action, the revolutionary movement at home, of which they were the mainspring, could never be effectually put down. One attempt after another might fail; but the struggle would be constantly renewed from hence with unabated zeal and persistency, while ever any materials for an army of liberation still remained in Ireland – “never ending, still beginning.” It was therefore in the United States, not in Ireland, that Fenianism could have been combated with any permanent good results for its enemies.... DISCORD sown by pretended Fenians among the Irish patriots of the United States is the only effective weapon that can or will be used for that end. It must, therefore, be taken for granted that British money has been, is and shall be employed with a lavish hand in order to purchase the services of

⁸¹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 4 July 1868.

corrupt Irishmen to act as agents of Fenian disunion and demoralization, under the mask of red-hot Irish revolutionists.⁸²

O'Mahony's incisive account is corroborated by the fact that it was after the Fenian split, in January 1866, that F. F. Millen (allied to the 'O'Mahony-wing') offered his services as an informer to Edward Archibald, the British Consul in New York in March 1866.⁸³ It was also during this period that the infamous Thomas Beach (under the pseudonym of Henri Le Caron and allied to the 'senate-wing') offered his services as a spy to the British.⁸⁴

James McDermott (known as 'Red Jim') was O'Mahony's blind spot. McDermott claimed to have been made knight of St. Sylvester by Pope Pius IX for heroism while serving in the papal brigade in 1860. From at least 1865 onwards, McDermott sold the secrets of the Fenian Brotherhood to the British consul in New York, including confidential documents, ciphers, and the location of arms stores.⁸⁵

Six Dublin centres sent a letter to O'Mahony in 1863 warning him against McDermott after he had left that city for the United States. This was followed by an even more emphatic warning to O'Mahony from Stephens writing from Louisville, Kentucky, while travelling the United States in the summer of 1864.⁸⁶ There were also demands for McDermott's dismissal from American Fenians who strongly mistrusted him. In a letter dated 20 April 1864, Patrick J. Downing advised O'Mahony that 'I recommend that he [McDermott] has nothing whatsoever to do with the business [Fenian Brotherhood] and as little as possible with yourself personally'.⁸⁷

Despite many and repeated warnings of his perfidy, McDermott was appointed O'Mahony's assistant secretary and retained his confidence to the dismay of his colleagues and friends. Even the most forthright language from John O'Leary who told O'Mahony that McDermott was a blackguard, left O'Mahony in the same mind.⁸⁸

⁸² Ibid., 18 July 1868.

⁸³ Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, pp. 47-49.

⁸⁴ J.A. Cole, *Prince of spies: Henri Le Caron* (London, 1984), pp.29-30; Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, pp.94-95.

⁸⁵ Michael Davitt, *The fall of feudalism in Ireland* (London and New York, 1904), pp.428-30 (Hereafter cited as Davitt, *The fall of feudalism*); D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp. 96-7.

⁸⁶ Stephens to O'Mahony, 20 May 1864, printed in Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, pp. 184-6.

⁸⁷ P.J. Downing to O'Mahony, 20 April 1864, Fenian Brotherhood Collection (C.U.A., Washington D.C.).

⁸⁸ Devoy, *Recollections*, pp.269-70.

O'Mahony's extraordinary blindness to the treachery and character of 'Red Jim' McDermott is undeniable. In fact, O'Mahony wrote in 1868 that:

James McDermott, the "Assistant Secretary," was the best abused of all my subordinates. This arose from the fact that it was through his evidence that the existence of the secret conspiracy in Chicago was made known to myself, and the Central Council. For this neither P.J. Dunne nor Michael Scanlan, whom he confronted face to face before me and their colleagues, could ever forgive him. He was, moreover, exceedingly and demonstratively devoted to me personally. I found him an indefatigable worker and strictly scrupulous in all his pecuniary relations with the Brotherhood⁸⁹

Devoy believed that McDermott was more responsible for the split than any of the 'bigger men' and that he fomented trouble in the Fenian council by spreading lies of secret conspiracies against O'Mahony's leadership.⁹⁰ Devoy was in Ireland at this time and did not have first hand experience of the developments in America. Neither did he know O'Mahony. Furthermore, Devoy's trust of Henri le Caron and Alexander Sullivan has to leave his judgement in doubt. What would appear most likely is that McDermott gained the confidence and trust of O'Mahony by reporting details of the conspiracy against him. By telling O'Mahony stories based on fact, McDermott maximised the damage to the Fenian Brotherhood. It was many years before McDermott was finally exposed, when he sold the dynamiters in the 'Triangle faction' of the Clan na Gael, led by as brazenly as he had sold O'Mahony, who stood by him to the end.⁹¹

In his *Recollections* John Devoy wrote that O'Mahony was 'not a good judge of men'.⁹² O'Mahony's judgement was clearly at fault in the case of McDermott whom he continued to trust even after prominent Fenians had recognised McDermott for what he really was – an agent provocateur. Although Devoy's criticism is understandable in the light of O'Mahony's stubborn refusal to get rid of 'Red Jim' there is no other evidence of O'Mahony making such a misjudgement. No revolutionary leader who was a bad judge of men could have survived in South

⁸⁹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 29 Feb. 1868.

⁹⁰ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.269.

⁹¹ Davitt, *The fall of feudalism*, pp.428-30.

Tipperary in July and September 1848. Knowing whom to trust at such a critical time saved him from arrest on numerous occasions.

On the other hand, O'Mahony had correctly taken the measure of Pierce Nagle⁹³ (perhaps the first informer in American Fenianism) and in one encounter in 1863 had him summarily dismissed from his office. In his retrospective account, O'Mahony wrote that when, on this same occasion, Nagle demanded that he be sent home to fight:

I instructed my secretary to ask him [Nagle] whether he had served in the American Army and become a practical soldier, during his sojourn in America. Upon his replying in the negative, I gave instructions to have him informed that he could not be sent home at the expense of the Brotherhood, as there were already enough of undrilled Fenians in Ireland.⁹⁴

Following this incident, Nagle made his way to Ireland at the expense of the British government where he worked in the offices on the *Irish People* (Dublin), at 12 Parliament street, being at the same time in the pay of the authorities.⁹⁵

SUSPENSION OF THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT IN IRELAND – 17 FEBRUARY 1866

Shortly after the adjournment of the New York convention of the 'O'Mahony wing,' in January 1866, increasing numbers of Fenians went to Ireland to participate in the projected insurrection. The authorities in Ireland were cognizant of what was taking place and, as in 1848, they asked parliament for a suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.⁹⁶ This made it crucial for Stephens to act before the government struck.

⁹² Devoy, *Recollections*, p.268.

⁹³ Nagle, from Fethard, County Tipperary, came to the United States during the Civil War armed with a letter of introduction to O'Mahony from Denis Dowling Mulcahy (of Remondstown, Clonmel, County Tipperary).

⁹⁴ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 21 Mar. and 5 Dec. 1868.

⁹⁵ Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, p. 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

It is worth recalling here the judgement of the soldier of fortune General Gustave Cluseret that 'As regards action, he [Stephens] was worth nothing'.⁹⁷

The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended on 17 February 1866, permitting the indefinite detention of any person in Ireland on warrant of the lord lieutenant.⁹⁸ Hundreds of Fenians were arrested including about 150 of the 500 Irish-American officers who had gone to Ireland for the expected insurrection. Many of these men had served with distinction and held high rank in the American Armies.⁹⁹ Stephens failed to give the word in spite of the fact that the opportunity presented by the I.R.B infiltration of the military regiments in Ireland could only be held open for a relatively short time. He overruled Devoy's proposal, at a meeting of the military council on 21 February 1866, to set off an insurrection by seizing the Dublin barracks and arsenals with the help of the Fenian soldiers in the British army.¹⁰⁰ The 'chance' that O'Mahony had pinned his hopes on was lost and the military potential of Fenianism had already crested.

In the *Irish People* (New York), of 16 May 1868, O'Mahony wrote that:

The parties upon whose opinion and judgement I place most reliance, are the veteran American officers who had remained faithfully at their posts in Ireland up to the end of December 1865. All of these gentlemen, whom I have met, are unanimous in holding that a good fight was really practicable, even in spite of all the disappointments, and several of them, and these not the least intelligent and experienced in war-craft, have shown me plausible reasons for thinking that it was possible at that time to have mastered the City of Dublin by a sudden, resolute and well conducted *coup-de-main*; for though the quantity of arms and munitions in the actual possession of the brotherhood, was but scant, still there was a large supply of both within our reach and where they could have been seized upon by a few resolute men led by competent officers. I have not, however, met any one of these officers, who would venture to assert his belief that any attempt of this kind could have so resulted

⁹⁷ Quoted in Ryan, *Fenian chief*, p.239. Cluseret had served in Sicily under Garibaldi and on the Union side in the American Civil War, under General George B McCellan, where he achieved the rank of Brigadier General.

⁹⁸ *29 Vict.*, c. 4.

⁹⁹ Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, p.44, 61; Ryan, *Fenian chief*, p.226.

¹⁰⁰ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp.227-28; Devoy, *Recollections*, pp.98-111.

otherwise than in ultimate and bloody defeat, even if successful at first, without the promised aid from America.¹⁰¹

O'Mahony's analysis, and that of the Irish-American officers, was in tune with Mitchel's statement in his letter to O'Mahony from Paris in January 1866: 'An insurrection in Ireland without such aid from America must fail'.¹⁰²

'SENATE-WING' CONGRESS – PITTSBURGH, 19 FEBRUARY 1866

In January 1866 the 'senate-wing' issued a war circular and, on 19 February 1866, held a separate convention at Pittsburgh. The principal figure at their convention was General Sweeny, who laid before the delegates a report of his military plan of operation. Two envoys from the 'O'Mahony wing', Doran Killian and a Canadian priest, Fr John Curley, made their appearance at the Pittsburgh convention and appealed to the secessionists to reunite with their 'wing'.¹⁰³ Professing to speak for 813 circles loyal to O'Mahony, the two emissaries' appeals for re-unification were rejected.

The Pittsburgh convention served to attract the allegiance of the Fenians who were uncertain as to which faction they belonged to.¹⁰⁴ This was largely due to a promise of action in the near future, which strengthened the perception that here were the 'men of action'. To offset this advantage O'Mahony summoned a military convention of his 'wing' to meet at 814 Broadway, New York, on 22 February.¹⁰⁵ Here the military council considered their plan of operation. In a report of the convention published in the *Irish People* (New York), of 3 March 1866, it was stated that 'Almost every delegate to this convention held a position in the American army and is perfectly conversant with the responsibilities and dangers of the battlefield'.¹⁰⁶ This resolution was signed by 118 Fenians with a rank of officer in the United States army, which comprised 12 colonels, 44 captains, 26 lieutenants and 36 sergeants:

¹⁰¹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 16 May 1868.

¹⁰² Mitchel to O'Mahony, 27 Jan. 1866, Fenian Brotherhood collection (C.U.A., Washington D.C.); printed in Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.214.

¹⁰³ Fr Curley had carried letters from Killian to Seward during the Fenian Brotherhood's negotiations with the American administration in November 1865.

¹⁰⁴ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.114.

¹⁰⁵ *Irish People* (New York), 17 Feb. 1866.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3 Mar. 1866.

We, the naval and military representatives of the Fenian Brotherhood in America, do solemnly pledge to use all our energies with fidelity and zeal to concentrate the fighting faculties we possess for the whole and sole purpose of making a direct attack upon the English domination in Ireland, to occupy it, to hold it, to possess it for ourselves and the people, our brothers at home, their and our heirs, forever and ever, and to this we pledge our honour and our lives.¹⁰⁷

The fact that 118 officers of the United States army stayed with O'Mahony makes it very understandable that O'Mahony would think if he could detach General Sweeny, the 'senate-wing', which tended to attract the opportunistic politicians, would be defunct.

FENIAN RALLY AT JONES' WOOD, NEW YORK, 4 MARCH 1866

When the news of the suspension of habeas corpus in Ireland reached the United States, O'Mahony announced a Fenian rally to meet at Jones' Wood, in New York City, on Sunday 4 March 1866, and sent an invitation to the American Secretary of State William H. Seward to attend. Killian had maintained contact with the American administration as O'Mahony's representative.¹⁰⁸

The announcement of the Jones' Wood rally encountered the opposition of the Archbishop of New York, John McCloskey, who issued a circular letter expressing his opposition, to be read at all the catholic churches of the city on the day scheduled for the Fenian gathering.¹⁰⁹ In the *Tribune* (New York) it was claimed that a very large crowd, estimated to number over 100,000 people, attended the Fenian rally at Jones' Wood, on 4 March 1866.¹¹⁰ The fact that the New York Irish were prepared to ignore political condemnations by their church underlined the difficulties faced by the catholic hierarchy in trying to curb Irish nationalist sentiment. Considering that the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from O'Mahony to secretary of State, Seward, March 1866, miscellaneous letters, MS Dept. of State, referred to in D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁹ Oliver Rafferty, 'Fenianism in North America in the 1860s: the problems for church and state' in *History: the Journal of the Historical Association*, Apr. 1999, p.257; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.124-5.

¹¹⁰ *Tribune* (New York), 5 Mar. 1866; *Herald* (New York), 5 and 15 Mar. 1866.

total number of Irish-born immigrants living in New York City and Brooklyn in 1860 was 259,000,¹¹¹ this was a very large proportion. It shows that the 'O'Mahony-wing' had popular support in New York, where O'Mahony lived and where his personal influence was strong. The very large turn-out that attended the Fenian rally at Jones' Wood, in spite of Archbishop John McCloskey's opposition, was the clearest indication that Irish-Americans were showing their capacity to distinguish between the secular and the spiritual role of the clergy.

SALE OF THE 'BONDS OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC'

The 'bonds of the Irish Republic' had been advertised in the *Irish People* (New York), beginning on 17 February 1866, to raise money on the credit of an independent Irish state. The sale of these bonds increased as a result of the Jones' Wood rally and donations began to arrive to the treasury of the 'O'Mahony-wing' at the Moffat Mansion.¹¹² O'Mahony, Patrick A. Collins, of Boston, Captain John McCafferty (of the Confederate army), and other Fenian orators, proceeded on a speaking tour pleading for money and supplies. Captain McCafferty, a native born citizen of the United States, had been arrested in Ireland as a suspect the year before, but was released after American diplomatic intervention.¹¹³ The fact that the Washington administration would exert their influence on the British authorities, especially for a Confederate officer, provides strong evidence of their support for the Fenians at that time.

Despite the split in the Fenian Brotherhood, O'Mahony still managed to sustain the flow of money across the Atlantic. In his letter to O'Mahony from Paris, dated 10 March 1866, Mitchel (still acting as financial agent in that city) reported having received \$46,000. O'Mahony's hopes for the projected insurrection in Ireland were greatly diminished by the gloomy account sent to him by Mitchel in this same letter. Mitchel acknowledged the receipt of a package of 'bonds of the Irish Republic', which he had been sent to dispose of in France. He had little luck in doing so as he explained to O'Mahony that:

¹¹¹ Kenneth E. Nilsen, 'The Irish language in New York, 1850-1900' in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, (Baltimore and London, 1997), p.254.

¹¹² *Irish People* (New York), 10 Mar. 1866.

You are aware that to put any bonds of a foreign loan upon the market here requires previous authorization by the government. That, I need hardly tell you, was not to be expected in the present relations of France and England. But perhaps they might have sold privately. However, after the events, which have happened, both in the United States and in Ireland, I see no chance of this.¹¹⁴

The 'events' referred to by Mitchel were the Fenian split in the United States and the large-scale arrests conducted by the authorities in Ireland in the days following the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act on 17 February 1866. In an interesting addition to Mitchel's letter, intended only for O'Mahony, Mitchel gave the following interpretation of recent events and prospects for the future:

The worst effect of the break-up of the Fenian Brotherhood was the deconsideration of our cause in America – which sentiment of the Americans was what encouraged the enemy to make this swoop upon all Irish American citizens they could find in Ireland.¹¹⁵

Mitchel realized that the most damaging effect of the Fenian split had been the United States administration's loss of faith in the Fenian Brotherhood. From then on the United States government maintained a carefully ambivalent attitude towards the Fenians, knowing that their effectiveness lay in united leadership.¹¹⁶

In that same letter to O'Mahony from Paris, dated 10 March 1866, Mitchel confided that:

I am glad to learn that you are getting the power of the F.B. into your own hands. You know it was my opinion that you should never have shared it with the others. And where you were first seriously to blame (as I thought, and think) was in permitting that Philadelphia congress at all, or at least in permitting the appointment of Senate and "Government," etc. I partly foresaw

¹¹³ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.126.

¹¹⁴ Mitchel to O'Mahony, 10 Mar. 1866, Fenian Brotherhood collection (C.U.A., Washington D.C.); printed in Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.220.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Senior, *The Fenians and Canada* pp.99-106.

trouble before I left, and tried to impress most earnestly upon the members of the Senate that their business and duty were to sustain you. But I further find you to blame, when the Senate attacked you, in retorting hard names upon them and posting them as thieves. This made the breach irreparable, provoked their friends throughout the country to sustain them through everything and added to the already inevitable scandal of an “Irish quarrel” which amused the Americans and encouraged the British to ride roughshod over the I.R.B.¹¹⁷

Mitchel understood matters better than most, but he was then in Paris and consequently did not have first hand experience of events as they unfolded in the United States. Although not a public political figure like Mitchel, O’Mahony never let the system down like Mitchel had done in late 1854, when he left New York for Tennessee (see chapter five). Mitchel’s criticism of O’Mahony’s handling of the split never affected their mutually trusting relationship, which probably existed since their Trinity College days.

Nemesis – personalised in the failure of Stephens, the ambition of Roberts, the treachery of ‘Red-Jim’ and the panic pressure for action – was coming for O’Mahony. Perhaps the Jones’ Wood rally was the high point for O’Mahony before nemesis.

CAMPO BELLO EXPEDITION, 17 MARCH – 19 APRIL 1866

As preparations were being made by the ‘senate-wing’ for invading Canada, letters from Fenians reached O’Mahony, complaining of the delay in inaugurating hostilities and threatening to join the rival wing. Added to this discontent, there were the increasing numbers of I.R.B. men who had fled to New York when the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended. O’Mahony summoned the central council to meet on 17 March, to cope with this emergency and to determine on a course of action. It was during this meeting that Bernard Doran Killian proposed the ill-fated Fenian expedition to Campo Bello, an island located at the western entrance of Passamaquoddy Bay near the Maine-New Brunswick border.¹¹⁸ In the *Irish People* (New York), of 12 May 1866, O’Mahony wrote that:

¹¹⁷ Mitchel to O’Mahony, 10 Mar. 1866, Fenian Brotherhood collection (C.U.A., Washington D.C.); printed in Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.221.

¹¹⁸ *Irish People* (New York), 12 May 1866.

During this session which commenced on 17 March last, at a joint meeting composed of the C. C. [central council] and the chiefs of bureaus, an expedition to Campo Bello island was proposed by Mr. B. Doran Killian and warmly advocated by Mr. P. A. Sinnott. This island was represented by the proposer of the measure to be *neutral territory*, claimed alike by Great Britain and the United States, while no clear title to its ownership had been established by either. It was proposed that the men engaged in its occupation proceed to Eastport, Maine, without arms and in civilian attire, so as to commit no overt violation of the laws of the American Republic, while munitions of war, arms and other supplies were to be sent to the same place by a different route.

Upon gaining possession of the island, it was represented that an armed force could be organized there either for the immediate invasion of Ireland or for manning privateers to prey upon the British commerce, and thus commence hostilities. It was also forcibly insisted on, and, from the encouraging promises made to us from many quarters, proved with apparent likelihood that, were the first blow successfully struck from this or, indeed any other point, it would be sustained and followed up by the friends of Ireland and the *enemies of Great Britain* throughout the United States; that privateers would be extensively fitted out; and that Great Britain would be attacked in her commerce upon the American waters. Other eventualities were brought forward, to which it were unwise to refer to here. Furthermore, it was shown, and I have since ascertained its correctness, that Campo Bello could be taken within the space of one day after the arrival of our friends in Eastport.

The majority of the Central Council and myself were opposed to the raid upon Campo Bello as an isolated movement, though in favour of it as a movement co-operative with a descent upon Ireland and the launching of privateers. It was, also, the all but unanimous opinion of those present that no movement whatever should be made until after the arrival of James Stephens, then and still daily expected on these shores. General Wm. G. Halpin, who had recently landed from Ireland, most forcibly insisted upon this point. So did Messrs. Rogers, Kavanagh, Col. Downing and Captain Tobin and

McCafferty. A resolution to this effect was actually passed before the Council adjourned.

Next day, unfortunately, by the erroneous statements made to me of the *neutrality* of the place to be captured, and under the pressure of the impatient members of the New York Circles, the fighting material of which had been, *without my knowledge or consent*, ordered to report for immediate duty, and throw up all employments, I was induced to consent to a sudden movement, and to sign an authorization for Mr. Killian to commence it. The comparatively small expense at which it was insisted the thing could be done was also a great incitement to me at the time. I, moreover, felt somewhat impatient myself, now that we had a naval force, to have our national flag unfurled on the Atlantic with as little delay as possible.¹¹⁹

It was hoped that Campo Bello, whose ownership was disputed, would be seized and occupied for the United States by a Fenian expedition.¹²⁰ This well-defined and contained aim was certainly within the bounds of feasibility. In the *Irish People* (New York), of 3 February 1866, it was reported that the Fenians had bought a ship at a Government sale.¹²¹ This would suggest connivance on the part of the American administration in the fitting out of a Fenian expedition. The island of Campo Bello was not acknowledged by the United States as being part of Canada. It is significant that Killian chose a point where they could not be accused by the United States of attacking the sovereignty of Canada.

The Campo Bello plan would appear to have been a compromise between an invasion of Canada and the sending of an expedition to Ireland. It also had the potential to provoke an Anglo-American crisis. In contrast to this, the plan of the 'senate-wing' for a full-scale invasion of Canada was predicated on the active sympathy of the United States government and, therefore, had little chance of success without their backing. O'Mahony felt that he had no alternative but to sanction the plan to seize Campobello; no doubt hoping that a successful strike might end the split and reunite the Fenian Brotherhood under his leadership. Killian had assured

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, pp.43-4; Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations during reconstruction* (Ithaca and London, 1969), pp.134-35 (Hereafter cited as Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations*).

¹²¹ *Irish People* (New York), 3 Feb. 1866.

O'Mahony that the United States authorities had given him every verbal indication that they would not interfere.¹²²

Besides the usual pressure from the rank-and-file, the *Herald* (New York) was openly advocating such a project, while the *Citizen* (New York) had even suggested, on 24 March, that President Johnson should replace Seward by O'Mahony as Secretary of State.¹²³ On 31 March, O'Mahony issued a circular which called for immediate shipment of men and war materials to the headquarters in New York.¹²⁴ By the second week of April, several hundred Fenians had assembled at Eastport, Maine, Killian among them. O'Mahony remained in New York and did not take part in the expedition. The Fenians arrived at Eastport without arms or ammunition so that the neutrality law would not be broken; the arms were to arrive by a different route. Killian's chief supporter for the Campo Bello scheme was the former 'senator' Patrick A. Sinnott, who had been elected to the central council of the 'O'Mahony wing' at the New York convention in January 1866. The treachery of 'Red Jim' was a crucial factor in the failure of the expedition. Edward Archibald, British consul in New York, had full knowledge of the details of the Campo Bello project which he received directly from 'Red Jim' McDermott on 20 March.¹²⁵

The Fenian steamer 'Ocean Spray', loaded with five hundred stand of arms, arrived at Eastport on 17 April. The British (forewarned through 'Red Jim' McDermott) sent six warships to fortify the island of Campo Bello. On 19 April - a full twelve days after the Fenians had begun to assemble - the commanding figure of Major-General George Meade of the United States army, the hero of Gettysburg, was ordered with a company of artillery from Philadelphia to Eastport. Killian asserted to Meade that his object was to go fishing on the banks and, as the reciprocity treaty was abrogated, he claimed the right to arm his parties in anticipation of Canadian opposition. Meade had the arms removed from the 'Ocean Spray' and lodged in Fort Sullivan. They were subsequently returned to O'Mahony. That was the end of the grand plan to seize Campo Bello Island. The United States administration policy of benign neutrality/support towards the united Fenian Brotherhood altered, after the

¹²² Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, pp. 43-4.

¹²³ *Citizen* (New York), 24 Mar. 1866; *Herald* (New York), 24 Mar. 1866.

¹²⁴ *Herald* (New York), 1 Apr. 1866; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.136-7.

¹²⁵ Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations*, pp.134-35; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.140-41.

split, to one of active intervention when each 'wing' tried to bring their war plans to fruition.¹²⁶

While the Campo Bello project had a better chance of success than invading Canada, and could have made military history, it turned into a fiasco. The failure of the Campo Bello project had a very negative impact on the sale of Fenian bonds and money donations and, as a consequence, cut off disbursements to Paris.¹²⁷

After months of waiting, Stephens finally determined to come to the United States in an effort to rededicate the Fenian Brotherhood to action in Ireland and to ensure a flow of money to Mitchel in Paris.¹²⁸ Mitchel disliked and distrusted Stephens and had grave doubts about his ability to lead a revolutionary movement. In a letter dated 7 April 1866, Mitchel informed O'Mahony that:

Stephens leaves this, I believe on the 14th [April]. I wish he had gone by an earlier steamer as his presence must be very much needed over there to give impetus to the movement and strengthen your hands. I hope there is no intention of placing him at the head of the Fenian Brotherhood. He says he does not wish this himself and would not accept it; that he goes out chiefly to help bring back the Senate party to reason and to sustain your position. He tells me however that you have earnestly urged him to go over, as you are yourself worn out. It is not to be wondered at if the strain of the last few months has told heavily upon you, both in physique and morale. I trust you are to remain at the head of the American organization.¹²⁹

Mitchel appears to have suspected that Stephens was going to America to displace O'Mahony as head centre. On receipt of Mitchel's letter O'Mahony immediately moved to effect a union of the two 'wings' of the Fenian Brotherhood.

¹²⁶ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.138; Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, p.62.

¹²⁷ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.140-1.

¹²⁸ Ryan, *Fenian chief*, p.228.

¹²⁹ Mitchel to O'Mahony, 7 April 1866, Fenian Brotherhood collection (C.U.A., Washington D.C.), reprinted in Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.226.

ATTEMPT AT UNITY, APRIL 1866

In April 1866, O'Mahony made an effort to harmonize the differences of the two rival factions of Fenians in the United States, with a view of combining them into one strong, influential organization. With this end in view, he sought reconciliation with Roberts but was rejected. The sequence of events was as follows.

On 20 April, O'Mahony designated Colonel Halpin to act as his representative in making the first overtures to the 'senate-wing'.¹³⁰ It is significant that O'Mahony chose Colonel Halpin (who had earlier opposed the Campo Bello project) for this mission.¹³¹ Halpin wrote to Roberts, as 'president' of the 'senate-wing', that same day, stating that 'I see no difficulty in the way of carrying out General Sweeny's programme if we have a perfect understanding. I much fear the result of either party attempting anything on their own account, while united they may smite the enemy at different points'.¹³² Roberts rejected O'Mahony's overture on the grounds that he was addressed as a private individual and not as 'president' of the Fenian Brotherhood. Colonel Halpin then addressed his appeal to General Sweeny, who said that he would only consider appeals which came under the signature of O'Mahony. That ended the attempt at re-unification.¹³³

The Fenian Brotherhood had not been founded to invade Canada; planning to do so would certainly have gone against the grain with O'Mahony. Aiding the home organization had been a fundamental principle since the days of the Emmet Monument Association and was what differentiated the 'O'Mahony-wing' from the Canadian bound 'senate-wing'. The abortive Campobello raid was itself a deviation from the principle of direct armed intervention in Ireland. The fact that O'Mahony was prepared to declare for immediate action is an indication of his desperation at this time.

Up to 1865 O'Mahony's obsession was to send an expedition for a rising in Ireland. After Stephens failed to give the word in December of that year, and the only real opportunity for success was consequently lost, O'Mahony's main focus was to preserve the unity of the Fenian Brotherhood. The fact that O'Mahony was now

¹³⁰ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.140-1.

¹³¹ *Irish People* (New York), 12 May 1866.

¹³² W.G. Halpin to W.R. Roberts, 20 April 1866, printed in Denieffe. *A personal narrative*, p.230.

prepared to co-operate with the 'senate-wing' in an attack on Canada indicates how serious he was in his attempt to re-unite the two 'wings' of the Fenian Brotherhood. However, the rift had grown too wide between the rival 'wings' during the past five months and had rendered reconciliation virtually impossible.

When Stephens finally reached New York, on 10 May 1866, he attempted unsuccessfully to regain control of Fenian affairs. He accepted O'Mahony's resignation the following day, and assumed leadership of the 'O'Mahony-wing'.¹³⁴ Stephens chided O'Mahony for sanctioning the Campo Bello raid, stating that 'You not only gave proof of weakness, but committed a crime less excusable in you than in any other man; for you should have known that your project would have resulted in our ruin'.¹³⁵ This was not a good start. Of an arrogant nature, Stephens was the person least likely to restore harmony; but in the circumstances there was no other.¹³⁶

'SENATE-WING' INVASION OF CANADA, 31 MAY – 3 JUNE 1866

The invasion of Canada by the 'senate-wing' was planned as a three-pronged assault, from Vermont in the east, Buffalo in the centre and Chicago in the west. Overall command of the operation was given to General Sweeny. The Canadian government were well informed, through spies and detectives, of the invasion plans. Lack of co-ordination and the action of the American government in sealing the frontier doomed the plan to failure. The western attack never got off the ground. In the centre, County Monaghan born Colonel John O'Neill (formerly of the United States army) led a force of 800 Fenians across the frontier north of Buffalo and occupied the village of Fort Erie on 31 May 1866. Cut off from reinforcement and low on ammunition, O'Neill was soon forced to retreat, but not before his men had routed a group of 900 Canadian volunteers (the "Queen's Own") at the battle of Limestone Ridge, on 2 June. A few days later a force of one thousand Fenians, under General Samuel P. Spear, crossed the frontier from Vermont, but were immediately driven back. As in the case of Colonel O'Neill's force, the American authorities disarmed them.¹³⁷ On the Quebec border, the United States authorities arrested

¹³³ Ibid., pp.230-2.

¹³⁴ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.151.

¹³⁵ *Irish People* (New York), 19 May 1866.

¹³⁶ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.191, 213-14.

¹³⁷ Senior, *The Fenians and Canada*, pp.99-106.

General Sweeny and his staff and intercepted vast quantities of arms. Sweeny was soon released without trial, and thereafter his interest and influence in the Fenian movement declined. He returned to the United States army until his retirement in 1870, with the rank of brigadier-general.¹³⁸ In his retrospective narrative, O'Mahony wrote that:

Sweeny was never interfered with by the United States government in the discharge of his functions as a Fenian military official until some time after the disruption of the Brotherhood. By this time it had lost a considerable portion of that power and prestige which had undeniably won for it the encouragement of American statesmen and the semi-official recognition as a national power by the heads of the American administration, during, and for some time after, the Congress of Philadelphia.¹³⁹

After the split in the Fenian Brotherhood, the position of the United States administration regarding Fenian military plans altered completely. For the American government to support the military plans of one 'wing' of the Fenian Brotherhood would be seen by the other as favouritism towards its rival's plans. The United States administration was consequently in a no-win situation. This much is certain – the window of opportunity opened by the American administration to the Fenians began to close following the split.

Having once promised 'war or dissolution in 1865', Stephens now proclaimed that 1866 would, without fail, be the year for action. Through the summer and early autumn of 1866 he toured the United States promising imminent action in Ireland, and raising almost sixty thousand dollars. Stephens disappeared from the New York scene following his final public appearance at a Fenian rally in New York, on 28 October 1866, where he indicated that his next public appearance would be made in Ireland, at the head of a revolutionary army. In fact he went to Philadelphia and then to Washington, returning to New York in mid-December. Here Stephens called a meeting of the Fenian officers (who had been commissioned to accompany him to Ireland) at his New York lodgings, at 11 West Eleventh Street.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Entry for William T. Sweeny' in *Dictionary of American Biography, XVIII* (1936), pp.242-3.

¹³⁹ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 7 Mar. 1868.

¹⁴⁰ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.169-79; Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, pp.91-2.

At the meeting in New York, Stephens proposed another postponement of action in Ireland, as he found himself unable to fulfil the pledges he had given. The Irish-American officers, tired of Stephens's inaction, deposed him from the position of head centre of the 'O'Mahony-wing'. They let Stephens remain for a time as the nominal civil head of the organization in Ireland, but his deputy, Captain Thomas J. Kelly, became head of the all-important military sector. He had been a persistent opponent of Stephens's delaying tactics on the grounds that delay could only strengthen the government's position and weaken that of the I.R.B.¹⁴¹

Having deposed Stephens the next step taken by the Irish-American officers was to volunteer to cross the Atlantic and start a rising in Ireland. All had seen service under fire. Many like Captain Kelly (of the Union army) and Captain John McCafferty (of the Confederate army) had already risked their freedom in Ireland the year before. The steamship used for the Campobello expedition was sold (at a considerable loss) and the proceeds were utilised by Captain Kelly to finance a resumption of the revolutionary effort. Among those who sailed with Kelly from New York to London, on Saturday 12 January 1867, was his close associate Colonel Halpin. Stephens was to have accompanied them but afterwards claimed to have missed the boat; he left America at the end of the month. Stephens landed in France on 4 February 1867, and headed for Paris, where he would spend the next few years.¹⁴²

Mitchel lost interest in Fenian affairs after his friend O'Mahony's resignation as head centre. He resigned from the position of financial agent for the Fenian Brotherhood in Paris in June in mid October 1866 and he sailed for New York where he founded and edited the *Irish Citizen* (New York), starting 12 October 1867.¹⁴³ In a letter to Mortimer Moynahan (the I.R.B. man from Skibbereen), dated 28 January 1867, Mitchel wrote that:

I am more than ever convinced, that while England is at peace with America and France, all invasions and insurrections will be in vain.... If the Fenian organization here could be kept together, merely as a permanent association of Irishmen, to wait patiently for an opportunity, (which must arise, and may

¹⁴¹ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp. 218-20.

¹⁴² Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp.243-54; Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, p.92.

soon) and would not demand money save the trifle needful merely to keep the organization active and in connection with a central Executive - then I think good would come of it.¹⁴⁴

Mitchel's prospects for the future were exactly in tune with O'Mahony's measured policy of continued preparation until the moment of opportunity.

ATTEMPTED RISING, 5 MARCH 1867

By the end of January 1867, Captain Kelly and his group of Fenian officers reached England. From the outset, the organizers of the 1867 rising were beset with difficulties. Their arms supplies were utterly inadequate, and the arrests of 1866 had disrupted the local leadership in Ireland. Government agents closely watched them and the police were in possession of sufficient information to enable them to arrest many Fenians on their arrival in Dublin from England and America. Captain John McCafferty organized a daring plan to capture the arms in Chester Castle, on 11 February 1866, but the informer John Joseph Corydon betrayed it to the government. On the eve of the rising McCafferty was arrested on the collier *New Draper* in Dublin Bay. Godfrey Massey, who was to command the insurgents in Munster, was arrested at Limerick Junction on 4 March. Before many months were out Massey was to be the star witness for the government against his former comrades in arms. The long-expected rising in Ireland finally took place on 5 March 1867. Like in 1849, the leadership felt that some attempt had to be made, regardless of either the circumstances or of the consequences. Apart from a few skirmishes in Dublin, Cork, Tipperary, Limerick, Clare, Queen's County and Louth, it came to nothing.¹⁴⁵ In a letter to the *Irish People* (New York), dated 19 April 1867, O'Mahony wrote that 'Had I been consulted on the subject in time, and had my opinion prevailed in the Executive Department of the Brotherhood, no attempt at a rising would have been made in Ireland this Spring'.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*, 2 vols. (London, 1883), vol. ii, pp. 245-50, 356-7 (Hereafter cited as Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*).

¹⁴⁴ John Mitchel to Mortimer Moynahan, 28 Jan. 1867, Fenian Brotherhood collection (C.U.A. Washington D.C.).

¹⁴⁵ Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, pp.129-32, 143-5.

¹⁴⁶ Letter From O'Mahony to D. O'Sullivan Esq., Editor of the *Irish People* (New York), dated 19 Apr. 1867.

Captain Thomas J. Kelly was moving regularly between British and Irish centres of Fenianism and was arrested on 11 September, along with a native of Clonakilty, Captain Timothy Deasy (of the United States army) in Manchester. One week later, on 18 September 1867, they were rescued from a police van, that was transporting them from the courthouse in Manchester to the county jail. Sergeant Charles Brett, of the Manchester police department, was accidentally shot in the course of the Manchester rescue and twenty-nine men were arrested. Three of them, William O'Meara Allen, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien were convicted of murder and publicly hanged on 23 November 1867. They were henceforth known as the 'Manchester Martyrs'. Captain Kelly himself had organized Stephens's escape from Richmond prison in November 1865. It is striking that two successive Fenian leaders were rescued from police custody by Fenian action. The organizer of the Manchester rescue was Ricard O'Sullivan Burke (a native of Kinneigh, near Ballineen in West Cork) who had risen to the rank of Colonel in the United States army during the American Civil War. In 1865, Captain Kelly had placed O'Sullivan Burke in charge as Fenian agent for the purchase of arms in Britain. The American Split, however, caused a shortage of money, and most of the contracts that O'Sullivan Burke had made could not be completed.¹⁴⁷

In the *Irish People* (New York), of 16 May 1868, O'Mahony wrote that by early 1867:

The American organization as a whole had dwindled to a mere feeble shred of what it had been in 1865. It had lost a great many of its members by the secession of the portion, which had remained faithful to principle through that crisis. At least one half fell-off after the failure of Campo Bello. The "Jones Wood promise" caused a large number of the remainder to fall away from James Stephens; and, finally, his refusal at the eleventh hour to fulfil that rash and unfortunate promise, and his consequent rupture with his staff had reduced the acting Brotherhood to comparatively miserable proportions.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*, 192-200; Mary C. Lynch and Seamus O'Donoghue, *Sullivan Burke Fenian* (Cork, 1999), pp.4, 113-18.

¹⁴⁸ O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 16 May 1868.

O'Mahony acknowledges that the failure of the Campo Bello raid, which he had sanctioned, had detrimental effects on the Fenian Brotherhood, as did Stephens's hollow promises of a rising in Ireland before the year was out. Throughout his writings O'Mahony repeatedly examines and interrogates his own behaviour. He never omits mentioning what he perceives as mistakes made on his part; nor does he ever make deceitful or exaggerated promises about the Fenians' prospects for success. During his years as head centre of the Fenian Brotherhood, O'Mahony never promised victory – he promised, what he termed, 'a good fight' which he knew would have to bring in another power as a final arbiter.¹⁴⁹

Devoy identified the split in the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States in January 1866 as the chief cause of the failure of Fenianism in Ireland, but conceded that 'It would not necessarily have had that effect if Stephens had been a more resourceful man, capable of making proper use of the means at his command in Ireland'.¹⁵⁰ Stephens's actions tend to show that he expended more energy in building up the I.R.B. than in planning how it could be put to use.

The split in the Fenian Brotherhood, headed by Roberts against O'Mahony's authority, proved to be far more detrimental to the whole Fenian movement and to the Irish cause than the lack of harmony between Stephens and O'Mahony. Nevertheless, Stephens' undermining of O'Mahony's position within the Fenian Brotherhood had enabled the so-called 'men of action' to gradually deprive O'Mahony of his powers, on the pretext of setting up a more representative organization.

In his *Recollections* Joseph Denieffe gives the judgement of another Fenian on it all where he concludes that:

In analysing causes and results, I decided that Stephens and O'Mahony, who never worked in harmony, were both of them unfit for the great responsibility they had undertaken. In my opinion, it was mainly O'Mahony's fault. He always kept around him a lot of flatterers, an imbecile pack, who were no use whatever to the movement, who could not get the confidence of anyone but that one good-natured soul who loved to listen to flattering stories of himself

¹⁴⁹ John O'Mahony, 'Fenianism' in *Irish People* (New York), 16 May 1868.

¹⁵⁰ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.90.

and of the chieftains of old, without taking a single lesson from their misfortunes and ultimate extinction.¹⁵¹

During the course of his public life in politics O'Mahony was not without his detractors who would have been glad to say this of him or get Denieffe to do so. We do not know to what extent Denieffe knew O'Mahony, who had died twenty nine years before Denieffe published his narrative. The failure of the Fenian Brotherhood to deliver on their promises to the I.R.B. led to a breakdown of confidence and trust. Denieffe's disillusionment as a member of the I.R.B. may have coloured his interpretation of events.

CONCLUSION

The Fenian Brotherhood under O'Mahony's leadership was a very significant factor in Anglo-American relations in the years during and immediately following the American Civil War. If, as was originally intended, an insurrection had taken place at the end of 1865, when the American Civil War ended with bad relations between Britain and the United States, along with the Fenian infiltration of the British garrisons, it had the potential to be a very serious challenge to British rule in Ireland. But Stephens failed to lead in 1865 or 1866, and when a token rising was at last attempted in March 1867 it was little more than a forlorn hope much as it had been in September 1849.

¹⁵¹ Denieffe, *A personal narrative*, p.149.

CHAPTER 9: O'MAHONY'S FINAL DECADE, 1867-77

ERIN'S HOPE, 13 APRIL – 1 JUNE 1867

On 11 February 1867, Ireland witnessed the attempted rising in the Iveragh peninsula of County Kerry. This was followed by a more general rising on 5 March. The most romantic episode of American Fenianism, and one which caused serious international complications between Britain and the United States, occurred later that spring.¹ It was the outcome of an urgent letter from Captain Thomas J. Kelly (chief executive of the Irish Republic), dated from Dublin on 15 March 1867.² Despite the fact that the rising had been suppressed, with a number of Irish-Americans captured, Captain Kelly was able to write in this letter that 'A landing in Sligo at the present time would be of infinite service. That section has been reserved for just such an event, and if fortune should only guide your ships in that direction it would just suit our purposes'.³

The American Fenians determined to assist the I.R.B. by sending a vessel to Ireland loaded with a cargo of arms and ammunition. It would appear that some time between 15 March and 12 April 1866 the Fenians had been given a vessel, the *Jackmel Packet*, by the American administration, apparently through the influence of William H. Seward, the Secretary of State. The Fenian treasury was in such a poor condition that the purchase of such a vessel would not have been possible at this time.⁴ An example of the Irish influence in a later United States administration became evident in the early stages of the Second World War when Ireland's industries could not obtain raw materials. Éamon de Valera had some political input in Washington by way of John W. McCormack of Boston (the majority Democratic leader in the House of Representatives) whose resolution authorising 'the Maritime Commission to sell two merchant ships to the government of the Republic of Éire' was adopted by the House on the 19 November 1941. Without these raw materials it

¹ Leon Ó Broin, *Fenian fever: an Anglo-American dilemma* (London, 1971), pp.129-32 (hereafter cited as Ó Broin, *Fenian fever*); William D'Arcy, *The Fenian movement in the United States, 1858-1886* (Washington, 1847), pp.243-8 (Hereafter cited as D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*).

² On 15 February 1867, Kelly was designated as acting 'chief executive of the Irish Republic'.

³ Letter from "K" (Captain Thomas J. Kelly) to an unnamed General, 15 Mar. 1867 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.).

⁴ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.244-5.

would not have been possible to maintain Irish neutrality during the Second World War.⁵

The first task in the organization of the Fenian expedition was to obtain enlistments for service in Ireland. Prominent among those Fenians who enlisted were Augustine Costello and John Warren - a leader in the 'senate wing's' invasion of Canada. Both men would later become the subject of a naturalization controversy between Britain and United States. The total strength of the military and naval force mustered on the vessel was fifty men. The military force, which numbered thirty-eight, were under the command of James E. Kerrigan, a former colonel in the Union army and one of the leaders in the 'senate-wing's' invasion of Canada. In command of the ship and its twelve men crew was the captain of the ship, John F. Kavanagh of Waterford. He had been a lieutenant in the Volunteer Navy of the United States during the Civil War.⁶

It was on the assumption that large bodies of the I.R.B. still held the field, and could continue to do so for a considerable time, that the *Jackmel Packet* (loaded with a cargo of 5,000 stand of arms, three artillery pieces and a great quantity of ammunition) set sail from New York harbour on 13 April 1867. Occasionally, during the first week of the voyage, the Fenians hoisted the British flag when another vessel hove in sight, but on Easter Sunday, 21 April, Captain Kavanagh felt safe enough to re-christen the vessel as *Erin's Hope* and to hoist the Fenian flag of green and sunburst.⁷

The explanation of Captain Thomas J. Kelly, contained in his letter of 15 March, that a section of the coast of Sligo had been reserved as a safe place to land Fenian arms and men, determined the choice of that part of Ireland. A Fenian named Hayes was sent from New York to Ireland to inform Captain Kelly of the sailing of the *Erin's Hope*, and to arrange that on her arrival an agent should board her from the shore with information as to the state of the country and orders to guide the landing of

⁵ Seán Cronin, *Washington's foreign policy 1916-1986: independence partition neutrality* (Dublin, 1987), pp.119-20.

⁶ *Herald* (New York), 5 June 1866; Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, *Irish rebels in English prisons: a record of prison life* (New York, 1882), pp.302-3 (Hereafter cited as O'Donovan Rossa, *Irish rebels*).

⁷ *Irish People* (New York), 12 and 19 Feb. 1870; John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (New York, 1929), pp.235-6 (Hereafter cited as Devoy, *Recollections*).

the expedition. The man selected for this task was Colonel Ricard O'Sullivan Burke of the United States army.⁸

On the night of 25 May, O'Sullivan Burke boarded the *Erin's Hope* off the Irish coast at Sligo Bay to warn the crew that the rising had collapsed more than two months earlier. The American Fenians had decided to attack the town of Sligo, but O'Sullivan Burke branded this enterprise as foolhardy and advised them to proceed to Skibbereen, County Cork. Finally on 1 June, thirty-two of the military men landed at Helvick head, near Dungarven bay, County Waterford, where they were all quickly arrested. The ship itself returned safely to New York with its crew and military supplies on 1 August 1867.⁹ Captain Kavanagh submitted a report on his return to New York wherein he stated that 'There is no point of the coast at which I stopped during this time but where I could land any amount of men and arms were there preparations made to take them from me'.¹⁰ So ended the Irish American expedition to Ireland which had been advocated by different Irish revolutionary societies in the United States since the days of the Irish Republican Union in 1848.

In the *Irish People* (New York) of 16 May 1868, O'Mahony wrote that:

Such [the *Erin's Hope* episode] being the result of an attempt made by the Brotherhood during the feeblest and most despised stage of its existence – while almost expiring – no sane and candid man can dare to deny that it could and would have inaugurated a glorious fight for independence on Irish soil in the winter of 1865, while its prestige was at its highest and while its strength, numbers and resources were not only unbroken but increasing rapidly every hour.¹¹

The Fenian's ship, *Erin's Hope*, was almost two years too late, for a cargo such as she carried, to be of effective service to the I.R.B. The year for action was 1865 when the

⁸ Mary C. Lynch and Seamus O'Donoghue, *Sullivan Burke Fenian* (Cork, 1999), pp.4,113-18; William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan (ed.), *Devoy's post bag* (2 vols, Dublin, 1948 and 1953) Vol. I, 1871-1880, pp.35-6 (Hereafter cited as *Devoy's post bag*).

⁹ *Irish People* (New York), 12 and 19 Feb. 1870; Stephen Ball (ed.), *A policeman's Ireland: recollections of Samuel Waters R.I.C.* (Cork, 1999), pp.9-10, 33-4.

¹⁰ O'Donovan Rossa, *Irish rebels*, p.302.

¹¹ 'Fenianism – an exposition' by John O'Mahony in *Irish People* (New York), 16 May 1868 (Hereafter cited as O'Mahony 'Fenianism').

authorities in Ireland had in their midst a formidable secret revolutionary army, with powerful allies across the Atlantic, and committed Fenians within the British forces.

When his secretary, Michael Cavanagh, later wrote a song in English celebrating the raising of the green flag on the *Erin's Hope* on Easter Sunday 1867, O'Mahony wrote the refrain for the song in Irish. Cavanagh's opening verse was:

May he who this day from the grave hath arisen,
In whose glory the glad sun now dances on high,
Pour balm on the hearts of our brothers in prison,
And bless the green banner we flung to the sky!

O'Mahony's Irish refrain was:

Scaoiltear le gaoith gan mhoill an Gath Gréine,
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn,
Agus seoltar ár long faoi bratach na Féinne,
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn.¹²

CLAN NA GAEL

The I.R.B. survived the failure of the 1867 rising and under a new collective leadership, the Supreme Council, was successfully re-organized at a general convention, held in Manchester in July 1867.¹³ As long as the I.R.B. continued to exist, it would always command support in the United States. Almost simultaneously with the re-organization of the I.R.B., a new secret organization with identical aims was formed in America - the Clan na Gael - but it did not have any communication with the I.R.B. until some time later. The Clan na Gael (also known as the United Brotherhood) was formed at a meeting held on 20 June 1867 at the house in Hester Street, New York, of Waterford-born James Sheedy. Everyone of the small number present at this meeting had been in the Fenian Brotherhood or the I.R.B. They decided to found an organization which would afford a common meeting ground for

¹² Michael Cavanagh and John O'Mahony, 'Resurgam on raising the green flag on the Erin's Hope Easter Sunday 1867,' MSS 3308, pp.101-3 (N.L.I.).

members of both ‘wings’ of the Fenian Brotherhood. The Clan na Gael was established as – “Fenianism without the factions” and its name appears to have been taken from O’Mahony’s favourite term for the Irish race in America – ‘Clanna Gaedhail’. From at least the 1850s onwards, O’Mahony had used this term in his writings and speeches.¹⁴ The man who inspired that meeting of 20 June 1867, and the movement that grew out of it, was Jerome J. Collins, a civil engineer from Dunmanway, County Cork. He had to flee from London in 1866 after a plot to rescue the Fenian prisoners in Pentonville prison became known to the government. Collins later served as the scientific editor of the *Herald* (New York)¹⁵

The Clan na Gael took over the role of the Fenian movement, which was no longer able to develop further due to internal dissension. Before the year was out O’Mahony and Roberts were sitting amicably together at the meetings of the Napper Tandy club in New York - the premier club of the Clan na Gael. Gradually a number of Fenians, recent Irish immigrants and others began to join the Clan na Gael. The records of the Fenian Brotherhood from 1867 onwards show serious defection to join the new organization. By 1874 the Clan na Gael had seven thousand members, and by 1877 this number had increased to eleven thousand.¹⁶

JOHN SAVAGE – CHIEF EXECUTIVE, 1867-71

After his escape from Ireland in the late autumn of 1848, O’Mahony’s comrade in arms, John Savage, made his way to New York where he arrived on 7 November. There he met County Tyrone born William Erigena Robinson¹⁷, who had emigrated to New York City in 1836 and at the time of Savage’s arrival was the editor of Thomas Devin Reilly’s *People* (New York), as well as a contributor to the *Tribune*

¹³ Leon Ó Broin, *Revolutionary underground: the story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924* (Dublin, 1976), pp. 10-17 (Hereafter cited as Ó Broin, *Revolutionary underground*).

¹⁴ Letter from John O’Mahony to P.M. Haverty, dated 27 Dec. 1856, printed in *Irish News* (New York), 3 Jan. 1857; *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn.... the History of Ireland, from the earliest period to the English invasion, by the Reverend Geoffrey Keating, D.D.* Translated from the original Gaelic and annotated by John O’Mahony (New York, 1857), p.7.

¹⁵ Seán Ó Lúing, *Fremantle mission* (Tralee, 1965), p. 43-7 (hereafter cited as Ó Lúing, *Fremantle mission*); *Devoy’s post bag*, pp.115, 165-6.

¹⁶ Ó Lúing, *Fremantle mission*, pp. 43-7; D’Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.385-6; Michael F. Funchion (ed.), *Irish American voluntary organizations* (Westport, Connecticut, 1983), pp.74-5 (Hereafter cited as Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*).

¹⁷ In 1867 Robinson was elected to sit in congress as the Democrat representative of Brooklyn.

(New York).¹⁸ Within a week of Savage's arrival, Robinson introduced him to New Hampshire born Horace Greeley, the founder-editor of the *Tribune* (New York), who installed Savage as a proof-reader for his paper. Beginning in January 1854 Savage was the literary editor of Mitchel's *Citizen* (New York), but it ceased publication one year later. For the next three years Savage earned a living by freelance journalism. In 1857 he went to Washington and there he became the leading editorial writer on the *States*, the organ of the leading Democrat Stephen Arnold Douglas, who defeated Abraham Lincoln for a seat in the Senate in 1858, and was his closest rival for the Presidency in 1860.¹⁹

At the outbreak of the American Civil War, Savage joined the Sixty-Ninth Regiment, under the command of General Michael Corcoran. In June 1864, Savage accepted a position as leading editorial writer on the *New Orleans Times*, remaining in New Orleans until March 1867. When news of the insurrection in Ireland reached the United States that same month, Savage came to New York City and offered his services to the Fenian Brotherhood.²⁰ Savage was very suitable as a Fenian leader for a number of reasons. He had become well known in American political circles (both Democrat and Republican), after writing the *Life and public services of Andrew Johnson* in 1866, and now had the potential to make the Fenian Brotherhood influential in United States politics. Because Savage had played no part in the dissensions which eventually led to the split, he had the potential of healing the rift and re-uniting the two 'wings' of the Fenian Brotherhood. A fifth Fenian convention meeting in New York at the end of February 1867 failed to heal the split; a sixth held on 22 August 1867 saw Savage, elected chief executive. Savage was re-elected to this position at the seventh convention, in August 1868, and again at the eight convention, on 25 August 1869 (both held in New York). He would remain at this position until 1871.²¹

In December 1869 President Johnson nominated Savage as United States Consul at Leeds, but a Senate committee reported adversely and the matter was tabled.²² Johnson's nomination of Savage as Consul shows the influence that the

¹⁸ Entry for 'William Erigena Robinson' in *Dictionary of American biography XIV* (1935), pp. 57-8.

¹⁹ Entry for 'John Savage' in *Dictionary of American biography XVI* (1935), pp. 388-9.

²⁰ Ibid; Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: the prairie years and the war years*, in three volumes (New York, 1954), vol.i, pp.81-82 (Hereafter cited as Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*).

²¹ *Irish People* (New York), 5 Sept. 1868 and 4 Sept. 1869; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.233, 265.

²² Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations during reconstruction* (Ithaca, 1969), pp.286-7 (Hereafter cited as Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations*).

Fenians still had with the American administration. The fact that many other nominations were sent at the same time probably influenced the Senate to reject the appointments of the retiring President. Savage was only one of a number of Fenians who tried to get appointed to consular positions in Britain and Ireland. In 1864, under Abraham Lincoln, another '48 man and Fenian, James Cantwell, had been nominated American consul at Dublin. The nomination was withdrawn as a result of the machinations of William West, the acting American consul in Dublin at this time. On 23 April 1864, West himself applied for, and later obtained the position.²³ In 1892, the Grover Cleveland administration appointed the Fenian Patrick A. Collins as United States Consul-General in London. Collins had joined the Fenian Brotherhood in 1864 and had remained loyal to O'Mahony during and after the 1866 split. Collins was elected mayor of Boston in 1901 and 1903, and in 1908 a monument was erected in his honour, by public subscription, on Commonwealth Avenue, Boston.²⁴ Cantwell, Savage and Collins, were all strong supporters of O'Mahony.

PAPAL CONDEMNATION, 1870

The catholic hierarchy increasingly feared that an outright clerical condemnation of Fenianism would lead many Irish-Americans to leave the catholic church, whose influence was already on the wane. This fear was justified by the turnout of over 100,000 people at the open air Fenian rally at Jones' Wood, New York, called by O'Mahony in March 1866, despite the condemnation of Archbishop McCloskey.

In late December 1869 the Irish bishops were in Rome for the opening of the first Vatican Council. On 22 of that month, the bishops, spearheaded by Cardinal Paul Cullen, drew up a memorial for *Propaganda Fide* requesting that the Fenians be condemned by name. It was because of their apparent weakness at this time that Cullen felt he could push it. The memorial was addressed to the Pope through the Holy Office and was adopted with only two Irish bishops, John McHale, of Tuam, and John Denny, of Clonfert, among the dissenters. Apart from his dislike of Cullen, McHale had probably not forgotten the assistance given by the Fenian Brotherhood to aid the poor and distressed people of Partry, County Mayo, in 1862 (see chapter five).

²³ *Irish People* (New York), 12 Dec. 1868; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp. 13-14, 309.

On 12 January 1870, the Vatican issued a decree explicitly condemning the Fenian Brotherhood. Its members were now automatically excommunicated. The British government had been seeking this for many months. After this evidence of the influence of British machinations on the Vatican, Rome would never again command the unquestionable loyalty of Irish nationalists. The papal condemnation made explicit what for more than a decade had been implicit, namely that it was impossible simultaneously to be a Catholic and a Fenian.²⁵

The overall impact of the papal declaration of 1870 was not very significant. By that time the Fenian Brotherhood's power was much reduced due to the split. Had the papal condemnation been issued four or five years earlier, thousands of Irish Americans would undoubtedly have been lost to the catholic church.²⁶ Fenian reaction in the United States to the news of the condemnation by Rome is expressed in the editorial of the *Irish People* (New York) of 19 March 1870:

If love of country be such a heinous sin, the bulk of the Irish catholics have been outside the pale of the church for the last seven hundred years. ...The Irish people, thanks to the Fenian Brotherhood, have learned to discriminate between matters spiritual and temporal.²⁷

It can be presumed that these are O'Mahony's words as he was the editor of the *Irish People* (New York) at this time.

While remaining a member, O'Mahony held no office in the Fenian Brotherhood from 1866 until August 1872. From 12 December 1868 to 8 October 1870, it appears O'Mahony devoted most of his energy to editing the *Irish People* (New York) and to an unsuccessful attempt to recover for the Fenian Brotherhood the funds covered by the drafts confiscated by the British government in their raid on the offices of the *Irish People* (Dublin) in September 1865.²⁸

²⁴ Entry for 'Patrick A. Collins' in *Dictionary of American biography, IV* (1930), pp.309-10.

²⁵ Oliver Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat* (Oxford, 1997), pp.127-9 (Hereafter cited as Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat*); Emmet Larkin, *The consolidation of the Roman catholic church in Ireland, 1860-1870* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 652-9.

²⁶ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.329-31.

²⁷ *Irish People* (New York), 19 Mar. 1870.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 24 Oct. 1868, 4. Sept. 1869; *Pilot* (Boston), 5 Sept. 1874. These funds were retained by the New York banker, Auguste Belmont after O'Mahony had unsuccessfully litigated against him.

CONVENTIONS 1870

On 31 December 1867, William R. Roberts resigned as president of the 'senate-wing'. Colonel John O'Neill, a leader of the Fenian invasion of Canada in 1866, was elected to succeed him as of 1 January 1868.²⁹ Roberts's Fenian record was a useful foundation for a career in the politics of the Democratic party in New York City; in 1870 he was elected to the United States Congress, as representative of the fifth congressional district and re-elected in 1872. For supporting Cleveland in his state and national campaigns, Roberts was rewarded with an appointment as United States minister to Chile from 1885 to 1889.³⁰ Patrick Egan, a prominent I.R.B. member and treasurer of the Land League, succeeded him in this position.³¹

Colonel John O'Neill split with the 'senate-wing' in early 1870, and managed to stage a futile raid on Canada in May of that year. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for violating the neutrality laws and was confined in Windsor Prison, Vermont.³²

At the convention of the 'senate-wing' in Cincinnati on 23 August 1870, the name 'Fenian' as applied to itself was abolished and the title of 'United Irishmen' was taken in its place. The constitution of this body of 'United Irishmen' provided for a directory of seven members, three of whom, it was hoped, would be chosen by the 'O'Mahony-wing,' which now alone claimed the title of Fenian Brotherhood.³³

The Fenians met in New York on 30 August 1870 for their ninth annual convention. Savage was re-elected chief executive and Patrick A. Collins submitted the proposal of the 'United Irishmen' to the convention, but it was rejected. Savage had a unity plan of his own. On 7 September 1870, a committee consisting of O'Mahony, Edward Counihan and Edward McSweeney went to visit Colonel John O'Neill at Windsor prison and a plan of union was agreed. It came four years too late to be fruitful.³⁴

²⁹ *Herald* (New York), 1 Jan. 1868.

³⁰ Entry for 'William Randall Roberts' in *Dictionary of American biography*, XVI (1935), pp.19-20; *Irish People* (New York), 12 and 19 Nov. 1870.

³¹ *Devoy's post bag*, p.441.

³² D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.363.

³³ I will henceforth refer to this 'wing' exclusively as the Fenian Brotherhood and its members as Fenians.

³⁴ *Irish American* (New York), 30 July 1870; *Proceedings of the ninth general convention of the Fenian Brotherhood* (New York, 1870), pp.5-29; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.363.

FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR, 1870

Following the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war in August 1870, there was some optimism in the United States that conditions in Europe were such that Britain might begin to find itself involved in the conflict. This prospect revived both general Fenian recruitment in America and further talk of unification of the fragmented movement, but once again such confidence proved short-lived. The Franco-Prussian war resulted in a crushing defeat for the French. The twin disasters at Metz and Sedan signalled the end of the Second Empire, as the Third Republic was proclaimed in Paris on 4 September 1870. The revival of Republicanism in France inspired a resuscitation of national resistance to the invader, but the armies of national defence were unable to stop the Prussian advance.³⁵

O'Mahony had supported the defence of the French Republic against Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*, in 1851. The success of the latter had been an important factor in O'Mahony's decision to move to the United States in 1853. In the *Irish People* (New York) of 29 October 1870, he wrote incisively that:

Without the naval and military support of America, an Irish republic, or even an independent Irish nation, could not exist for twelve months, IF FRANCE WERE TO REMAIN A MONARCHY MEANWHILE. If England's monarch were not able to crush it single-handed, the other tyrants of Europe would be forced, *for their own safety*, to aid her in its destruction. This is so obvious to any reasoning mind that it needs no discussion.

As the United States WILL not, during the present generation, lend aid to ANY people struggling for freedom, and the statesmen and politicians of this Republic are either too narrow-minded and selfish or too peddling, venal and corrupt to expect any broad-minded or generous action from America, the sole reliance of Irish republicans must therefore be placed for the present upon the republicans of France.

FRANCE IS NOW A REPUBLIC, and her continuance under that form of government is absolutely indispensable to the permanent establishment of Irish freedom. But this is reducing the cause at stake to a

very narrow and nationally selfish issue; for it is necessary to the freedom of all mankind. But we, as Irishmen, must regard it in a merely national light. The United States failing us, we must build all our hopes of national freedom upon the success and stability of the republic of France.

Ireland's cause no less than that of France is now at stake beneath the walls of Paris. If that city be taken, and a monarch be again forced upon the banner-nation of freedom and civilization by the barbarous hordes of the despot William of Prussia, we may give up our aspirations after the liberty of our Irish land and race during our natural lives. I assert this after mature consideration, and after a study of the Irish question, which has extended over considerably more than a quarter of a century.³⁶

It is evident in a letter, dated 3 November 1870, to the *Irish People* (New York) from a M. Cooney, of Chicago, Illinois, that plans were being made and money collected for an Irish-American ambulance corps of which Cooney was to be commander. The purpose of this ambulance corps was to bring medical relief to wounded French soldiers, as well as providing cover for the dispatch of Irishmen to fight for France.³⁷ M. Cooney is very likely the attorney and counsellor at law of that name who was in correspondence with John Devoy in 1876 regarding the *Catalpa* rescue mission of the six Fenian prisoners in Fremantle prison, Western Australia (see later in this chapter).³⁸

An address jointly written by J.P. Leonard (O'Mahony's friend from his years in Paris) and Patrick James Smyth, published in the *Irish People* (New York), of 12 November 1870, strongly urged Irishmen in America to send prompt aid to France.³⁹

³⁵ William H. C. Smith, *Second empire and commune 1848-1871* (London and New York, 1996), pp. 58-9 (Hereafter cited as Smith, *Second empire and commune*).

³⁶ Article by O'Mahony entitled 'Ireland's solidarity with France' in *Irish People* (New York), 29 Oct. 1870.

³⁷ Letter from M. Cooney to John O'Mahony, dated 3 Nov. 1870, printed in *Irish People* (New York), 19 Nov. 1870; Article by O'Mahony entitled 'An Irish ambulance corps in Chicago' in *Irish People* (New York), 19 Nov. 1870.

³⁸ Letter from M. Cooney to John Devoy, dated 26 May 1876, printed in *Devoy's post bag*, pp.171-2.

³⁹ 'The Irish in France to the Irish in America' in *Irish People* (New York), 12 Nov. 1870. Dublin born Patrick James Smyth had planned and participated in Mitchel's escape from Van Dieman's land in 1853. He was a Home Rule M.P. for Westmeath between 1871-9, and for Tipperary between 1880-2 Leonard, who had been granted French citizenship, was at the heart of the Irish-Parisian community. From the 1860s to the 1890s he played the part of a *chargé d'affaires* in Paris on behalf of an Irish government which was yet to come into existence: Janick Julienne, 'John Patrick Leonard (1814-1889) charge d'affaires d'un gouvernement Irlandais en France' in *Études Irlandaises*, No. 25-2, Automne 2000, pp.50-67.

In that same issue of the *Irish People* (New York) O'Mahony outlined the sound logic behind the Irish now aiding France:

The idea of sending direct to Ireland an armed expedition of Irish-Americans from these United States was once a favourite with me and with the Fenian Brotherhood. But while this Republic is ruled by such peddling politicians as [Ulysses Simpson] Grant, and time serving men of his stamp, it is idle to expect that any such expedition for the liberation of Ireland will be allowed to leave these shores in our day. Hence it is clearly now the duty of all our Irish Revolutionary organizations to ship all their available resources in men and war material for France while it is yet time. These of course would be immediately employed in defence of the French Republic. But they are certain, from the very nature of the present war and from the political necessities of Republican France, to be paid back to Ireland with tenfold interest as soon as French liberty is securely established and the Prussian hirelings expelled.⁴⁰

With the inauguration of the Union General, Ulysses Simpson Grant as Republican President of the United States, on 4 March 1869, the prospects of an Anglo-American war appeared far less likely than they had been under the administration of President Andrew Johnson. O'Mahony's political sense was wise and his judgement on Grant's serious shortcomings as President and the corruption of his administration proved to be correct. The several financial scandals involving members of the Grant administration proved conclusively that O'Mahony had taken his measure.⁴¹

In the *Irish People* (New York) of 3 December 1870, O'Mahony reiterated his appeal to Irish-America to provide aid in defence of the Republic, stating that 'The success of the present Republic of France is the great hope of all oppressed peoples today. It is the universal terror of all monarchs and oligarchs. It is Ireland's surest reliance for the attainment of her liberty'.⁴² O'Mahony clearly believed that the Republic was the only possible manifestation of Irish independence.

⁴⁰ Article by O'Mahony entitled 'The Irish "should" fight for France' in *Irish People* (New York), 12 Nov. 1870.

⁴¹ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.177-8, 240.

⁴² Article by O'Mahony entitled 'The Russian war cloud' in *Irish People* (New York), 3 Dec. 1870.

On 5 January 1871, the Prussians began a bombardment of the city of Paris. Finally on 19 January the French garrison asked for an armistice, which came into force on 28 January 1871; the Franco-Prussian war had ended. The elections for a national assembly the following month resulted in the election of Louis Adolphe Thiers as chief executive of the (Third) French Republic and in August its president. He immediately signed the Treaty of Frankfurt with Prussia by which France was forced to pay an indemnity of 5 billion francs and was stripped of Alsace and two thirds of Lorraine. The unification of Germany under Prussian hegemony, and the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, meant that France's principal enemy in the immediate future would be Prussia rather than her traditional rival, Britain. France had now lost her role as a military or political ally for Irish nationalists.⁴³

'IRISH CONFEDERATION', 1871

Both the Democrats and Republicans vied with one another in expressing sympathy for Irish national ambitions. The different party affiliations of those who constituted the two rival 'wings' of Fenianism had been another fault line in the Fenian Brotherhood prior to, and following, the split. It was in New York, where the Irish voted largely for the Democratic Party, that O'Mahony had the greatest support. By contrast, the Republican Party was strongest in the Mid-West and New England, where the 'senate-wing' drew most of their support. The 'senate-wing' were inclined to favour the Republican Party and were in turn championed by them. The *Irish Republic* (New York) founded in 1867 and edited by the former Fenian 'senator' Michael Scanlan, stood for General Ulysses Simpson Grant/Schuyler Colfax⁴⁴ in the presidential year of 1868. At a picnic of the 'senate-wing' in Chicago on 15 August 1866, Colfax and Governor Richard J. Oglesby, of Illinois, were the principal speakers.⁴⁵

At the end of 1870 The British government bowed to intense public pressure and offered amnesty to the Fenian prisoners, on condition that they spent the remaining portion of their sentences abroad. In early 1871, it was envisaged that the

⁴³ Smith, *Second empire and commune*, pp. 59-62; Janick Julienne, 'La France et L'Irlande nationaliste de 1860 à 1890: évolution et mutation de liens multiséculaires' in *Études Irlandaises*, No. 24-1, Printemps 1999, pp.124-36.

⁴⁴ Colfax (1823-85), former speaker of the House of Representatives, vice-president to Ulysses S. Grant, 1869-73.

arrival of the recently released Fenian prisoners in New York would put an end to all factions and become a focal point for a new and stronger Irish-American revolutionary organization. John Savage called for a convention of the Fenian Brotherhood, 'United Irishmen' and other Irish American societies to be held shortly after the arrival of the released prisoners, whose advice and co-operation would be sought in forming one united organization.⁴⁶ A generation earlier, in late 1853-4, the arrival of Mitchel and O'Mahony in New York had given rise to hopes of unity and effective leadership among the factions then forming among Irish-Americans.

On 19 January 1871, the first group of Fenian prisoners arrived in New York City, where they received an enthusiastic welcome. They were Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, Rosscarbery, County Cork; John Devoy, Kill, County Kildare; Harry Shaw Mulleda, Naas, County Kildare; Charles Underwood O'Connell, County Offaly, and John McClure, New York. Underwood O'Connell and McClure had both served in the United States army during the American Civil War. All five men travelled on the Cunard steamship, *Cuba*, and were henceforward known as the 'Cuba Five'.⁴⁷

As a White House reception was planned, both the Democrats and Republicans of New York strove for the honour of officially greeting the 'Cuba Five' and raced each other down the bay to meet the ship. First on board was the Republican collector of the port of New York, Thomas Murphy, who attempted to 'capture' the 'Cuba Five' on behalf of the Republicans. The Democrats, headed by a delegation from Tammany Hall led by Richard O'Gorman and William R. Roberts, arrived a few seconds later, and a verbal battle ensued between the rival factions for control of the Fenian heroes. The 'Cuba Five' wisely decided to steer clear of both groups and made their way to Sweeney's Hotel, spurning the palatial Astor House, where Tammany Hall had reserved suites for them. A round of receptions followed and a parade was held in their honour, in which Boss William M. Tweed, of New York, was grand marshal.⁴⁸

The popular enthusiasm which greeted the first five Fenians to reach the United States was extended to the others who arrived in the following months. They included Thomas Clarke Luby, Dublin; John O'Leary, Tipperary town; Colonel

⁴⁵ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.187-8.

⁴⁶ *Irish People* (New York), 21 Jan 1871.

⁴⁷ *Devoy's post bag* Vol. I, pp.10-13; O'Donovan Rossa, *Irish rebels*, p.312.

⁴⁸ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.370; *Herald* (New York), 31 Jan 1871; O'Donovan Rossa, *Irish Rebels*, pp.425-7.

William G. Halpin, County Meath; Colonel Ricard O'Sullivan Burke, Castletown-Kinneigh, County Cork; William Mackey Lomasney, Cincinnati, Ohio; Thomas F. Bourke, Fethard, County Tipperary; Captain John McCafferty, Sandusky, Ohio; William Francis Roantree, Leixlip, County Kildare, and Denis Dowling Mulcahy, Redmondstown, Clonmel, County Tipperary.⁴⁹ The Republican Congressman from Massachusetts, Benjamin Butler, introduced in the United States congress a resolution of welcome to the newly liberated Fenians.⁵⁰ Butler's resolution was passed by an overwhelming margin, 172 to 21; Republicans cast all the negative votes. On 22 February 1871 President Grant received the released Fenians in the White House.⁵¹

The newly liberated Fenians resolved to join none of the existing organizations but to make a fresh start themselves, and called for a new Irish organization which would be known as the 'Irish Confederation'. They invited all Irish American societies – nationalist, fraternal, benevolent, and cultural – to become affiliates of the 'Irish Confederation', provided they agreed to send it 25 per cent of their funds.⁵² In March 1871, The 'United Irishmen' voted to transfer their power and authority to the 'Irish Confederation'.⁵³

FENIAN CONVENTION, MARCH 1871/EMERGING ORGANIZATIONS

In 1855 O'Mahony had rejected the Emigrant Aid Society's proposal that the Emmet Monument Association should amalgamate with that society (see chapter five). O'Mahony was again prominent in Fenian affairs in 1871 and, as the founder of Fenianism, naturally opposed any amalgamation with the 'Irish Confederation'. O'Mahony apparently felt that this new organization should first prove itself – time would show he was right. The tenth general convention of the Fenian Brotherhood met in New York, on 21 March 1871. The delegates voted not to become integrated into the 'Irish Confederation'. The unwillingness of the Fenians to place themselves under the control of the 'Irish Confederation' provoked the personal animosity of

⁴⁹ Michael Kenny, *William Francis Roantree (1829-1918)*, (Dublin, 1996); *Devoy's Post Bag* Vol. I, pp.10-13; O'Donovan Rossa, *Irish rebels*, p.312.

⁵⁰ *Major-General B.F. Butler, Autobiography and personal reminiscences* (New York, 1893). Butler, a former Union General, exercised a marked influence over President Grant and was regarded as his spokesman in the House.

⁵¹ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.371-2.

⁵² *Ibid*; Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*, pp.165-8.

⁵³ *Irish People* (New York), 10 Mar. 1871.

Peter McCorry who had succeeded O'Mahony as editor of the *Irish People* (New York)⁵⁴ on 8 October 1870. The leading article of 1 April 1871, in that paper declared that 'We deliberately and emphatically pronounce John O'Mahony and John Savage to be the enemies of true union among all Irishmen in America'.⁵⁵ McCorry had been expelled from the Fenian Brotherhood the year before for accusing Savage of trying to use his position for political capital.

The 'Irish Confederation' had the support of five Irish American newspapers in New York; the *Irish American* (edited by P.J. Meehan), *Irish People* (edited by Peter McCorry), *Irish Citizen*, (edited by John Mitchel), *Irish Republic*, (edited by Michael Scanlan), and the *Irish World*, (edited by Patrick Ford). The only paper supporting the Fenian Brotherhood in 1871 was Stephen J. Meaney's *Irish Democrat* (New York).⁵⁶

Although the Fenian Brotherhood had voted to remain a separate entity distinct from the 'Irish Confederation', they were willing to co-operate with it. In August 1871, representatives from both organizations held a series of conferences. In the *Irish People* (New York) of 9 September 1871, it was revealed that an agreement had been reached to set up of an 'allied council' composed of two members from each organization and a chairman to be agreed upon jointly. The 'allied council' was designed to coordinate the revolutionary activities of the two organizations but it never got off the ground.⁵⁷

One of the Fenian members of the 'allied council' was William G. Halpin, whom O'Mahony had designated to act as his representative in making overtures to the 'senate-wing' in April 1866 (see chapter eight). The other Fenian member on the 'allied council' was George Cahill, of Quincy, Massachusetts. The 'Irish Confederation' was represented by Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa and Thomas Clarke Luby. The fifth member, chosen by the other four representatives was P.J. Meehan. The short-lived 'Irish Confederation' disbanded in the spring of 1873, by which time it had become obvious that it was never going to amount to anything more than just another Irish American nationalist faction.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ As may be remembered the *Irish People* (New York) had been started as the newspaper organ of 'O'Mahony-wing' of the Fenian Brotherhood on 20 January 1866.

⁵⁵ *Irish People* (New York), 1 Apr. 1871.

⁵⁶ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.379.

⁵⁷ *Irish People* (New York), 9 Sept. 1871.

FENIAN CONVENTION 1872

By 1872, the Fenian Brotherhood was confined chiefly to New York and a section of Massachusetts.⁵⁹ This reflected the days of the Emmet Monument Association. The Clan na Gael was now the most powerful Irish-American revolutionary organization. In the spring of 1872, O'Mahony went on a lecture tour throughout the United States describing 'Ireland's revolutionary struggle from 1848 to 1872'.⁶⁰ At the eleventh general convention of the Fenian Brotherhood held in New York in August of that year, O'Mahony was elected chief secretary, a title equivalent to that of former head centre. The office of chief executive had been abolished at the previous year's convention. O'Mahony would lead the Fenian Brotherhood, now a shadow of its former strength, for the remaining years of his life.⁶¹

The long-standing feud between John O'Mahony and the former Fenian 'senator' Michael Scanlan came to an end in 1872. In his *Irish Republican* (Washington D.C.), Scanlan conceded that:

With John O'Mahony we have had some differences. We differed with him because of his slowness. We have often wondered latterly whether O'Mahony was too slow or whether we were too fast. We are inclined to think now that he was as advanced as were the Irish people and moved as fast as it was safe to travel.⁶²

Throughout his public life in politics, O'Mahony consistently proved that he was prepared to work with fellow nationalists with whom he had past differences, including P. J. Meehan and W. R. Roberts. But perhaps the best example of this is O'Mahony's readiness to continue working with James Stephens in spite of his instrumental role in undermining O'Mahony's authority in the Fenian Brotherhood. It is hard to dismiss the strong bond between O'Mahony and Stephens, forged during their together years in Paris, as a factor in O'Mahony's continuing loyalty and regard

⁵⁸ *Pilot* (Boston), 7 June 1873.

⁵⁹ *Irish People* (New York), 31 Aug. 1872.

⁶⁰ *Times* (New York), 6 Mar. 1872.

⁶¹ *Irish People* (New York), 5 Oct. 1872.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 21 Sept. 1872, reprinted from the *Irish Republican*. In New York it was the *Irish Republic*, but when Scanlan moved the paper to Washington, in April 1872, the name was changed to *Irish Republican: D'Arcy, Fenian movement*, p.385.

for Stephens. Desmond Ryan claims that when Stephens arrived in the United States in September 1871 as agent for a wine house of Bordeaux, O'Mahony welcomed him.⁶³ O'Mahony recognised Stephens ability and commitment in certain areas but he does not appear to have had any affection for him. In June 1882, five years after O'Mahony's death, Stephens wrote in the *Irishman* (Dublin): 'In his grave today John O'Mahony is dearer to me than any other man dead or alive'.⁶⁴ O'Mahony had a rare talent for making and keeping friends.

AMERICAN GAEL (NEW YORK), 1873

In 1873 the Fenian Brotherhood founded the Irish National Publishing Company and established two New York newspapers - the *American Gael* and the *Sunday Citizen*. O'Mahony had been bequeathed \$500 by Kilkenny born Michael Phelan who died in 1871. This money was used in starting the two new Fenian papers.⁶⁵ Phelan had been a co-founder of the Irish Republican Union and later had become an early member of the Fenian Brotherhood. He won fame in the United States both as a billiard player and manufacturer of billiard tables and was a benefactor of the Fenians on numerous occasions.⁶⁶

The Fenians appointed O'Mahony editor of the *American Gael* (New York). In a letter dated 13 June 1873, O'Mahony wrote to Captain John McCafferty in relation to his role as editor of the *American Gael* (New York), stating that 'My great object is to conciliate all that are honest and sincere of my fellow countrymen in America and to rally them once more in one patriotic phalanx'.⁶⁷ O'Mahony wished to regain the support of the old Fenians who had left the now much-weakened Fenian Brotherhood.

O'Mahony consistently resisted attempts by Irish-American politicians, and some ambitious American Fenians, to gain political capital from the Fenian

⁶³ Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian chief: a biography of James Stephens* (Dublin, 1967), pp. 273-6 (Hereafter cited as Ryan, *Fenian chief*).

⁶⁴ Quoted in Desmond Ryan 'John O'Mahony 1815-1877' in T.W. Moody (ed.) *The Fenian movement* (Cork, 1968), p.63.

⁶⁵ *Boston Pilot*, 12 July 1873; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, 386.

⁶⁶ John O'Mahony, 'Death of Michael Phelan' in *Irish People* (New York), 21 Oct. 1871; Michael Cavanagh, 'Our dead Comrades - Captain Michael Phelan' in *Celtic Magazine*, I (1882), pp.17-25; D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, p.387.

⁶⁷ Letter from John O'Mahony to John McCafferty, 13 June 1873 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.).

Brotherhood. At the Fenian Convention of August 1873, O'Mahony charged that some (unnamed) Fenians had attempted to sell the support of the *American Gael* (New York) the previous year to American politicians. In 1872 Benjamin F. Butler had offered \$1000 to the Fenians if they had supported his effort to obtain the Republican nomination for the governorship of Massachusetts.⁶⁸

The *American Gael* (New York) was started at an unfortunate time. The Panic of 1873 hit the American working class (of whom the Irish formed a large proportion) particularly hard. It was this class upon whom the Fenians had come increasingly to rely for financial support. With the prospect of continued unemployment confronting them, Irishmen were not going to spend two dollars a year on a newspaper. As a consequence the *American Gael* (New York) never attained a large circulation. O'Mahony resigned as editor of the paper in the spring of 1874, by which time it was \$15,000 in debt. James Haltigan, who had been president of Clan na Gael in 1871 and editor of the *Sunday Citizen* in 1873, succeeded O'Mahony as editor of the *American Gael* (New York), but the journalistic venture collapsed a short time later.⁶⁹ James Haltigan was a son of John Haltigan, the foreman printer of the *Irish People* (Dublin), whom O'Mahony had first met in Kilkenny City during his visit to Ireland in 1861.⁷⁰

FENIAN CONVENTIONS 1873 AND 1874

The twelfth general convention of the Fenian Brotherhood met in New York in August 1873. O'Mahony was re-elected chief secretary and a board of nine financial trustees selected. They were John Barry, New York City; George Cahill, Quincy, Massachusetts; Patrick Dunn, Brooklyn, New York; John J. Marrin, Albany, New York; Edward Whalen, Paterson, New Jersey; John Murphy, New York City; George Smith, Greenpoint, Long Island, New York; Daniel McCluskey, New York City; Patrick H. Ford, Brooklyn, New York.⁷¹ The Executive Council, which was the governing body, consisted of these nine men and O'Mahony.

⁶⁸ D'Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp.390-1.

⁶⁹ Ibid; Funchion, *Irish American voluntary organizations*, p.112.

⁷⁰ Joseph Denieffe, *A personal narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood* (Shannon, 1969), pp.8-9.

⁷¹ Galway born Patrick H. Ford was the founder and editor of the *Irish World* (New York) which debated Irish social as well as political questions. He was a spokesman for American labour as well as for Irish freedom: Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp.347-8.

Although only a shadow of its former strength, the 1873 convention voted for the continuance of Fenianism. The delegates adopted this significant resolution:

The policy of the Fenian Brotherhood can never be changed; nor can the Fenian Brotherhood, or any of its members, ever join any organization or man in an attack on Canada, or on any other territory on this side of the Atlantic, except with the consent of the government of the United States. That the Fenian Brotherhood, as now incorporated and constituted, shall never be dissolved, nor suffered to be dissolved or weakened, until the object of Fenianism shall have been fully attained.⁷²

This resolution indicates that the Fenian Brotherhood did not rule out the possibility of a future attack on Canada, if United States support proved forthcoming. It also indicates they had their tacit consent in 1866, but not in 1870.

While it is tempting to see the Fenian Brotherhood as a spent force after 1867, its actual strength ought not to be underestimated. The United States administration had exploited the continuing threat posed to Britain by the Fenian movement in pressing its case for settlement of the ‘Alabama claims’ – a demand for compensation for the damages suffered by Union shipping during the Civil War from the *Alabama* and other Confederate raiders which had been built in British shipyards. The Treaty of Washington, ratified in May 1871, had provided for the submittal of the ‘Alabama claims’ to a Geneva tribunal for arbitration. On 9 September 1873 this significant cause of Anglo-American tension was removed (shortly after the close of the Fenian convention) by Britain’s payment of \$15,500,000 to the United States. This agreement had been reached after long negotiations during the course of which the ‘Fenian card’ had played an important role.⁷³

The thirteenth general convention of the Fenian Brotherhood met in New York, in August 1874. O’Mahony was re-elected head centre, the title of chief secretary having been discarded. A central council of ten members was elected which included John Murphy, John Barry and George Smith from the previous year’s council. Three of the remaining seven members elected to the central council had

⁷² *Constitution and By-Laws of the Fenian Brotherhood : as adopted at the twelfth general convention, held in the City of New York, 1873* (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.).

⁷³ D’Arcy, *Fenian movement*, pp. 218, 388-9; Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations*, p.253.

been prominent in the now defunct 'Irish Confederation' - Thomas Clarke Luby, Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa and Thomas Francis Bourke. The remaining four members of the Fenian central council were John Sullivan, Chicago, Illinois; John Lysaght, New York City; William Mackey Lomasney, Cincinnati, Ohio; and John D. Driscoll, Boston, Massachusetts.⁷⁴

The delegates at the 1874 convention (with O'Mahony's support) passed a resolution which stated that

It is the opinion of the delegates to this (the fourteenth) General Convention of the Fenian Brotherhood that the restoration of James Stephens to the proud position he once occupied and filled with such credit to himself and credit to Ireland is of paramount importance to the cause of Irish nationality at home and abroad.⁷⁵

The Fenian Brotherhood was not linked with the I.R.B. at this time. This resolution was ineffectual in Ireland due to the weakness of Stephens's faction.

THE CATALPA RESCUE, 17 APRIL 1876

The Clan na Gael convention held at Baltimore, Maryland, between 15 and 22 July 1874, was presided over by Jeremiah Kavanagh - a member of the Fenian delegation that had accompanied the remains of McManus to Ireland in 1861. O'Donovan Rossa, Luby and Bourke (all of whom were on the central council of the Fenian Brotherhood) also attended the convention.⁷⁶ This overlap in personnel was probably the result of both organizations' commitment to building up a formidable Irish-American revolutionary movement again.

One group of Fenian prisoners were refused release, despite the amnesty campaign. These were the so-called 'soldier Fenians', serving members of the British army who had been sentenced to penal servitude for life and transported to the British penal colony of Fremantle, Western Australia. A committee of ten, with John Devoy

⁷⁴ *Constitution and by-laws of the Fenian Brotherhood: as adopted at the thirteenth general convention, held in the City of New York, August 1874* (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.)

⁷⁵ *Irish World* (New York), 19 Feb. 1876.

⁷⁶ *Devoy's post bag*, I, pp.14-15, 49-50; Devoy, *Recollections*, pp.128-60; Ó Lúing, *Fremantle mission*, pp.50, 58-62; Ó Broin, *Revolutionary underground*, p.5.

as chairman, were entrusted by the Baltimore convention with the duty of organizing the rescue of these remaining Fenian prisoners (Martin J. Hogan, James Wilson, Thomas J. Hassett, Michael Harrington, Robert Cranston and Thomas Darragh).⁷⁷

The activities of the Fenian Brotherhood during early 1875 were directed towards raising the necessary funds to aid in the rescue of the six Fenian prisoners. A whaling ship was purchased and advice received from Fenians who had already escaped from Australia. In 1869, Meath born John Boyle O'Reilly had escaped from Fremantle to the United States, on board the whaler *Gazelle*. Boyle O'Reilly had joined the British army in order to recruit Fenians and had risen to the rank of officer in the Queen's Royal Hussars. His escape had proved to Devoy that the *Catalpa* rescue was possible.⁷⁸

In April 1875, the whaler *Catalpa*, under a Captain George Anthony, sailed out of New Bedford, Massachusetts, on an epic voyage which took her, via the Azores, to the coast of western Australia, where she arrived on 28 March 1876. The actual escape was planned and carried out by a group already in place under Drogheda born John J. Breslin aided by Australian Fenians. Breslin was a very effective operator and had masterminded the escape of James Stephens from Richmond Prison, on 24 November 1865. Two I.R.B. men, Middlesbrough born John Walsh and Cork born Denis Florence McCarthy also played a part in the *Catalpa* rescue mission.⁷⁹

The six Fenian prisoners were rescued on 17 April 1876 and the *Catalpa* sailed back to America. On their arrival in New York on 19 August 1876, the captain, crew and released prisoners received a tumultuous welcome. The *Catalpa* expedition was a huge morale booster for Fenians worldwide.⁸⁰

FENIAN CONVENTION 1876

The Fenian Brotherhood did not hold a convention in 1875. Their fourteenth general convention met in session from 27 January to 1 February 1876, with 77 delegates attending. Central councillor George Smith acted as permanent president and O'Mahony was re-elected head centre. Smith along with Thomas Clarke Luby,

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Devoy's post bag Vol. I, pp. 81-2, 109-10; Ó Broin, *Revolutionary underground*, p. 15; Ó Lúing, *Fremantle mission*, pp.47-50.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, Thomas Francis Bourke, John Sullivan, John Murphy, John Barry and John Lysaght were re-elected to the central council. The only new member was T.H. O'Brien of Long Island, New York.⁸¹ The Address of the new central council, published in the *Irish World* (New York) of 26 February 1876, admitted that 'The Fenian Brotherhood, we regret to say, has effected comparatively little during the past 16 months. This was chiefly owing to the unprecedented depression of the times all through the Union'.⁸² The Fenian Brotherhood could not have held together without O'Mahony.

In what was to be his last address as head centre to a general convention of the Fenian Brotherhood, O'Mahony included the following realistic appraisal:

Discord, betrayal, vain ambition and selfish wrong-headedness, fickleness and want of faith have reduced the Fenian Brotherhood from the proud position which it held in 1865 to its present comparatively weak and powerless position. Its strength today consists principally in the abiding faith of its actual members and in their persistent determination to persevere in patriotic endeavour until the liberation of Ireland shall be accomplished. Still in numbers and resources it exceeds its immediate parent, the Emmet Monument Association of 1857, at which time the latter organization was undertaking the resurrection of our prostrated and apparently defunct nationality and inaugurated the Fenian Movement.... Weak in numbers and resources, as you see the Fenian Brotherhood at present, I know of no immediate hope for Ireland from America outside its ranks. You will therefore cherish and maintain it until its object be accomplished when liberated Ireland will no longer need its existence.⁸³

It is implied here that once the Irish people were in the position to determine their own affairs, O'Mahony would happily retire from politics. This is consistent with his wish in 1848 to confine his role to that of a 'partisan'.⁸⁴ The Fenian Brotherhood,

⁸¹ *Irish World* (New York), 12 Feb. 1876; *Constitution and by-laws of the Fenian Brotherhood: as adopted at the fourteenth general convention, held in the City of New York, August 1876* (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.).

⁸² *Irish World* (New York), 26 Feb. 1876.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Personal narrative of my connection with the attempted rising of 1848* by John O'Mahony (N.L.I., MS 868), p.17.

under O'Mahony's leadership, consistently pledged itself to the principle that the only hope for Irish regeneration lay in an armed rising for an independent Republic. He had enough of support to continue the much smaller Fenian Brotherhood as a separate organization to the Clan na Gael.

THE RUSSIAN WAR CLOUD

In 1875 Anglo-Russian tension over the struggle for power in the Balkans raised the possibility that Britain might become involved in a war with Russia.⁸⁵ By late 1876 there appeared to be thoughts among Irish-American revolutionaries of again opening negotiations with the Russian government. In a letter dated 17 November 1876, a William M. Curry wrote to O'Mahony from Washington that 'Many years ago, if I am not mistaken, you were one of those who had some negotiations with the Russian Minister in Washington. Would it not be well to try to re-open the negotiations now?'⁸⁶ The author of this letter was probably the corporal of the 87th Royal Irish Fusiliers of the same name, whom Devoy described as 'the most efficient man I ever had'.⁸⁷

Curry was urging a renewal of the policy initiated by Mitchel, and seconded by the Emmet Monument Association, during the period of the Crimean War. O'Mahony was always willing to contemplate military action if the international circumstances were opportune but was now in no position to undertake this task, as he was already in physical decline.⁸⁸ On 1 November 1876, a delegation from the Clan na Gael visited M. Shiskin, the Russian minister in Washington, to see if his government would consider assisting them. The Russian minister showed little enthusiasm, stating that only in the case of a war between Britain and Russia could his government enter into direct negotiation with Irish revolutionaries.⁸⁹

The Emmet Monument Association, under the leadership of O'Mahony and Doheny, was actually the only Irish-American revolutionary organization to make any serious headway in the procurement of military aid from Russia.

⁸⁵ Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations*, p.321.

⁸⁶ William M. Curry to O'Mahony, 17 Nov. 1876 (Fenian Brotherhood collection, C.U.A.).

⁸⁷ *Devoy's post bag* Vol. I, pp.106-9, 150-1.

⁸⁸ O'Mahony to William M. Curry, 23 Nov. 1876 (Margaret McKim Maloney collection: O'Donovan Rossa papers, box 4, N.Y.P.L.).

FINAL DAYS

John Boyle O'Reilly has left a moving picture of O'Mahony in his final years with everything he had, including his health, spent in the cause of Ireland:

A tall gaunt figure – the mere framework of a mighty man; a large lustreless face, with deep-sunken introverted eyes; faded, lightish hair, worn long to the shoulders; an overcoat always buttoned, as if to hide the ravages of wear and tear on the inner garments; something of this, and something too of gentleness and knightlihood, not easily described, were in the awkward and slow-moving figure, with melancholy and abstracted gaze, so well known to Irishmen of New York as John O'Mahony, the Head Centre.⁹⁰

Apparently sensing his approaching end, O'Mahony tendered his resignation as head centre of the Fenian Brotherhood at the fifteenth general convention, which met in session from Monday 29 January to Friday 2 February 1877. O'Donovan Rossa was elected head centre.⁹¹

Some days after the convention, O'Mahony was found dying in frugal circumstances in his apartment at 47 Beekman Street, Brooklyn⁹² by two of his faithful friends, Thomas Clarke Luby and Dr Denis Dowling Mulcahy.⁹³ O'Mahony had handled vast sums of money donated to the Fenian cause (\$463,000 was collected in America for Fenian purposes from the winter of 1858 to the summer of 1866⁹⁴) yet he was to end his days practically penniless. He was too unselfish, and perhaps too proud, to make his needs known. John Savage hurried to O'Mahony's bedside, and other devoted friends came before the end. They included Richard O'Gorman, Bernard Doran Killian, William Kennealy, John Barry, and George Smith. Dr Dwyer of Harlem, Dr John Griffin of Brooklyn as well as Dr Denis Dowling Mulcahy,

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp.209-12; Ó Broin, *Revolutionary underground*, pp.15-17.

⁹⁰ John Boyle O'Reilly, 'The dream of John O'Mahony' reproduced without source given in Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*, pp.21-3.

⁹¹ *Irish World* (New York), 10 Feb. 1877.

⁹² This is the last address listed for O'Mahony in the Brooklyn and New York City Directories.

⁹³ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.271.

⁹⁴ *Irish People* (New York), 4 July 1868.

residing at Newark, New Jersey, did everything that lay in their power to relieve and save O'Mahony. Their efforts were too late. O'Mahony passed away on 6 February 1877. The cause of death was a lung disease. On O'Mahony's passing, Dr Dowling Mulcahy was heard to say almost to himself: 'Well, he was a great man'. Mulcahy would lead the official six-man delegation which accompanied the body to Ireland for burial.⁹⁵

On the death of O'Mahony, the news flashed through the Irish community that the head centre and outstanding leader of the Fenian Brotherhood had passed on. To a man so little concerned with worldly goods poverty did not matter. John Boyle O'Reilly wrote of O'Mahony:

He was not merely the guide and fabricator of Fenianism. He, more than any man alive or dead, was the subtending principle of the movement. Its single-heartedness and devotion were his, no matter whose its narrowness and shortcomings. Stephens was the "Chief Organizer," but John O'Mahony was the "Head Center." His whole life and aspirations were bound up in one word – Fenianism.⁹⁶

O'Mahony was the incarnation of his cause as he envisaged it, sincere, honest and unselfish in pursuing his vision of a culturally revitalized and independent Irish Republic. The Fenian Brotherhood under his leadership emerged to become the largest, and most enduring, Irish revolutionary organization in the United States.

During his life of exile, O'Mahony continued an affectionate correspondence with his sister, Jane Maria, and her family, in Ireland. In a letter to his nephew, Francis Mandeville, circa 1862, he confided such thoughts as:

It often makes me feel sad in my moments of rest to think that I am doomed to go through life without my private or domestic duties as a relief from my political toils. I must work on for my country whilst I live, without any object

⁹⁵ Thomas Clarke Luby, 'The Father of Fenianism: Personal reminiscences of Colonel John O'Mahony' in *Irish World* (New York), 14 Apr. 1877 (Hereafter cited as Luby, 'Personal reminiscences').

⁹⁶ John Boyle O'Reilly, 'The dream of John O'Mahony' reproduced without source given in Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*, p. 22.

whereby my private and personal affections can be satisfied. Such is the meed of patriotism.⁹⁷

O'Mahony found life as a revolutionary leader distressing; his loneliness as well as his selfless devotion to his cause is palpable in the above reflection. In a letter to his sister, Jane Maria, dated 24 October 1864, O'Mahony's tremendous mental resolve is clearly evident:

For myself, I am neither very happy nor very content as far as my personal lot is concerned. My road is a hard one to travel, but now that I am so far entered upon it I must foot it to the end of my tether. I am full of hope for the success of my work, but not for myself. I long for quiet and repose, but these I shall never find on earth.⁹⁸

On Monday 6 February 1877, John O'Mahony finally found peace.

O'MAHONY'S FUNERAL

The embalming process completed, the remains of O'Mahony were deposited in the officer's room of the armoury of the Sixty-Ninth Regiment in New York City, where they lay in state throughout the week (from 6 to 12 February). A guard of honour from the regiment kept silent and continuous watch beside the corpse, while an estimated 30,000 people passed daily through the armoury to take a last glance at O'Mahony's well-known features. On the evening of Monday, 12 February, the remains were taken to St Francis Xavier's church on 16th Street, New York City. On the following morning, Tuesday, 13 February, Fr Dooley officiated as celebrant of Requiem Mass with Fr White as deacon.⁹⁹ It was at this same church that Requiem Mass had been celebrated for Thomas Francis Meagher on 14 July 1867.¹⁰⁰

The O'Mahony funeral, like that of Terence Bellew McManus in 1861, was a massive public occasion. An estimated twenty thousand people rallied and marched

⁹⁷ John O'Mahony to Francis Mandeville, circa 1862, in Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*, p.79.

⁹⁸ John O'Mahony to Jane Maria Mandeville, 24 October 1864, in Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs*, p.87.

⁹⁹ *Irish World* (New York), 17 Feb. 1877.

behind the coffin from St Francis Xavier's church to the pier where the Pacific steamship, *Dakota*, awaited to bear O'Mahony's body to Ireland. The hearse was drawn by four black horses and was attended by a guard of honour. The Brooklyn City Council delegated a committee of five aldermen to attend the funeral. The funeral ceremonies in New York City took on all the trappings of a state funeral, which included Judges Daly and Duffy among the pall-bearers, some '48 men, as well as leading members of the Fenian Brotherhood and the Clan na Gael. They included; Richard O'Gorman, John Savage, Dr Denis Dowling Mulcahy, David Power Conyngham, John Devoy, James Haltigan, William Francis Roantree, John J. Breslin, Thomas Francis Bourke, Thomas Clarke Luby, Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, George Smith, John Barry and Patrick H. Ford. Next followed the Fenian Brotherhood, 1,200 strong; the Clan na Gael, over 3,000; the St Patrick's Mutual Alliance, 2,000, and various branches of Fr Mathew's Temperance Organization of New York City and New Jersey. Colonel James Cavanagh, of the Sixty-Ninth, commanded the whole as Brigadier-General. About 200 carriages, among whom were many representatives of Irish associations in other American cities, completed the procession.¹⁰¹

O'Mahony's old colleagues in the Fenian Brotherhood joined forces with the Clan na Gael to send his body home for burial. G.W. Gibson, the agent for the Williams and Guion Steamship Line wrote to head centre O'Donovan Rossa offering to ship the remains to Ireland without charge.¹⁰² A delegation of prominent Irish-Americans, Fenians and Clan na Gael activists, travelled with the remains on the ship to Ireland. They included Dr Denis Dowling Mulcahy as chairman, William Francis Roantree, William Cusack (both resident in Philadelphia), Stephen J. O'Kelly and Thomas J. Gill (both residents of New York City). On its arrival in Queenstown (Cobh), on the morning of Friday 23 February, the ship was received by the funeral committee of the town. This committee included the town commissioner and member of the supreme council of the I.R.B., Charles Guilfoyle Doran as well as the '48 veteran and friend of O'Mahony, Stephen Joseph Meaney. The other members of the committee were Michael Joseph Barry (Manchester), John Sarsfield Casey

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Keneally, *The great shame: the story of the Irish in the old world and the new* (London, 1998), p. 473 (Hereafter cited as Keneally, *The great shame*).

¹⁰¹ *Irish American* (New York), 3 Mar. 1877; *Irish World* (New York), 10, 17, 24 Feb; 3, 10, 17, 31 Mar. 1877; Devoy, *Recollections*, p.271; Keneally, *The great shame*, p. 289.

¹⁰² Letter from G.W. Gibson to O'Donovan Rossa, dated 7 Feb. 1877, printed in the *Irish World* (New York), 17 Feb. 1877.

(Mitchelstown), Fr Eugene Sheehy (Kilmallock), J. A. O'Connell, Patrick McCarthy and Richard O'Sullivan.¹⁰³

The remarks of Denis Dowling Mulcahy on his arrival in Queenstown seemed appropriate:

Had we honoured O'Mahony while living as we now honour him when dead, his life might have been prolonged many years.... But a cause which can point to patriots as pure as John O'Mahony – men of incorruptible integrity and uncompromising principle – will not die, and cannot be put down.¹⁰⁴

In the performance of the duties of his position as Fenian head centre in the United States, O'Mahony epitomised the Fenian spirit of dedication to the cause of Irish independence. It was this same spirit that enabled Fenianism to survive defeat, imprisonment and religious censure.

O'Mahony's body was transferred by hearse to St Colman's cathedral, Queenstown with the approval of Dr John McCarthy, the Bishop of Cloyne, probably through the influence of Charles Guilfoyle Doran, who was clerk of works to the cathedral. Fr David Barry officiated as celebrant of Requiem Mass. O'Mahony's remains were guarded all day by relief squads, in strict military style, under command of one or other of the American deputation. In the evening a procession with torchlights was formed, preceded by a band playing the Dead March of Saul to a specially chartered steamer, which that night bore the remains away to Cork City.¹⁰⁵

On arrival at a hugely crowded Albert Quay, the Cork funeral committee awaited the body, which was taken to the Democratic club-rooms in Duncan street, escorted by an immense torchlight procession. The Cork funeral committee consisted of '48 man and *Catalpa* rescuer Denis Florence McCarthy, James O'Connor, the editor of the *Irishman* (Dublin), Patrick Neville Fitzgerald¹⁰⁶ (Midleton), W. O'Rearden, J. Lennan, L. Hynes and D. O'Brien. Several bands played funeral dirges and thousands of people thronged the route. The remains lay in state at the

¹⁰³ *Cork Examiner* (Cork), 24, 26 Feb. 1877; *Irishman* (Dublin), 17, 24 Feb 1877; *Irish World* (New York), 17, 24 Mar. 1877; Ryan, *Fenian chief*, pp. 300, 346.

¹⁰⁴ *Cork Examiner* (Cork), 24 Feb. 1877; *Nation* (Dublin), 3 Mar. 1877.

¹⁰⁵ *Cork Examiner* (Cork), 24, 26 Feb. 1877; *Irish World* (New York), 17, 24 Mar. 1877; *Catholic Directory* (1877), pp.192-93.

¹⁰⁶ Fitzgerald was a prominent figure in the I.R.B. and later the G.A.A.

Democratic club-rooms, on Saturday night, guarded by relays of squads in military style.¹⁰⁷

At about 2 o'clock on Sunday 25 February, an immense body of trades' societies and sympathisers from the surrounding towns were put in motion as a grand funeral procession which moved in regulated order from the Democratic club-rooms. Thousands thronged the streets through which the funeral cortege passed, and the procession was a mile long. The coffin was covered with the flag of the late Ninety-Ninth Regiment of the New York National Guard of which O'Mahony had been colonel, and the American and Irish colours. It was borne on a bier drawn by six horses; there were eight pall-bearers, and many deputies came to assist them from England, Dublin and some towns in Munster. The pall-bearers were Messrs. W.C. Power (Tralee), P. O'Keefe (Kanturk), J.W. McNerney (Limerick), John Darker (Mallow), James O'Connor (Dublin), Jeremiah Donovan (Mitchelstown), John Sarsfield Casey (Mitchelstown) and an O'Reagan (Bolton). Immediately after the hearse walked O'Mahony's nephews Frank, John, James and Ambrose Mandeville and his cousin Thomas O'Mahony, along with the delegation from the United States. Next came Messrs James Francis Xavier O'Brien¹⁰⁸ (Cork), W.M. O'Sullivan M.P. (Kilmallock), Alderman D.J. Galvin, Charles Guilfoyle Doran, Richard O'Sullivan (both of the Cobh funeral committee) and others. The Democratic Club of Cork followed them along with the trade organizations with their banners draped.¹⁰⁹

When O'Mahony's remains reached Cork railway station at about 5 o'clock that evening, they were placed in the goods store and watched in military style throughout the night. At half-past ten the following morning, Monday, 26 February, the train conveyed the remains from Cork to Dublin. At all the stations through which the train passed large crowds awaited the expected arrival of the body. Reception committees met and welcomed the American delegation, which accompanied the body by train to Dublin. The largest public demonstrations of sympathy were made at Charleville and Limerick Junction.¹¹⁰ As Dr Dowling Mulcahy, the chairman of the delegation reminded those in attendance, O'Mahony was being brought home, 'not merely to find him an Irish grave' but to pass on his legacy to a new generation.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *Cork Examiner* (Cork), 24, 26 Feb. 1877.

¹⁰⁸ Fenian leader and M.P. for Mayo, 1885-1895; Cork City, 1895-1905.

¹⁰⁹ *Cork Examiner* (Cork), 24, 26 Feb. 1877.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Irishman* (Dublin) 24 Feb. 1877; *Nation* (Dublin) 3 Mar. 1877.

Charles J. Kickham, the president of the supreme council, was chairman of the O'Mahony funeral committee and its secretary was James O'Connor. They formally asked Archbishop Paul Cullen for permission to allow the body to be placed in the pro-cathedral, Marlborough Street, or some other church in Dublin City, for O'Mahony's lying in state. In response to this request, Cullen addressed a very bitter letter to the O'Mahony funeral committee, dated 23 February 1877, refusing permission and stating that:

I am unaware that O'Mahony contributed any signal service for his country: but I believe that he rather provoked hostile legislation against us. I have been unable to learn that he was a great benefactor of the church. On the contrary he is said to have written in a spirit hostile to it. He was the Head Center of the Fenians and collected large sums to promote their absurd movements. Were I to allow his remains to lie in the Cathedral, I should seem to approve his religious and public conduct and his projects relative to Ireland, a responsibility which I am not at all inclined to assume.¹¹²

However, Cullen's refusal to allow the coffin into the pro-cathedral, or any other catholic church, did not prevent O'Mahony from being given a great public funeral.

The remains arrived in Dublin railway station at half-past seven on the evening of Monday 26 February. From six to eight thousand men marched in close military line and measured paces behind the hearse, which passed along the quays, through Sackville (nowadays O'Connell) Street and then into Lower Abbey Street after this. Following the precedent set at the McManus obsequies sixteen years before, O'Mahony was laid in state in the Mechanics' Institute (where the Abbey Theatre is presently located). From 12 o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, 27 February, the remains lay guarded in military style day and night. The Mechanics' Institute remained open at all hours until the time fixed for the concluding part of the ceremony five days later. An estimated 20,000 people passed daily into the building to pay their respects to the departed Fenian chief.¹¹³

¹¹² Letter from Cardinal Cullen to the O'Mahony funeral committee, dated 23 Feb. 1877, printed in the *Irish World* (New York), 3 Mar. 1877.

¹¹³ *Irishman* (Dublin), 10 Mar. 1877; *Irish Times* (Dublin), 5 Mar. 1877 *Irish World* (New York), 31 Mar. 1877

The funeral procession, from Lower Abbey Street to Glasnevin cemetery, on Sunday 4 March, witnessed a tremendous turnout of tens of thousands of people. It was estimated, in the *Irish World* (New York), that the procession numbered between seventy and one hundred thousand and that it took an hour and a quarter to pass any given point. The *Irish Times* (Dublin) wrote that it numbered five thousand but that there was a vast multitude walking beside the procession and that the route through which the cortège passed was crowded with onlookers.¹¹⁴

At ten past twelve the funeral procession started down Abbey Street. First came the Grand Marshal of the day, William Francis Roantree, on a white horse. Following him came a regiment of well-dressed boys and youths, carrying black wands and small banners. Then came the '48 men, among whom were Patrick James Smyth M.P., Philip Callan M.P., and Francis Morgan, law agent of Dublin Corporation and O'Mahony's friend in Paris.¹¹⁵

Next in the funeral procession came the American deputation already named and the O'Mahony funeral committees of Dublin, Cobh, Cork and other places. They were followed by the hearse, which was on a high car built for the occasion. The pallbearers included Charles J. Kickham (Mullinahone), James O'Connor (Dublin), John Sarsfield Casey¹¹⁶ (Mitchelstown), Denis Florence McCarthy (Cork), John Hickey (Dun Laoghaire), Charles Guilfoyle Doran (Queenstown), Michael Cusack (Drangan, Tipperary), John Torley (Duntocher, Glasgow), John Leavy¹¹⁷ (Dublin), Charles O'Farrell (Enniscorthy); Michael Halley (Tramore); Neal Fallon (Edinburgh) William Moore Stack¹¹⁸ (Dublin), John Daly¹¹⁹ (Limerick), P. O'Byrne (Dublin) and Andrew Nolan (Dublin). The chief mourners were O'Mahony's nephews Frank, John, James and Ambrose Mandeville and his cousin, Thomas O'Mahony, followed by the American delegation.¹²⁰

Following the body and chief mourners, the place of honour was given to the Tipperary delegation. Four mounted stewards preceded the contingent from

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Sarsfield Casey was a Fenian and secretary of the Mitchelstown branch of the National Land league, circa 1880.

¹¹⁷ Both were members of the I.R.B. supreme council at this time.

¹¹⁸ He was the father of Austin Stack, the patriot.

¹¹⁹ Daly was a Fenian and Mayor of Limerick from 1899-1901; he died in 1916 shortly after the executions of his nephew, Edward Daly, and Thomas J. Clarke who was married to his niece Kathleen.

¹²⁰ Marcus Bourke, *John O'Leary: a study in Irish separatism* (Tralee, 1967), p.121; *Devoy's post-bag*, vol.i, p.282.

Tipperary, which numbered over 200. The Cork deputation was next in order, then Limerick, and after them marched the delegates from England and Scotland. The members of the Amnesty Association mustering a considerable force were next, followed by the long procession of Dublin and country trade organizations, Forresters, Temperance societies and others.¹²¹

When the coffin reached the open space outside Glasnevin cemetery Charles J. Kickham delivered the funeral oration beside the hearse. The trustees had forbidden its delivery over the grave inside the cemetery. Kickham's voice was not powerful enough to reach one tenth of the vast audience. In his oration, Kickham declared that:

The name of John O'Mahony is a household word in Ireland, and in every clime where her children have found a home. His whole life was given to his country. True he was never in chains, never knew the cruelties, the untold horrors, of a British convict prison; nor was he strangled upon a British scaffold. Yet was John O'Mahony a martyr for Ireland. And from my knowledge of the man – and I believe he showed me his whole heart – his tender, affectionate nature, his yearning love of home and kindred, his sensitive pride – it is my firm conviction that no patriot, living or dead, ever endured more intense and prolonged suffering for the sake of the land that bore him, than was endured for Ireland's sake by him around whose lifeless clay we are now assembled, and whose name will live forever in the affections of a generous people, who reject with loathing the cold-hearted suggestion that honour should be accorded only to the successful and the victorious.¹²²

Instead of dying for his country in the tradition of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet, O'Mahony saw his mission as living for Ireland. The depth of the commitment that he had made in 1848, inevitably led over the next quarter of the century to the sacrifice of all that was most naturally his.

At the conclusion of Kickham's oration the coffin was lowered on to the shoulders of half a dozen chosen men, and was carried into the cemetery to the grave of Terence Bellew McManus, which had been opened to receive it. When Luby in New York read of the impressive last scenes, he wrote 'This is well. Yet I could

¹²¹ *Irishman* (Dublin), 10 Mar. 1877; *Irish Times* (Dublin), 5 Mar. 1877.

almost wish that he were sleeping, in accordance with his own desire, beside his mother in the old Munster grave of his fathers'.¹²³ O'Mahony's paternal family tomb is located in Kilbeheny graveyard, County Limerick.

Funeral ceremonies for O'Mahony were also held in Carrick-on-Suir, Fethard and Newcastle West in Ireland and at Edinburgh, Wolverhampton, Darlington, Manchester and Preston in Britain. On 12 March the American delegates were officially thanked by the Irish reception committee and shortly afterwards returned to America, their mission accomplished. The funeral was a huge propaganda coup for the Clan na Gael and the I.R.B.¹²⁴ O'Mahony had always been emphatic that an effective Irish revolutionary organization must survive and in the end it did.

¹²² Printed in *Irishman* (Dublin), 10 Mar. 1877.

¹²³ Luby, 'Personal reminiscences in *Irish World* (New York), 14 Apr. 1877.

¹²⁴ *Irishman* (Dublin) 10 Mar. 1877; *Irish World* (New York), 31 Mar. 1877.

CHAPTER 10: O'MAHONY AND THE IRISH LANGUAGE, SCHOLARSHIP AND REVIVAL

FORAS FEASA AR ÉIRINN - THE WORK OF TRANSLATION

From the early summer of 1856 to the late summer of 1857 O'Mahony concentrated on his translation of Seathrún Céitinn's famous seventeenth century History of Ireland *Foras feasa ar Éirinn* from Irish into English.¹ This work was O'Mahony's principal literary effort and encapsulated his aims and work. He undertook the task of translation at the request of P.M. Haverty, the Dublin born publisher and bookseller. As a boy Haverty had served his apprenticeship in Brian Geraghty's Dublin bookshop at 11 Anglesea Street, which was frequented by James Clarence Mangan. In 1847 Haverty emigrated to the United States, returned to Ireland in 1848 to take part in the Irish Confederation rising, and went back after its failure. He joined in the gold rush to California, and on his return to New York in the early 1850s, opened a bookstore at 110 Fulton Street which he allowed to be used as a headquarters for the Irish in exile.² In the mid-1850s Haverty became a prominent member of the Emmet Monument Association (see chapter five).

In the 1620s Céitinn had exhaustively examined all the historical manuscripts and materials he could find for his *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*. This work of Gaelic historiography, which seems to have been completed about 1634, tells the story of Ireland from the creation of the world to the coming of the Normans. Céitinn accepted without question the *Lebor Gabála* (Book of Invasions)³ a medieval chronicle recounting the legendary history of the various peoples to have inhabited Ireland before the coming of the Gaels. His main object in completing his *Foras feasa* was to defend the Irish against the calumnies of foreign historians and to explain

¹ *Foras feasa ar Éirinn.... the History of Ireland, from the earliest period to the English invasion, by the Reverend Geoffrey Keating, D.D.* Translated from the original Gaelic and annotated by John O'Mahony (New York, 1857) (Hereafter cited as O'Mahony (transl.), *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*); Desmond Ryan, *The Phoenix flame: a study of Fenianism and John Devoy* (London, 1937), p.56 (Hereafter cited as Ryan, *Phoenix flame*).

² *The Dublin almanac and general register of Ireland* (Dublin, 1939), p.436; William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan (ed.), *Devoy's post bag* Vol. I 1871-1880 (2 vols, Dublin, 1948 and 1953), p.473.

³ The various sources of the *Lebor Gabála* include the Jewish and Christian Bible, Isidore of Seville and much native tradition.

how the Irish and Old English had fused to become the catholic Irish nation. Many copies of the work circulated widely in Gaelic manuscript form.⁴

Dermod O'Connor was the author of the first printed English version of Céitinn's *Foras feasa*. O'Connor's work, published in Dublin and London in 1723 and regularly reissued was an adaptation rather than a direct translation of Céitinn's *Foras feasa*.⁵ Haverty insisted to O'Mahony that other American publishers knew that there was a demand from the exiled Irish in America for Céitinn, and would continue to reprint this much criticised adaptation by O'Connor if some better version did not replace it once and for all. O'Mahony agreed to edit and correct O'Connor's work, but soon found that nothing short of an entirely new translation of *Foras feasa* would suffice.⁶

Four of O'Mahony's Irish manuscripts are now in the National library of Ireland (MSS G 640-43). O'Mahony used one of these, a contemporary copy of Céitinn's *Foras feasa* (G 640) when working on his translation.⁷ This manuscript G 640 was written by Seághan Ó Duibhidhir (John O'Dwyer) of Fethard, County Tipperary, in 1837, and belonged to Mrs James O'Dwyer of New York. She had inherited it from her deceased husband, James O'Dwyer, formerly of Fethard, County Tipperary.⁸ He may have been a relative, perhaps a son, of the original scribe John O'Dwyer. O'Mahony probably knew James O'Dwyer while both lived in Tipperary. In an article in the *Irish American* (New York), dated 23 February 1856, Fethard born Michael Doheny mentions a James O'Dwyer, who was probably the same person, as his personal friend. He was possibly even a neighbour.⁹

In the preface to his translation O'Mahony states that a James Michael Sheehan, then practicing law in New York, provided him with a valuable manuscript

⁴ Bernadette Cunningham, 'Geoffrey Keating's *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*' in *History Ireland*, vol. 9, No.1, Spring 2001, pp.14-17; *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000); *The Oxford companion to Irish history*, edited by S.J. Connolly (Oxford, 1998), pp.322-3 (Hereafter cited as *The Oxford companion to Irish history*).

⁵ Brian Ó Cuív, 'Irish language and literature 1691-1800' in *A new history of Ireland iv: eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800*, edited by T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan (Oxford, 1986), pp.393-94.

⁶ O'Mahony (transl.), *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.6; Ryan, *Phoenix flame*, p.56.

⁷ Manuscript G 641 consists of miscellaneous material. Manuscript G 642 contains verse and tales and manuscript G 643 consists of tales: Nessa Ní Sheághdha, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the National library of Ireland Vol. 12* (Dublin, 1990), pp.18-33.

⁸ O'Mahony (transl.), *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.17; Kenneth E. Nilsen, 'The Irish language in New York, 1850-1900' in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, (Baltimore and London, 1997), p.273 (Hereafter cited as Nilsen, 'The Irish language in New York, 1850-1900'); Seamus O Casaide, 'Sean O'Mathghamhna's Irish MSS' in *The Irish Book Lover*, May-June 1930, p.80.

⁹ *Irish American* (New York), 23 Feb. 1856.

copy of Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras feasa*. This manuscript had been transcribed in 1753 by James Sheehan's grandfather, William Sheehan, of Coolivote, near Kanturk, County Cork.¹⁰ Other residents of New York provided O'Mahony with ancillary materials for his translation; for instance William Desmond O'Brien, a civil engineer residing in Brooklyn, provided him with a copy of John O'Donovan's translation of the *Annals of the Four Masters* (1848-1851) and several other rare books.

In a letter to the *Irish News* (New York), dated 27 December 1856, O'Mahony records that:

When I had collected the materials for proceeding with this task [the work of translation] and had compared several Irish manuscript copies of the original both with printed translations and with one another, I found that I should have done a work of very questionable utility, were I to content myself with giving a mere bald translation of my author, omitting to give notes explanatory of traditions and usages now forgotten by the vast majority of Irishmen. I deemed that had I done this, I might just as well have left Keating still untranslated by me, for he would have continued, nevertheless, incomprehensible to a great portion of those of my exiled countrymen, for whose more special use and information I have undertaken to interpret him. To present them with such a version, I considered to be little better than making use of the venerated name of Dr. Keating in order to make money thereby, at small cost either in labor or study. Now, whatever others may think upon the subject, I do not hold it legitimate to traffic upon the patriotism of my countrymen, by presenting them with a literary clap-trap of no possible utility to them. I, therefore, have set about elucidating the text of my author both with notes of my own and with historic quotations explanatory of his meaning, and allusions wherever I thought they required it. This has nearly trebled my labour, and has added greatly to the bulk of the book.¹¹

With sheets of paper being rushed to the printer as soon as written due to his commitment to his publisher, Haverty, and other unnamed patrons, O'Mahony did not

¹⁰ O'Mahony (transl.) *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.17; John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (New York, 1929), pp.267-8 (Hereafter cited as Devoy, *Recollections*).

have the opportunity to review his own work, or even Doheny's biographical sketch of Céitinn, which preceded the text. Despite O'Mahony's complaints over this circumstance, the work was finally finished and printed.¹² In the preface to his translation, O'Mahony wrote, in the third person, that:

Some imperfections found therein have been the result of the haste with which it has been hurried from his desk to the press, and of the fact that he [O'Mahony] has been compelled all through it to write against time – to consult his various authorities, to correct proofs, and at the same time arrange new matter for the printers. Thus he has never been able to see any large portion of his work before him at one time, soon enough to remedy several of its manifest typographical and verbal errors.¹³

The translation work thus became a frantic effort to do a professional job against the demands of an eager publisher, somewhat reflecting the difficulties under which Céitinn had compiled the original. Two impressions of O'Mahony's completed work were published in New York, one in July 1857 (by P.M. Haverty, 110 Fulton street) and the other in 1866 (by James B. Kirker, 599 Broadway).¹⁴

In that same letter to the *Irish News* (New York), of 27 December 1857 (already quoted), O'Mahony wrote:

I am most anxious, it is true, that it [his *History of Ireland*] should clear the expenses of printing and publishing. That, at least, if report speaks correctly, it is certain to do. For myself, I shall not feel much chagrined, and shall feel not at all disappointed at finding it to do no more. It will be but some months of my life spent without worldly profit to myself at a work that may not be entirely useless or uninteresting to the scattered sons of *Clanna Gaedhail*.¹⁵

¹¹ Letter from John O'Mahony to P.M. Haverty, 27 Dec. 1856, printed in *Irish News* (New York), 3 Jan. 1857.

¹² O'Mahony (transl.) *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

¹⁴ *Irish People* (New York), 28 Apr. 1866.

¹⁵ Letter from John O'Mahony to P.M. Haverty, dated 27 Dec. 1856 printed in *Irish News* (New York), 3 Jan. 1857.

The conditions under which the work was done gave O'Mahony no pleasure: neither did he derive any monetary reward from either issue – he was no businessman.

RECEPTION OF THE WORK (2ND EDITION)

A letter from O'Mahony to the Gaelic scholar and publisher John O'Daly in the autumn of 1856, dealt mainly with books and material that he required for his translation of Céitinn's *Foras feasa*.¹⁶ In this letter we also find a request for the addresses of the two most eminent Gaelic scholars of the mid-nineteenth century, Kilkenny born John O'Donovan and Clare born Eugene O'Curry. O'Donovan and O'Curry were also brothers-in-law. Like O'Mahony, O'Curry was a native Irish speaker and grew up in a household where the family tradition was to collect Gaelic manuscripts and where Irish lore and traditions were handed down and cherished for generations. O'Curry and O'Donovan were based in Dublin, and were on the staff of the Ordnance Survey during the period that O'Mahony was registered as a student at Trinity College.¹⁷ Given their common interests, it is quite likely that they knew one another at that time and O'Mahony now wished to renew old acquaintances.

In the preface to his translation O'Mahony wrote about his efforts in completing the work 'If he [O'Mahony] failed in presenting the public with a good book, he would, at least, present them with one that might not be positively *mischievous*'.¹⁸ The Gaelic scholar James Henthorn Todd, picking up on O'Mahony's comment, remarked in the preface to his *Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill* (1867), as follows:

The new translation of Keating's *History of Ireland*, lately published at New York (Haverty, 1857) by Mr. John O'Mahony, is largely indebted to O'Donovan's notes to the *Four Masters*. Notwithstanding the extravagant and very *mischievous* political opinions avowed by O'Mahony, his translation of Keating is a great improvement upon the ignorant and dishonest one published by Mr. Dermot O'Connor more than a century ago (Westminster, 1726, Fol.), which has so unjustly lowered, in public estimation, the character of Keating

¹⁶ Letter from O'Mahony to John O'Daly circa autumn 1856, quoted in Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian chief: a biography of James Stephens* (Dublin, 1967), p.61-3.

¹⁷ Patricia Boyne, *John O'Donovan (1806 – 1861) a biography* (Kilkenny, 1987), pp. 11-13, 20-23.

as a historian; but O'Mahony's translation has been taken from a very imperfect text, and has evidently been executed as he himself confesses, in great haste; it has, therefore, by no means superseded a new and scholarlike translation of Keating, which is greatly wanted. Keating's authorities are still almost all accessible to us, and should be collected for the correction of his text; and two excellent MS. copies of the original Irish, by John Torna O'Mulconry, a contemporary of Keating, are now in the library of Trinity College Dublin.¹⁹

Todd deliberately chooses to borrow the word 'mischievous' from O'Mahony and applies it to his political opinions instead of the translation itself. From a unionist perspective O'Mahony's position would have been considered treasonable; describing his political opinions as 'mischievous' is quite innocuous. Todd had been elected a Fellow in Trinity College in 1831 and O'Mahony probably knew him since his Trinity days. They certainly shared intellectual interests.

When undertaking, with Pádraig Ó Duinnín, his own edition of *Céitinn* fifty years later, the Gaelic scholar, David Comyn, picks up on Todd's remarks quoted above:

Though I may not hope to do all that the learned writer [Todd] here quoted lays down, or to rival his own scholarlike edition of the *Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill*, from which this passage is cited, I shall be well pleased if I do not fall greatly short of O'Mahony's mark, whose work has done so much to rehabilitate our author [Keating] in the opinion of those who have to depend on a translation. His best vindication, however, will be the publication of an authoritative text of his complete work, based on the MSS. named by Dr Todd and others at least equally authentic, carefully edited and revised, and printed with the accuracy and style which have characterised the press of his university since Dr O'Donovan's *Four Masters* was published there, fifty years ago.²⁰

¹⁸ O'Mahony (transl.) *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.7.

¹⁹ James Henthorn Todd, *Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill* (London, 1867), p.cxiv; *A Compendium of Irish Biography*, by Alfred Webb (1878), p.402.

This full edition of *Foras feasa ar Éirinn; the history of Ireland* was published by the Irish Texts Society in 4 vols. (1902-14), side by side with an English translation and notes written by Comyn.

O'Mahony's use of John O'Donovan's notes from the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* in his work though fully acknowledged, led to copyright difficulties. It was on these grounds that the publishers of the *Annals*, Hodges and Smith, procured an injunction against the sale of O'Mahony's translation in the British jurisdiction, which excluded the publication of the book from Ireland.²¹ All this notwithstanding, O'Mahony's work won the praise of such Gaelic scholars as Todd, Comyn, and Roscommon-born Douglas Hyde (later first president of independent Ireland) who wrote that 'John O'Mahony, the Fenian Head Centre, published a splendid translation of the whole work [*Foras feasa ar Éirinn*] from the best MSS, which in his exile he was able to procure, in New York'.²²

The copious historical, topographical and genealogical material in the annotations, which makes up the larger portion of the work, is as valuable as the basic text itself. In his *Recollections* John Devoy rightly perceived that this had been made possible by O'Mahony's 'intimate knowledge of old manuscripts and the traditions of the people'.²³ O'Mahony had access to living tradition which is no longer accessible to modern scholars. He was also familiar with every local point of interest and brings his own extensive and intimate knowledge of the Irish countryside to bear in his notes on the text.²⁴

HISTORIAN OF ANCIENT HISTORY

A common theme among European nationalists of the first half of the nineteenth century was to trace the beginnings of their nation's civilization to the ancient past.²⁵ In addition to Ireland's ancient oral tradition, the surviving Gaelic manuscripts provided concrete evidence that Ireland had a written culture dating from

²⁰ David Comyn, ed., *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, Irish Texts Society Vol. IV (London, 1902), p. xiii.

²¹ *A Compendium of Irish Biography*, by Alfred Webb (1878), p.402; Dominic Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde* (Dublin, 1974), pp.206-7.

²² Douglas Hyde, *A literary history of Ireland from the earliest times to the present day* (London, 1899), p.364, 558.

²³ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.267.

²⁴ See, for example, O'Mahony (transl.) *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.392, note 88.

²⁵ G.H. Hearder, *Europe in the nineteenth century, 1830-1880* (New York, 1966), pp.43-7.

the coming of Christianity to Ireland. What should be the *modus operandi* of the historian of ancient history in dealing with myth, legend and the oral tradition, O'Mahony enunciates as follows in the textual notes:

The historian is scarcely at liberty to reject a legend because he does not understand its meaning, unless its falsehood be manifest. Hypercriticism often overshoots its marks, and rejects traditions as fabulous altogether, which may be but truths clad in the language of hyperbole, and which, upon more extended information, may afford most useful collateral evidence to the historic inquirer.²⁶

The above remark could equally be made about the Jewish and Christian scriptures and indeed the *Lebor Gabála*. While very often dealing in the realm of probabilities, our knowledge of ancient history, through archaeological and scholarly discoveries, continues to gather more data with the passage of time. Modern archaeology, in particular, has come to show that the roots of legend are often based upon fact. Céitinn's *Foras feasa* is rich in legend and tradition and reflects the historical memory of the Irish people in his time. This memory is based upon oral history containing historically established fact as well as legend. In recording the ancient history of the Irish race, O'Mahony wrote that:

Uncertain they [historic events] certainly are, as the historic events of every nation had been previous to the adoption of a fixed system of chronology; that is they are uncertain in date and uncertain in consecutive arrangement. There is also much uncertainty as to how far mythologic legend and druidic allegory have been blended with plain matter of fact. But these great features of our early history, that have left indelible impressions upon the national memory, and even upon the physical appearance of the country, are not to be rejected because Tighernach [Irish annalist who died in the year 1088] has rejected them as uncertain. The same phrase might be applied to the history of Rome, Athens, or any other antique nation. The existence of Romulus and Remus, and even the time they lived, are both very uncertain. It is, also, uncertain

²⁶ O'Mahony (transl.) *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.186.

how far truth is blended with fable in the legends of Rhea Sylvia and of Lupa, but no person, except one who is of a frame of mind to doubt of his own existence, will deny that these represent real historic facts and persons; or that, however obscure their legends be in themselves, they represent those facts more truly and clearly than can now be done by substituting, in their stead, any other hypothesis, founded upon every-day experience.²⁷

In an early Irish literary story in the *Yellow Book of Lecan*, entitled *Tochmarc Étaíne*, (which generally was considered mythological) there is a description which concerns the construction of a great trackway through a bog. The story in the form recorded dates from the 8th or 9th century AD, but it is based on much earlier oral tradition. It tells of the tasks which were imposed by the Tara King, Eochaidh Aireamh, on the mythical personage Midhir, which included the building of a causeway over a bog. The remarkable similarity between this description and an archaeological discovery made in the 1980s, of an enormous trackway (up to 2km in length) laid across a bog at Corlea, near Keenagh, County Longford, suggests that this may have been the roadway described. In *Tochmarc Étaíne* Midhir's dwelling place is situated at Brí Léith, which is a poetic designation of Slieve Golry, near Ardagh, County Longford a few miles east of Corlea bog, where the trackway was found in the 1980s.²⁸

The Corlea trackway was subjected to dendrochronology and Carbon-14 dating. Its timbers, made from oak planks, were discovered to be of Early Iron Age period - a date of 148 BC being confirmed.²⁹ King Eochaidh Aireamh was sixteen years in the sovereignty of Ireland (124 -110 BC). An entry in the pre-annals, gives the year of his death as 110 BC.³⁰ The period that the track way dated from is consistent with the entry in the pre-annals given above. The confirmation by dendrochronology would have been gratifying to O'Mahony - but would not really have surprised him.

²⁷ Ibid., p.246.

²⁸ Dáithí Ó hOgáin, 'The road and the literature' in *Irish archaeological wetland unit, transactions: volume 3, trackway excavations in the Mount Dillon bogs, Co. Longford 1985-1991*, pp.359-66; Barry Raftery, *Pagan Celtic Ireland: the enigma of the Irish Iron Age* (London, 1994), pp.98-111.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ John O'Donovan, *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, Annála Rioghachta Éireann* Vol. 1 (Dublin, 1851), pp. 88-89. Unlike the annals, which recorded contemporaneous events, the pre-annals registered earlier facts compiled from memory.

OBJECTIVES OF THE TRANSLATION

In the United States during the 1850s, the Know-Nothings (strongly anti-Irish, anti-Negro and anti-catholic) propagated the view that Anglo-Saxons were morally superior to the Celts and others in their people and institutions.³¹ O'Mahony wished to re-awaken among Irish people everywhere a sense of pride in their culture and tradition and especially directed his work towards the growing Irish community in the United States. It is evident in the preface to his book that O'Mahony wanted to make ancient Irish history more accessible to a wider readership rather than specifically to Gaelic scholars:

The chief design with which this book had been translated and annotated, has been to make the author's meaning perfectly understood by the majority of its readers, and to give the latter some insight into the manners and customs of the ancient times of which he treats. Should this design be accomplished, the translator and editor will rest perfectly content with what he has done. ...The book is not specially designed to please literary people. It is more designed for the purpose of conveying, in plain and simple terms, certain information about the country and usages of their ancestors, to those of the translator's own race and kindred who have not much time to devote to the perusal of books, and whose early opportunities have not enabled them to become critics in the elegancies of a language which has been forced upon them by their enemies. Provided these latter understand him thoroughly, he cares little for the opinion of the critics.³²

The Irish language had no recognition in any form in the institutions of the state and had all the economic forces stacked against it. With the establishment of the National School system in 1831, subjects were taught through the medium of English. The students attending these schools became literate in English while remaining illiterate in Irish. Between 1841 and 1851 over a million people of Irish birth emigrated to the

³¹ Thomas N. Brown, 'The origins of Irish-American nationalism' in *Irish Nationalism and the American contribution* (New York, 1976), p.341-3.

³² O'Mahony (transl.) *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, pp. 7-8.

United States. They fell into three linguistic categories: monolingual English speakers, bilingual Irish/English speakers, and monolingual Irish speakers. It has been estimated that of the 259,000 Irish-born immigrants living in New York City and Brooklyn in 1860, approximately 73,000 were native Irish speakers. The majority of these Irish-speaking immigrants were not literate in their native language. The first language that most became literate in was English; hence the need for O'Mahony to translate Céitinn's *Foras feasa* from Irish into English.³³

In the notes to his work, O'Mahony wrote that 'The preservation of their genealogies was, it is true, an essential institution of the Gaelic polity – in fact, the man or tribe whose pedigree was forgotten, lost his or its liberty thereby'.³⁴ This would be known in modern times as an 'identity crisis.' O'Mahony wished to inspire a sense of kinship among the Irish people. Consequently, in his translation, and in contemporary Irish American newspapers and magazines, O'Mahony provides detailed explanations about the genealogies of Irish clans for the benefit of the Irish in America. He was clearly a leading light in this field.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL VIEWS

The nationalistic spirit of O'Mahony's comments in his translation is clearly evident where he writes that:

English writers, wanting to vilify the victims of their countrymen, and thus to extenuate the robberies and cruelties practiced upon the Irish Celts, will see nothing but savagery in the whole Celtic race, forgetting that the greatest nation of antiquity [Rome] – their own mistress and the mistress of the world in the sciences of jurisprudence and war – trembled, while yet in all its youthful vigour, at the bare mention of the Celtic name – forgetting, also, that this great nation was itself chiefly composed of Celtic elements, and that its type was Celtic, rather than Saxon.³⁵

³³ Nilsen, 'The Irish language in New York', pp. 253-4, 260.

³⁴ O'Mahony (transl.) *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.121.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.186-7.

In the section of his work dealing with the Milesians, O'Mahony speaks of these early Irish settlers as Celts. For O'Mahony, as well as for Céitinn, the Milesians or Celts were the Gaelic speaking population. It is difficult to define what Celtic is except in the linguistic context, which had not been developed in Céitinn's time. We know today that on the Indo-European tree the Celtic languages are most closely related to the Italic group which may prove O'Mahony's point.³⁶

In the notes accompanying his translation of Céitinn's *Foras feasa*, O'Mahony discusses the political divisions and kinship system of Gaelic Ireland where he writes that:

From all that has come down to us on the subject, it appears that the Irish clans were in themselves species of petty republics. That the chieftain was, in reality, but the elected chief magistrate, or rather, the *public steward*, during his lifetime, of the lands of his whole kindred, who constituted, in Celtic countries, the *people*.³⁷

In his book O'Mahony pointed out, what he believed to be, the crucial link between Gaelic culture and democratic freedom. In doing so he foreshadowed the social teachings of James Connolly on the eve of 1916. According to James Connolly, in the preface to his *Labour in Irish history*, socialism, or primitive 'Celtic communism' existed as 'the Gaelic principle of common ownership by the people of their sources of food and maintenance' but was suppressed by 'the feudal capitalist system of which England was the exponent in Ireland'.³⁸

The Antrim born Gaelic scholar Eoin MacNeill, with scientific scepticism, was justifiably critical of the vague use of terminology by scholars such as Limerick born Patrick Weston Joyce. Although MacNeill argued that any simple understanding of the 'clan system' was misleading he falls short of any serious criticism of Joyce's perception. In his *Celtic Ireland* (1921) MacNeill wrote that 'At all events I can find no evidence of communal ownership on a large scale, and I contend that, instead of being survivals of a wider communal ownership, the small family communes must

³⁶ *Concise Companion to Irish Literature*, edited by Robert Welsh (Oxford, 2000), pp.55-6.

³⁷ O'Mahony (transl.) *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.lii.

³⁸ James Connolly, *Labour in Ireland: labour in Irish history, the re-conquest of Ireland* (Dublin and London, 1910), pp. xxxiv, xxvii.

have developed out of individual ownership'.³⁹ MacNeill questioned the concept of common ownership of land in Gaelic Ireland on the basis that there was no evidence there in the law texts for it. However, the obverse side of this proposition, which is not drawn attention to by MacNeill, is that there is no reference to ownership of any kind: in fact, there is no verb 'to own' in the Irish language. It could be argued that the very absence of any concept of ownership of land implies that it was a communal resource.

Just as the Romans extirpated the Druids from Gaul and Britain, so too did the Elizabethan pamphleteers of the sixteenth century denigrate, what they termed, the 'lewd rhymers' – the poets who were the bearers of the ancient Gaelic tradition.⁴⁰ In the notes accompanying his translation, O'Mahony outlined his political and social views and wrote that:

Against no class of her [the Gaelic speaking] people did the English law rage with more violence than against the bards and shanachies; and none were hunted down more relentlessly by the bloodhound myrmidons of our tyrants. In fact, it was necessary for the perpetration of their wholesale plunder, and for the imposition of *feudal landlordism*, in the place of the *tribe-ownership* of the Gaels, that the members of the free clans should not be reminded of their ancestral rights, by hearing their pedigrees recited by the professional historians. They would fain have them forget that, as tribes-men, each individual was as noble as his chieftain, and had as full a right to his portion of the common inheritance. They were not the serfs or boors of any lord of strange blood. They obeyed their ruler as the elected representative of their common ancestor. For this purpose did they hunt down our shanachies, and for this, seek to destroy all our written records, and worse than all, for this reason did they seek and do still seek to demoralize and brutalize our noble race.⁴¹

There may be some truth in the notion that everyone who occupied the *túath* had a 'common ancestor' in the early stages of its development, but it is, perhaps,

³⁹ Eoin MacNeill, *Celtic Ireland* (Dublin and London, 1921), p.162.

⁴⁰ F.J. Byrne, 'Early Irish society' in *The course of Irish history*, edited by T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (Cork, 1967), p.40.

extrapolating too much to consider it a durable system over time. There was, however, a real sense of justice in the Gaelic tradition that individual 'tribesmen' had direct access to their chief for redress of grievances. This may explain why, unlike elsewhere in Europe, there was no peasant revolt in Ireland during the medieval period.

In their newspaper, the *Nation* (Dublin), the Young Ireland movement illuminated the historic identity of Ireland and, like similar nationalist movements throughout Europe in the 1840s, they espoused freedom and equality for oppressed nations along with an increased cultural awareness.⁴² Similarly, O'Mahony gave his work a contemporary relevance by relating the events of Irish history to the Ireland of his day and, in the notes that accompanied the translation, wrote that:

The present occupiers of the lands of our tribes should not, then, rest too secure in their occupation, from the fact that most of the direct descendants of the last chieftains who held these lands are now extinct; or from the fact that English law has attainted their blood. They were not, in their own right, *landowners*. They were the mere *temporal stewards* of their kinsmen, and the poorest O'Neill or O'Donnell, O'Brien or McCarthy, had as much *ownership* in the broad lands of Tirone or Tirconnell of Thomond or of Desmond, as those renegade chiefs who bartered their kingly titles for English coronets. It was not, then, a *few Gaelic landlords* that were robbed by the English settlers. It was the *whole Gaelic nation*.⁴³

Everyone's rights had been guaranteed and protected within the Gaelic social system. The adoption of feudal law by a number of Gaelic chieftains had partly undermined the Gaelic system of land tenure, determined by tradition, by the middle of the sixteenth century.⁴⁴ The Gaelic chieftains who accepted feudal law in Tudor times cannot have been aware that they were surrendering their own rights and, more importantly, that of their people.

⁴¹ O'Mahony (transl.) *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.lxviii.

⁴² Nilsen, 'The Irish language in New York', pp.253-4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. liv.

⁴⁴ G.A. Hayes – McCoy, 'The Tudor conquest (1534-1603)' in *The course of Irish history*, edited by T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (Cork, 1967), pp.174-88; *Oxford companion to Irish history*, p.229.

ANCIENT FIANNA AND MODERN FENIANS

The ancient Fianna are the main subjects of a body of popular literature - the Fenian Cycle - based upon the oral tradition. According to legend they protected Ireland from foreign attacks in the pre-Christian era.⁴⁵ O'Mahony's translation of Céitinn's *Foras feasa* contains a sustained commentary comparing the modern struggle against British rule in Ireland with the ethos of the ancient Fianna, who reflected his ideal of a national army. In fact, the ancient Fianna, described in book one of O'Mahony's work, served as a model for his new revolutionary organization - the Fenian Brotherhood - in the spring of 1859. In deriving this name from the heroic sagas in the manuscripts he loved so well, O'Mahony stamped the old name with a new meaning for his time. In the first issue of the *Phoenix* (New York), founded by O'Mahony and Doheny, on 4 June 1859, O'Mahony wrote:

Making due allowances for the customs, ideas and necessities of the present time, and also for the actual condition of Ireland in the nineteenth century, the duties of the contemplated organization are nearly the same as those of the Fenian order, so celebrated in the tradition of our sires. The former Fenians of Ireland constituted a National Guard of the Irish nation in the days of its independence, while the monarchy, or rather the patriarchal republic of the Gaels, still flourished in its integrity.

The principal duties of the Fenian Order in Ireland, called *Fiann na h-Eirenn* in our vernacular, were, to defend the country from foreign invaders, to put down domestic tyrants and plunderers, and to assist the *Ard-righ* or Arch-King of the Gaelic tribes in maintaining order and justice throughout his nation.⁴⁶

O'Mahony succeeded in perpetuating the ancient historic memory by calling his organization the Fenians in evocation of the ancient Fianna. As they were reputedly organized to assure Ireland's independence in pre-Christian times, so the Fenian Brotherhood was instituted to re-establish it.

⁴⁵ J. McKillop, *Fionn Mac Cumhaill: Celtic myth in English literature* (Syracuse, 1986), p.13.

O'Mahony wished to give his fellow countrymen hope for the future by re-awakening a sense of pride in their past. He also wanted to provide Irishmen with a rationale for revolutionary action and to justify such action before his critics. In explaining his motivation for undertaking his translation of C  itinn's *Foras feasa*, O'Mahony (speaking in the third person) outlines the Fenian perspective and meets his (potential) critics head on:

If it be the mark of a partizan to be thoroughly Irish in heart and soul; - to love men of Irish name and blood more than men of any other; - to abhor the destroyers of his nation and kinsmen, who are also the desolators of his own paternal hearth⁴⁷, with a hatred that neither time nor distance can mitigate; - then is this the work of a most undoubted partizan. And again, if an ardent desire to perpetuate like feelings amongst the men of his nation be the part of a partizan, then has he edited this book in a spirit of thorough partizanship. However, though he does hate the present hostile garrison that holds the country in thralldom as heartily as if he had lived in the days of Seaghan O'Neill, he still denies that he has in any one instance allowed his partialities to cause him to torture historic fact to bear out his own theories or opinions - neither has he in any one particular swerved from the truth of history, as he has understood it. To some well-meaning friends of the Irish people, and to some good souls of the Irish themselves, he deems it necessary to say this much - he begs that they will excuse him if he shall have curdled the lactine fluid in their kindly breasts, by any occasional infusion of gall which he may have pressed into these pages. From the enemies of the Irish nation, he asks no indulgence; he would himself show none to them. He has spoken a few of his real sentiments with regards to them and some of their institutions - institutions which he regards as so many hideous abominations,⁴⁸ and which he ardently hopes to see one day swept off the face of the earth.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Phoenix* (New York), 4 June 1859.

⁴⁷ O'Mahony is most likely thinking of the 1798 incident (see chapter one.)

⁴⁸ Throughout his writings, O'Mahony rails against what he perceives as Great Britain's oligarchic system of government, which operated in Ireland.

⁴⁹ O'Mahony (transl.) *Foras feasa ar   irinn*, pp.10-12.

If Todd is to be perceived as a Unionist then surely his characterization of O'Mahony's political views (expressed in the above quotation) as 'mischievous', in his *Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill*, must be seen as fairly mild. In the preface to his work, O'Mahony went on to state that:

It must not, however, be understood that it is his desire to stir up any hostile feelings of nation, race, or religious belief amongst his readers by any remarks made either here or elsewhere throughout these pages. He himself is actuated by no such feelings. Nations have been too long made the instruments of enslavement of their neighbours by cunning tyrants, who banded them against one another merely because they chanced to dwell on different sides of some sea, river, or mountain, or because they spoke different dialects. He [O'Mahony] has, it is true, a strong partiality towards the natives of the Irish soil, and his heart glows with a more kindly heat towards men of ancient Gaelic names – this is part of his instinct; - but he can also hold out the free hand of brotherhood to the Frank and the Saxon. It is only when he becomes an instrument of tyranny that hostility should be felt towards any of one's fellow men. In Ireland, more especially, the foreign element has become so absorbed in the aboriginal that it would be as just to think of avenging the wrongs of the Danaan or the Belgian upon their Spanish conquerors, as it would be those of the latter upon the followers of Earl Strongbow. These have long since merged into the Gael - so have some of the descendants of the more recent conquerors of them all, the Cromwellians and Williamites of later days. The oppressed natives of Ireland, of whatever name, creed or blood, represent the ancient rights of its aboriginal inhabitants. Their village tyrants, though some of them be of Gaelic name and blood, and a few of them even of the national faith, are now the only foreign enemy.⁵⁰

Here, O'Mahony acknowledges the contribution of all the main traditions – Gaelic, Viking, Anglo-Norman and English/Scottish – to the national history of Ireland. O'Mahony wished to inspire an Irish national identity embracing all classes of its people, which he hoped to see blending into a unified nation. Like Wolfe Tone and

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.11-12.

Thomas Davis, O'Mahony had a broad-minded concept of Irish nationality and tried to show that the Irish nation was a pluralist one.⁵¹ According to O'Mahony's thinking, all who lived in Ireland held citizenship in common. O'Mahony possessed a strong sense of social justice for all the peoples of Ireland, regardless of their ethnic origin, class or religion.

GAELIC REVIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

The Ossianic Society, founded in Dublin on St Patrick's Day, 1853, in the Anglesea Street house of John O'Daly, directed its efforts to the cultivation of the Irish language as well as Irish scholarship. Their publications drew upon poems and prose accounts dating from the later Middle Ages as well as those written down for the first time, from the oral tradition, in the late eighteenth/nineteenth centuries. This subject matter was an enshrined part of the written and oral tradition and culture of the Gaelic speakers. The Ossianic Society was a more popular organization than the earlier Archaeological Society founded by Gaelic scholars such as James Henthorn Todd, John O'Donovan and Eugene O'Curry in 1840; or the Celtic Society founded by John O'Daly and Nicholas O'Kearney in 1845.⁵²

The membership of the Celtic Society included most of the leading figures in the Confederate Clubs in south Tipperary such as O'Mahony, Anthony O'Ryan and Joseph Rivers.⁵³ Similarly, among the general membership of the Ossianic Society were people who later appear in the I.R.B., most notably Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, Mortimer Moynihan and Daniel McCarthy, all of the Phoenix Society in Skibbereen. O'Donovan Rossa was in correspondence with the Gaelic scholar John O'Donovan, and had sworn his sons, Edmund, John and William, into the I.R.B. during his visits to their father's house. Edmund O'Donovan (John's eldest son) started a circle of the I.R.B. in Clare (his mother's native county) in 1864 and his first cousin, John O'Curry (son of the Gaelic scholar Eugene O'Curry), became one of its earliest recruits.⁵⁴

William Smith O'Brien took up the study of Irish in his later years and attained a certain level of proficiency in the language. He gave his attention to the collection of manuscripts and was elected President of the Ossianic Society of Ireland

⁵¹ D. George Boyce, *Nineteenth-century Ireland: the search for stability* (Dublin, 1990), pp.79-80.

⁵² Damien Murray, *Romanticism, nationalism and Irish antiquarian societies, 1840-80* (Maynooth, 2000), 46, 74-5.

⁵³ Celtic Society correspondence, 1845-54 (N.L.I., MS 8010).

in 1858.⁵⁵ Their shared interest in Gaelic scholarship was undoubtedly a factor in O'Mahony's continuing regard for O'Brien despite their diverging political paths. Although O'Mahony and O'Brien differed radically as to the best mode of addressing the national question, O'Mahony retained a high esteem for O'Brien as a man of integrity, and made the following observation about him 'He is the first of his tribe in truth, honour and chivalry and all that ennobles the hero, the patriot and the man'.⁵⁶

On 25 July 1857, the *Irish American* (New York) introduced its Irish language column, 'Our Gaelic Department'. O'Mahony and Doheny, who it appears had interchanging roles, were involved in its production. The original Gaelic was presented side by side with the English translation. Extensive introductory notes and footnotes written by O'Mahony accompanied many of the early columns. O'Mahony, Doheny, and other Irish immigrants in New York, possessed a fair number of Gaelic manuscripts. Consequently, the material presented in the Irish column consisted largely of traditional poetry and songs, many of which had not been previously published.⁵⁷

O'Mahony and Doheny were taking the lead in the promotion and preservation of the Irish language and were implementing a policy in America that had never been tried in newspapers in Ireland. It is highly significant that the *Irish American* (New York) was the only newspaper (daily or weekly), in the world with such a feature. Eventually, on April 17 1858, it was announced in the *Irish American* (New York) that 'The Celtic tongue' would be a regular feature of the *Nation* (Dublin) as of 20 March.⁵⁸

O'Mahony was a man of action in everything he undertook and always led by the practical example of what was possible. His commitment to complete Irish independence and the revival of the language were inextricably linked and directed towards the same end - the political and cultural re-vitalisation of Ireland as a nation. In the first issue of the Fenian's newspaper the *Phoenix* (New York) on 4 June 1859,

⁵⁴ Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, *Rossa's Recollections, 1838-98* (Shannon, 1972), pp.332-77; Devoy, *Recollections*, pp.363-71.

⁵⁵ Liam Mac Peaircín, 'William Smith O'Brien, an scoláire Gaeilge' in *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, volume 42, 2002, pp.89-112; Richard Davis, *Revolutionary Imperialist: William Smith O'Brien 1803-1864* (Dublin and Darlington, 1998), pp.338-9.

⁵⁶ 'Irish genealogy' by John O'Mahony reproduced in the *Celtic Magazine* (New York, 1883), pp.538-9. This is the first recorded printing of the above tribute that I am aware of. In a note following this tribute, the editor of the *Celtic Magazine*, Michael Cavanagh, wrote that O'Mahony had written it during O'Brien's lifetime but does not specify the year.

⁵⁷ *Irish American* (New York), 15 Aug. 1857; *Irish News* (New York) 2 Apr. 1859.

it was announced that an Irish language column was to be started and that 'It will, of course, be solely conducted by John O'Mahony, whose valuable collection of Irish manuscripts will be made available for that purpose'.⁵⁹ The *Phoenix* (New York) included items in Irish, especially about the origins of Irish surnames and place names, which gave many English speaking readers their first contact with Irish.

In 1859 O'Mahony along with the New York resident and Gaelic scholar (in the judgement of Kenneth E. Nilsen), David O'Keeffe, founded the New York Ossianic Society as a branch of the parent Ossianic Society in Dublin. Colonel Michael Corcoran, Michael Doheny, Thomas Francis Meagher and James Roche (all prominent Fenians) were members of the New York Ossianic Society, whose literary milieu was inextricably linked to the political context of the Fenian Brotherhood.⁶⁰ The fact that both organizations shared the same address (the Phoenix Office, No. 6 Centre Street - Fenian headquarters) did not seem to bother the Unionist Todd, a leading member of the Ossianic Society in Ireland. O'Mahony, in New York, and Todd, in Dublin, shared an interest in the preservation of Irish as a living language, as they also shared membership of the Ossianic Society.

The New York branch of the Ossianic Society was a forerunner of the Gaelic League, the roots of which can be seen in O'Mahony's activities. From 4 April 1860 onwards, the *Phoenix* (New York), carried first page advertisements by the New York Ossianic Society announcing the sale of copies of John O'Daly's *Self-Instruction in Irish*. The Society held a general meeting at No. 6 Centre Street, New York on the evening of 18 January 1861. Six days later an advertisement appeared in the *Phoenix* (New York) in which the society announced the 'Formation of an Irish class'.⁶¹ This would appear to have been the first such venture in North America.

O'Mahony's deep commitment to the conservation of the Irish language and its literature was unwavering. On 13 February 1869, he began an Irish language column in the *Irish People* (New York). The content in this paper followed the same pattern as that of the *Irish American* (New York) and the *Phoenix* (New York): mainly traditional poetry with notes by 'Melgola' (O'Mahony's pen name) and translations into English by 'Cloch an Chúinne' (Michael Cavanagh's pen name),

⁵⁸ Nilsen, 'The Irish language in New York,' pp.261-3.

⁵⁹ *Phoenix* (New York), 4 June 1859.

⁶⁰ *Irish American* (New York), 26 Nov. 1878.

⁶¹ *Phoenix* (New York), 26 Jan. 1861.

Michael J. Heffernan⁶², then residing in Brooklyn, and others. During O'Mahony's years as head centre of the Fenian Brotherhood, Heffernan had served as his corresponding secretary and Cavanagh as private secretary. Cavanagh helped to establish a Chair in Celtic Studies in the Catholic University of Washington and was also very friendly with Douglas Hyde. In fact, Cavanagh helped to bring Hyde's work to the attention of Irish American audiences.⁶³

CONCLUSION

In his *recollections* Devoy wrote that 'All who knew him [O'Mahony] were well aware that he looked forward to the restoration of Gaelic as one of the certain results of the achievement of National Independence, and he expressed this hope in many of his speeches'.⁶⁴ Implicit in this statement is the belief that the Irish language could only be saved by the government of an independent Irish republic. O'Mahony was certainly an inspirational force in the Irish language and cultural revival later taken up by such people as Douglas Hyde. The latter's acquaintance with the Gaelic societies during his trip to New York in 1891 seems to have been a factor in guiding him to establish the Gaelic League, along with Eoin MacNeill and Thomas O'Neill Russell, in Dublin on 31 July 1893.⁶⁵ O'Neill Russell, a Protestant from Westmeath, was the proprietor of Ireland's first Fenian publication, the *Galway American*, which espoused separatist Republicanism.⁶⁶ Fr Michael Hickey (who was appointed Professor of Irish at St Patrick's College, Maynooth in 1896) became one of the two vice-presidents of the Gaelic League in 1899. It is worth recalling that Michael's father, Thomas Hickey, had been one of O'Mahony's lieutenants during the 1848 insurrection.⁶⁷

Under the guidance of Douglas Hyde, as its first president, the Gaelic League succeeded in creating a new enthusiasm for the language, which crossed religious, political and social barriers. Hyde considered that it was crucial to get the aristocracy onboard for the revival of the Irish language. Although in theory non-political, the

⁶² Heffernan had contributed to the *Celt* (Dublin) in the late 1850s.

⁶³ Brendan Kiely, *The Waterford rebels of 1849* (Dublin, 1999), p.101.

⁶⁴ Devoy, *Recollections*, pp. 262-3.

⁶⁵ Nilsen, 'The Irish language in New York,' p.270.

⁶⁶ This newspaper was published in the town of Galway from April 1862 to June 1863.

⁶⁷ Report of William Ryan, R.M. Clonmel, 30 Sept. 1849 (N.A.I., Outrages Papers, 1848, Co. Tipperary, 27/2674).

Gaelic League was inevitably drawn into the political arena as the various cultural and political pressure groups overlapped and intertwined.⁶⁸

Of all the revolutionary leaders since the Cromwellian conquest, O'Mahony was the one who most strongly represented the old Gaelic tradition. Douglas Hyde would make O'Mahony the subject of a 'Caoine', which lamented the loss of such a devoted patriot to Ireland.⁶⁹ This is the only lament Hyde wrote that I am aware of and he avoided political alignment of any kind except for this statement. For Hyde, O'Mahony was the Irish hero of the nineteenth century. In the lament there is the sense of a lifetime of toil going unrecognised - 'I have rescued nought but my honour only'. From what we know of O'Mahony it is all he would have asked.

⁶⁸ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine* (London, 1973), pp. 227-9.

⁶⁹ Douglas Hyde, 'Death lament of John O'Mahony: Bron caoineadh Sheaghain Ui Mathghamhain' in *Poems and ballads of Young Ireland* (Dublin, 1888), pp. 28-9.

CONCLUSION: O'MAHONY'S CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LEGACY

John O'Mahony was probably one of the most influential personalities in modern Irish history on either side of the Atlantic. O'Mahony's first choice was to live the life of a Gaelic scholar. In fact, everything seems to indicate that O'Mahony could have been happy indefinitely in his life of gentleman farmer with the leisure to pursue his scholarly interests. The outstanding Gaelic scholars of his day including James Henthorn Todd (generally perceived as a Unionist) and Douglas Hyde (later first president of independent Ireland) recognised O'Mahony as an excellent scholar. John O'Daly acknowledged that he was 'one of the ablest Celtic scholars living.'¹

O'Mahony's activities to promote and develop the Irish language strongly suggest that he regarded it as a matter of fact that with the spread of literacy in Irish the population would embrace its Gaelic heritage. There is the triumph that O'Mahony was a pioneer and visionary in the Irish language and cultural revival from whom Douglas Hyde drew inspiration. Since the initiation by O'Mahony and Michael Doheny of the Irish-column in the *Irish American* (New York), Irish-language activity in New York supported and stimulated the language movement in Ireland itself. This support was to continue for several decades.

All descriptions of O'Mahony agree on a detached mystical strain in his demeanour. John O'Leary, like most observers who came into contact with O'Mahony (including Thomas Clarke Luby and Inspector Thomas Doyle), admired his idealistic character and disinterested nature. While O'Mahony also had many detractors during the course of a long and often controversial public life in politics, most had to acknowledge his contribution to Irish political life. In his *recollections* John Devoy considered that 'O'Mahony knew the Irish Question theoretically better than any Irishman of his day...but he lacked some of the essential qualities of leadership. He was vary much of a dreamer and not a good judge of men'.²

O'Mahony's formulations on the national question are definitely original such as his idea of having an organization in readiness - to bide its time until an

¹ Quoted from the *Irish American* (New York) in Kenneth E. Nilsen, 'The Irish language in New York, 1850-1900' in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore and London, 1997), p.263.

² John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (New York, 1929), p.268.

opportunity presented itself. His plan of campaign for revolutionary organization was the blueprint for the rising of 1916, when there was the certainty of help from without up to Good Friday of that year. However, O'Mahony was too trusting perhaps to be a successful conspiratorial leader. This feature was part of O'Mahony's personality; political manoeuvre did not come naturally to him. It was not in O'Mahony's nature to suspect his closest associates and he never took the measure of Stephens correctly until it was too late. Consequently O'Mahony had no choice but to leave Stephens in place for the sake of the unity of the movement. But whatever measure O'Mahony may fall short of for historians he never fell short of his own standards. The tragedy lay in the fact that history should find this knight from the age of chivalry trapped in the role of leader of conspiratorial brotherhood even though he was 'as qualified to be the head of a secret conspiracy as Lamartine was to be the leader of a French revolution'.³

It is evident in a letter to his sister, Jane Maria, dated 16 November 1863, that O'Mahony carried with pride his ancestral patronymic where he wrote that:

It pleases me very much to find that you are on good terms with the De la Poers of Gurteen.⁴ Notwithstanding the ultra democracy of my political philosophy, I have a sort of instinctive regard for old races and old names, especially those whose blood has, however remotely, mingled with my own. 'Tis a human weakness one cannot get rid of!⁵

Of the leaders of the various revolutionary movements that sprang from Irish grievances, O'Mahony stands out as the clearest representative of the native Gaelic tradition. His *mórtas cine* (pride of race) was in keeping with his family's leadership role in the community and sustained him in his hours of despair. In his *recollections*, O'Donovan Rossa recalled that on meeting O'Mahony for the first time in the spring of 1861 'He made the impression on me that he was a man proud of his name and of his race. And I liked him for that. I like to see an Irishman proud of his people. It is seldom you will find such a man doing anything that would disgrace any one

³ Michael Davitt, *The fall of feudalism in Ireland* (London and New York, 1904), p.429.

⁴ The Powers (De la Poers) of Gurteen were allied by various marriages with the Mandeville and O'Mahony families.

⁵ John O'Mahony to Jane Maria O'Mahony, dated 16 Nov. 1863, in James Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs: a John O'Mahony anthology* (Mullinahone, 1957), p.84.

belonging to him'.⁶ This description perhaps comes closest of all to capturing the essence of O'Mahony's personality.

O'Mahony lived his life for his cause and implicit in this was his consistent belief in democracy. Perhaps the best example of the latter was O'Mahony's eventual submission to the demands of his followers in 1848 to lead a revolutionary insurrection against his own better judgement. A number of contemporaries including his enemies acknowledged that O'Mahony was a democrat. For example, Inspector Thomas Doyle noted in 1859 that 'It is to be observed that – 'O'Mahony is no dictator and consequently if he be not supported by the council of the Phoenixites, he cannot hope to carry out any filibustering expedition or even to attempt it'.⁷ The validity of Doyle's observation that the Fenians' decisions were made collectively would have crucial implications for future events. There could not have been a perennial discussion as to what the policy of the Fenian Brotherhood should be if the organization had not been democratic in structure with offices filled by election. However, O'Mahony had no instinct for the kind of political manoeuvring that dealing with the intriguers in the Fenian 'senate' required. Consequently, he did not make it difficult for them to unseat him by packing the Philadelphia convention with their supporters.

O'Mahony was first and foremost an Irish separatist – and the only way of advocating Irish sovereignty for him was as a republican. Ever since the destruction of the Gaelic aristocracy, the only flag under which Irish independence could be achieved was that of a Republic. This was the one regime which could give the Irish people a voice to determine their own affairs. O'Mahony's republicanism was separatist in thrust, inclusive in aspiration, with an explicit philosophy of human rights. To the extent that his republicanism was doctrinaire, it was motivated by a strong aversion to any form of privilege. O'Mahony saw the struggle for an Irish Republic as an integral part of a broader international conflict embracing as allies other European republicans. In an article published in the *Irish People* (New York) of 12 November 1870, O'Mahony outlined, what he believed to be, the sound logic behind Irish aid to the Third French Republic, proclaimed in Paris on 4 September, and then at war with Prussia:

⁶ Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, *Rossa's recollections 1838 to 1898* (New York, 1898), p.235.

That the true French Republicans would take an active part in the redemption of our Irish people from the tyranny of the English oligarchy with a right good will, and on principle, I feel myself very confident. But, whether they were willing to help us or not, I am thoroughly convinced that they would be forced to it; and so, I think, must every well-informed and rational European revolutionist. France herself cannot maintain her democratic liberty if she continue isolated among the adjacent monarchies. She will need allied European republics around her, and will be compelled, *for her own safety*, to help the subjects of the neighbouring tyrants in their establishment. Above all she will need the immediate creation of a Republic in Great Britain: and the surest and readiest way to affect this desirable event is to expel the English land-oligarchy from Ireland. Her present Republican leaders must be well aware of these political and even military necessities. The failure of the revolution of 1848 resulted almost wholly from the neglect of having provided for them. Had [Alphonse de] Lamartine given timely aid to the insurgent subjects of the neighbouring kingdoms at that period, there would have been no French empire, and the United States of Europe would have been long since one of the “established facts” of modern history.⁸

O’Mahony thought things out in a very original way and held ‘ultra-democratic’ views in a fashion characteristically his own. Everything about O’Mahony suggests that that he was in favour of a democratic egalitarian republic, based on universal suffrage. In an article for the *Irish People* (New York), of 10 December 1870, he wrote that:

The true Democrat believes firmly that far more can be done towards the extirpation of ignorance, vice and misery from among nations and communities under a well regulated system of popular self-government than under any other form. He sees that kings, hierarchs and aristocrats have been trying their hand and regulating the affairs of the world for, who knows how many thousands of years, while the relative proportion of the criminal, miserable or degraded portion of mankind to the more virtuous, happy and

⁷ Inspector Thomas Doyle Report No. 53, 9 Dec. 1859 (Fenian Police Reports, Box 1, NAI).

honoured has not been lessened during all this time in any very sensible degree.⁹

O'Mahony's ideas on class equality were in tune with those held by James Connolly many years later. In the preface to his *Labour in Irish history* published in 1910, Connolly expressed the belief that 'in the evolution of civilisation the progress of the fight for national liberty of any subject nation must, perforce, keep pace with the progress of the struggle for liberty of the most subject class in that nation'.¹⁰

O'Mahony did not outline his social revolutionary programme or how the Irish egalitarian republic would operate specifically – it never got that far. His social policy is left without final comment. Nevertheless, the land question was an inescapable issue for any Irish nationalist and O'Mahony could not fail to delineate his views on the subject. His stance on the land question is outlined in the preface to his translation of Céitinn's *Foras feasa*:

Throughout the work it has also been a desired object with him, to fix the minds of the disinherited sons of Clanna Gaedhail, wherever scattered, upon that green land which is their ancestral birth-right, so that they may never forget that Ireland is their proper home, and that it is they themselves, not the land-jobbers who now devour its people and its fruits, that have any just claim to possess its soil. Their restoration to such birthright has been the aim of his most longing and fondest ambition, since first he began seriously to consider their present fallen condition, and for that end he will strive until he shall have ceased to think.¹¹

Throughout O'Mahony's writings, one can see that he was deeply affected by the sense of ancestral pride and dispossession running through Irish history. The above quotation would have had a strong resonance with the emigrant Irish population in America. It can be inferred from it that O'Mahony envisaged that, after the

⁸ John O'Mahony, 'The Irish "should" fight for France' in *Irish People* (New York), 12 Nov. 1870.

⁹ John O'Mahony, 'Social reform' in the *Irish People* (New York), 10 Dec. 1870.

¹⁰ James Connolly, *Labour in Ireland: Labour in Irish history, the re-conquest of Ireland* (Dublin and London, 1910), pp. xxxiv, xxvii.

¹¹ *Foras feasa ar Éirinn.... the History of Ireland, from the earliest period to the English invasion, by the Reverend Geoffrey Keating, D.D.* Translated from the original Gaelic and annotated by John O'Mahony (New York, 1857) (Hereafter cited as O'Mahony (transl.), *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*), p.7.

attainment of Irish independence, land would be redistributed to the dispossessed famine emigrants who should return to Ireland to re-claim their birthrights. This was the only way to bring about social justice, since the only means of survival for the vast majority of Irish people, before, during and after the Famine, was access to land. Although O'Mahony had strong views as to the distribution of resources there is no indication of any personal or social aversion to the landlords in his writings. In this latter respect he was in tune with Charles Joseph Kickham. O'Mahony's criticism was levelled exclusively against those whom he perceived as agents of a foreign power.

During his public life in politics O'Mahony made several castigating references to the way that some American politicians who had no interest in Ireland used Irish issues to get themselves elected. In his address to a meeting of the Emmet Monument Association on 11 January 1856, O'Mahony made a realistic assessment of the American dream:

Irishmen should beware how they be made the stepping-stones of American aspirants to power. President [Franklin] Pierce should have taught them a salutary lesson on that point. Whether the parties in power be Whig or Democrat, Hard-Shell, Soft-Shell, or Know Nothing, it is all one to the suffering peoples of Europe. The American political mind is eminently selfish. It knows no fraternity or solidarity with the republicans of other lands. Its statesmen are mere worshippers of the *fait accompli* of iniquity triumphant; neither Ireland or any other down trodden nation has anything to expect from its sympathy, though they may probably from its necessity.¹²

O'Mahony as the political realist is evident throughout his assessment of each successive stage of his twenty-two years' involvement in Irish American politics. The Irish American community was expanding, and the politicians saw opportunities to use the Irish to their own advantage. O'Mahony wanted to redirect this power towards the Irish cause.

O'Mahony had reservations about the American republic because it had implicitly accepted the institution of slavery in its constitution in order to avoid

¹² *Irish American* (New York), 19 Jan. 1856.

alienating the southern states, in the post revolutionary war period. This is evident in his letter to John O'Daly, in the autumn of 1856, where O'Mahony wrote:

The very names of parties are inverted here. Your slavery-man is a Democrat. A Republican *pur sang* - your abolitionist - is an aristocrat! Even in the anti-slavery party, there is nothing sound - they are mere political tinkers - would-be patchers-up of an old kettle they call a Constitution, that they should rather throw into the furnace and cast anew.¹³

O'Mahony's remarks in the above quotation were written in moments of disillusion. The abolitionists were feeling the same kind of despair at this time. The American Civil War finally settled the issue of slavery to O'Mahony's satisfaction and in spite of the carnage the constitution survived. The traumatic events of that war changed everyone and the disillusionment of 1856, for many of those concerned, gave way to the hope of 1866. As shall be seen, by this time O'Mahony, like so many others, had renewed hope in the American constitution.

Ireland's first Fenian publication, the *Galway American*, edited by O'Mahony's long term associate James Roche, set out 'to advocate the national rights and the development of the industrial resources of Ireland'.¹⁴ It would be interesting to know whether O'Mahony himself had any concept of an industrialised Ireland, which possessed industries mainly at a local level in his time. He does not appear to have had any direct experience of the industrial revolution at the time that it was taking place in Britain.¹⁵ However, we do know that O'Mahony strongly supported the emergence of trade unionism in the United States. In an article, published in the *Irish People* (New York) of 17 December 1870, he wrote that:

The most healthful sign of the vitality of democratic institutions in the United States is to be found in the rapid and wide spread of Workingmen's Protective Societies or Trades' Unions in our great centres of manufacturing and commercial industry. In them alone we can have hope for any effective

¹³ John O'Mahony to John Daly, circa autumn 1856, quoted in Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian chief: a biography of James Stephens* (Dublin, 1967), pp. 61-2.

¹⁴ *Galway American* (Galway), 12 Apr. 1862.

barrier against encroachments of the monied monopolists upon the rights, liberties, and social happiness of the industrious toiling masses, who form the overwhelming majority of the citizens of this Republic.¹⁶

In this same article quoted above, O'Mahony expressed his belief that:

In an oligarchy, or under any form of mixed government, where Money is the master and Labour the slave, every individual capitalist has it in his power to act the despot; every man who is not fortunate enough to be a capitalist finds a tyrant at his own door. The most cogent examples of the rule of Capital in the hands of a favoured few, and of the Absolutism of a single individual, are to be seen in the condition of the working classes of Great Britain and Russia today. The Russian despot protects the industrial classes from the oppression of all kinds of petty tyrants. The workman whose lot is cast under the boasted British Constitution finds himself the slave of some petty tyrant in every village and every workshop; so that nowhere on earth is his condition more miserable and degraded than in Great Britain and the so-called "sister-island" at present.¹⁷

The above reflection recalls the economic, social and political theories of Karl Marx, and subsequently of James Connolly who believed that freedom for the working classes must be preceded by separation from the British capitalist system.¹⁸ But what is most interesting about the above quotation is O'Mahony's genuine feeling and concern for what he perceived as injustices in the British system of administration. O'Mahony believed that the same system of oppression that he railed against in Ireland operated against the people of Great Britain. Perhaps O'Mahony's most attractive legacy is his courageous attempt to give a platform and a voice to the most powerless people in society.

¹⁵ The *Galway American* was virtually a continuation of the *Phoenix* (New York) which lasted from June 1859 to August 1861. This latter newspaper had Roche as editor and O'Mahony as managing editor.

¹⁶ John O'Mahony, 'Labour and capital' in *Irish People* (New York), 17 Dec. 1870.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (London, 1982), pp.301-4; *Nineteenth-century Ireland: the search for stability* (Dublin, 1990), pp.236-7.

The Fenian Brotherhood gave a sense of social cohesion to the Irish immigrant classes in America. One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Fenian movement under O'Mahony's leadership was the firmness with which they withstood the hostility of, and pressures from, the Catholic church. O'Mahony held the view that 'when the priests descend into the arena of worldly politics they throw off their sacred robes and must be treated according to their personal political deserts.'¹⁹ The numbers, estimated at above 100,000 people, that attended the Fenian rally at Jones' Wood, on 4 March 1866, in spite of Archbishop John McCloskey's opposition, was the clearest indication that Irish-Americans were showing their capacity to distinguish between the secular and the spiritual role of the clergy.²⁰

It is highly significant that the Fenians, under O'Mahony's leadership, made the United States a factor in Anglo-Irish relations for the first time in history. O'Mahony was instrumental in building up the Fenian Brotherhood throughout the United States to become the foremost Irish-American organization of its time, with direct access to President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William Seward. O'Mahony's work in spreading the organization through the Union and Confederate armies during the American Civil War, was an event of momentous historic importance, which the government authorities knew they could not ignore.

Fenianism differed from all previous national movements in that it encompassed not only the Irish at home but also a significant and committed number of Irish immigrants in America. O'Mahony was the first person to unite the Irish nation in the United States as an effective auxiliary to the struggle for Irish independence. O'Mahony's idea of what the Fenians' role should be in American politics was essentially to influence Anglo-American relations. He set up the Fenian Brotherhood as an organization through which the American system could be used for Irish ends and this he considered his life's work. The fact that Fenianism could play such an important role in the affairs of the United States cannot simply be explained by the fact that the Irish were, in some states, a fairly important voting bloc. Even after resigning from office, and seeing his organization split into two factions, O'Mahony was confident enough to write to his nephew, Francis Mandeville, in a letter dated 4 December 1866, in these prophetic terms:

¹⁹ O'Mahony to Jeremiah Quinn, 6 Oct. 1864 (Margaret McKim Maloney collection: O'Donovan Rossa papers, box 4, N.Y.P.L.). Quinn was the local Fenian leader in Wisconsin.

²⁰ *Herald* (New York), 5 and 15 Mar. 1866.

The work that I have done here will tell in its own due time. The great *Irish element of this Republic is in motion Ireland-wards*. It will not be turned backwards until our Ireland is free. This element holds the *balance of power* between the two great parties that rule the United States: so that neither of them could long hold the reins of power if the Irish element unanimously joined its opponents. Hence, war with our ancient enemy is now a *necessity* arising from the state of parties in this country. *We can force that war on* by well-directed action. When it is declared will be Ireland's opportunity, *but not till then*, unless in case of a blow up in Europe previous thereto. I would not ask *any* friend of mine to run any serious risk until then. This was the "*drag chain policy*" on which I differed with Stephens all along, and which, with his connivance at first, has been used with such fatal results on my personal career as a revolutionist. But the Irish element knows now, that it is a *power* in this *greatest country in the world*. It knows too, that it can bring that *power* to bear on England in a thousand ways. Being a power here it is, from its situation, a *power* among the great ones of the world. The proving of this great and important truth has been *my peculiar work*. Having proved it is worth all I have endured, were I to end my life here. *The Irish element of America is able to free Ireland and must do it ere long.*²¹

It may however have taken longer than he then anticipated. The catalyst that had eluded the Fenians – a major international conflict involving Britain – finally presented itself in 1914. In a postscript to the letter quoted above O'Mahony concluded:

Tell my "friends" not to despair, whatever may happen. The movement is no longer *tied to the fate* of an *individual* or even to that of an organization. Henceforth it is the movement of the greater Irish nation in America – it is irrepressible. That nation has the power and its manifest destiny is to liberate Ireland.²²

²¹ John O'Mahony to Francis Mandeville, 4 Dec. 1866 (N.L.I., MS 5018).

The phrase ‘manifest destiny’, first used by the journalist John L. O’Sullivan in 1845 on behalf of American expansionists, had a special resonance in the United States. O’Mahony’s use of it may have been unconscious, but it illustrates the linkage in his mind between the future of Irish independence and the growth of Irish-American power.

O’Mahony had a broad vision and stuck tenaciously to it. It always made sense to O’Mahony that an Irish revolutionary organization would survive no matter what happened to him personally. O’Mahony always thought of the movement rather than himself. In fact, he did not consider his own political position important and proved inept in retaining it. Already at the time of O’Mahony’s death, the Clan na Gael, a powerful and influential revolutionary organization, had emerged as an effective successor to the Fenian Brotherhood. The formation of the Clan na Gael had been an attempt at re-inventing the Fenian Brotherhood without the animosities that had characterised Fenianism. And its name appears to have been taken from O’Mahony’s favourite term for the Irish race in America – ‘Clanna Gaedhail’. From the 1850s onwards, O’Mahony had used this term in his writings and speeches.²³

In the *Irish People* (New York), of 11 February 1871, O’Mahony wrote that:

The conclusion that should be deduced by all liberty-loving Irishmen...is that support of the Irish element is necessary to assure the ascendancy of either the Democratic party or the Republican in the government of the United States; and that it is our paramount duty to combine and to utilize all the legitimate influence, possessed by the said Irish Element, both for the extension of human freedom at large, and more especially for the liberation of our own native country, Ireland, from the tyranny of England.²⁴

The ‘Irish element’ in American society had become a substantial force by the 1860s. The census of 1860 listed 4,138, 697 foreign-born in the United States, of whom 1,611,304 were of Irish birth. The existence of a powerful Irish-American electorate, led by men of wealth and substance, guaranteed that the cause of Irish independence would be made an ongoing issue. Irish nationalism now had a base beyond the reach

²² Ibid.

²³ John O’Mahony to P.M. Haverty, dated 27 Dec. 1856 printed in *Irish News* (New York), 3 Jan. 1857; O’Mahony (transl.), *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, p.7.

of the British government, and Ireland could no longer be regarded merely as Britain's domestic problem.²⁵

The United States became the place where every Irish nationalist movement and political leader looked to for support among the Irish of the diaspora. Two years after O'Mahony's death the Land League was founded. When Charles Stewart Parnell arrived in New York in 1880, the organizational structures and leadership were in place through which they could collect funds. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the Land League to survive without the substantial contributions, which they received from the Irish in America.²⁶ Therefore it can be argued that O'Mahony's activities laid the indispensable foundation for Land League activities and their success.²⁷ In all future phases of the struggle for independence, the support, mainly financial and propagandistic, of the Irish in America would be of crucial importance to those on the home front. Indeed, it is doubtful whether complete Irish independence would ever have been seriously demanded, let alone achieved, without the radical influence of the Irish in America.²⁸

O'Mahony forged the Irish of the diaspora into an effective movement demanding Irish independence. His greatest contribution and legacy to the Irish national cause was that ever since the time when Fenianism was in the ascendant in the early 1860s, it was to prove advisable for any American administration to take Irish opinion into account. O'Mahony played a pivotal role in making American political organization for Irish ends a constant feature of American political life. He bequeathed a broad-based commitment from the Irish of the diaspora to their native land, later developed by John Devoy, and used as an effective instrument successively by Charles Stewart Parnell, Patrick Pearse and Éamon de Valera.²⁹

²⁴ John O'Mahony, 'Rival raids on the Fenian exiles' in *Irish People* (New York), 11 Feb. 1871.

²⁵ W.S. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America* (Pennsylvania, 1975), p.94; E. R. R. Green, 'The Fenians' in *History Today*, vol. viii (1958), p.704-5.

²⁶ John R. McKivigan and Thomas J. Robertson, 'The Irish American worker in transition, 1877-1914: New York City as a test case', p.305 in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, (Baltimore and London, 1997), pp. 321-3; Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations during reconstruction* (Ithaca, 1969), pp.319-20; Terence Dooley, *The greatest of the Fenians: John Devoy and Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), p.103.

²⁷ It may be worth noting here that a number of leading American Fenians, who remained strong supporters of O'Mahony, later became prominent in the activities of the American Land League. They included Stephen Joseph Meany, Patrick Andrew Collins and George Cahill. See Joe Power, 'Stephen Joseph Meany' in *Dal gCais: the Journal of Clare* (1991), pp.39-48; Patrick J. Blessing, *The Irish in America: a guide to the literature and the manuscript collections* (Washington, 1992), p.222.

²⁸ Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the famine 1798 – 1848* (Dublin, 1990), p.227.

²⁹ Diarmuid Ó Mathúna 'The vision and sacrifice of John O'Mahony' in *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna* (1978), p.30.

EPILOGUE: JOHN MANDEVILLE (1849-1888) AND THE LAND WAR

John O'Mahony's nephew John Mandeville (the fourth son of Jane Maria O'Mahony and James Mandeville) would play a prominent role as a local leader in the Land War of the 1880s. He lived as an independent farmer at the old O'Mahony home at Clonkilla, near Mitchelstown, and was the chairman of the Board of Guardians in that town. But the demands of the Land War had to be faced. Mandeville was keenly aware of what his community expected of him and was ready to supply leadership. By the unanimous call of the Kingston tenantry, he was made the director of the Plan of Campaign for non-violent confrontation on 11 December 1886. Because of his connection with the O'Mahonys, and especially because he was a nephew of John O'Mahony, the tenants had the utmost confidence in him. The remarks made at a Land league meeting, in August 1887, by Mandeville and William O'Brien M.P. resulted in the arrest of both men and their trial under the new Coercion Act on the charge of inflammatory speechmaking. On 22 September, Mandeville was sentenced to two months imprisonment and O'Brien was sentenced to three.³⁰

That November they were secretly transferred from the Cork county jail to Tullamore gaol. Having agreed beforehand to resist all attempts to deprive them of their status as political prisoners, Mandeville and O'Brien refused to wear prison uniforms, to clean out their cells, and to associate with common criminals. This was sternly resisted by the government, which instructed the governor of the gaol to take strong action. In the winter cold, five warders forcibly removed Mandeville's clothes and he now used the bed quilt as a covering. Mandeville was placed in solitary confinement, with its plank bed and diet of bread and water, and was denied all exercise. Although Mandeville complained of a bad throat and diarrhea, the prison doctor, named Ridley, pronounced him physically fit to bear such treatment. Mandeville was in very poor health when released from prison on Christmas Eve

³⁰ Colman O'Mahony, 'John Mandeville and the Plan of Campaign at Mitchelstown in the 1880's' in *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna* (1989), pp.5-18; L.P. Curtis, *Coercion and conciliation in Ireland 1880-1892: a study in conservative unionism* (London, 1963), pp. 197, 223-5.

1887. He was apparently released to die outside so that the government could avoid the bad publicity which ensued from prison deaths. Mandeville's death – which many regarded as martyrdom - on 8 July 1888, at 39 years of age, was a direct consequence of his maltreatment in prison. On 17 July 1888 the formal inquest on Mandeville's death began in Mitchelstown. Three days later Dr Ridley committed suicide. The verdict was unanimous that Mandeville had died from the effects of his 'brutal and unjustifiable treatment' in prison. His remains were shouldered from Mitchelstown to the graveyard of Kilbehenny where O'Mahony had wished to be buried. The cortege was so long that Mandeville's coffin arrived in the graveyard as the last of the mourners were leaving Mitchelstown, four miles away.³¹ The burden of leadership lay heavily on two generations of the family.

³¹ Ibid.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

I Manuscripts

NATIONAL ARCHIVES, DUBLIN

Fenian Papers

Tithe Applotment Books

Irish Will Register 1836

Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry, second report 1826-7

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND

Griffith's Valuation 1851

Michael Cavanagh papers

Thomas Clarke Luby papers

William Hickey papers

William Smith O'Brien papers

John O'Mahony Correspondence

John O'Mahony Gaelic Manuscripts

Personal narrative of my connection with the attempted rising of 1848 by John O'Mahony (N.L.I., MS 868)

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, DUBLIN

Memorials of indentures

TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY, DUBLIN

James Stephens collection in the Michael Davitt papers

Trinity College student records

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA, WASHINGTON

O'Mahony papers (Fenian Brotherhood Collection)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Margaret McKim Maloney collection: O'Donovan Rossa papers (on microfilm in National Library of Ireland)

II Published Letters and Papers

James Maher (ed.) *Chief of the Comeraghs: a John O'Mahony anthology* (Mullinahone, 1957)

James Maher (ed.), *The valley near Slievenamon: a Kickham anthology* (Mullinahone, 1942)

William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan (ed.), *Devoy's post bag* Vol. I, 1871-1880, (2 vols, Dublin, 1948 and 1953)

III Contemporary Newspapers and Periodicals

IRELAND

Celt (Dublin)

Cork Examiner (Cork)

Irishman (Dublin)

Irish Book Lover

Tipperary Free Press (Clonmel)

Tipperary Vindicator (Nenagh)

Nation (Dublin)

Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier (Cork)

United Irishman (Dublin)

Waterford Chronicle

AMERICA

Celtic Magazine (New York)
Citizen (New York)
Daily News (New York)
Herald (New York)
Irish American (New York)
The Irish Canadian
Irish News (New York)
Irish People (New York)
Irish World (New York)
Pilot (Boston)
Phoenix (New York)
Times (New York)
Tribune (New York)
United Irishman (New York)

IV Published Works of Contemporaries

Major-General B.F. Butler, *Autobiography and personal reminiscences of* (New York, 1893)

Memoirs of Myles Byrne, edited by his widow [Fanny Byrne] (Paris, 1863)

Michael Cavanagh, *Memoirs of Thomas Francis Meagher* (Worcester, Mass., 1892)

Michael Cavanagh, 'Our dead comrades: Hugh William Collender' published in the *Worcester Messenger* from 19 Apr. to 19 July 1890 and reproduced in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological Society No. 57* (2001), pp.103-30

James Connolly, *Labour in Ireland: labour in Irish history, the re-conquest of Ireland* (Dublin, 1910)

David Comyn, ed., *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, Irish Texts Society Vol. IV (London, 1902)

David Power Conyngham, *The O'Mahony, Chief of the Comeraghs: a tale of the rebellion of 1798* (New York, 1879)

David Power Conyngham, *The Irish Brigade and its campaigns* (New York, 1897)

Michael Davitt, *The fall of feudalism in Ireland* (London and New York, 1904)

Joseph Denieffe, *A personal narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood* (New York, 1906)

John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (New York, 1929)

Michael Doheny, *The Felon's track*, (Dublin, 1951)

Father P. FitzGearld, *Personal recollections of the insurrection at Ballingarry* (Dublin, 1862)

Charles Gavan Duffy, *Four years of Irish history, 1845-49* (London, 1883)

Charles Gavan Duffy, *My Life in two hemispheres* Vol. II (London, 1898)

Douglas Hyde, *A literary history of Ireland from the earliest times to the present day* (London, 1899)

Patrick Weston Joyce, *Old Irish folk music and songs* (London and Dublin, 1909)

T.C. Luby, Robert F. Walsh and Jeremiah C. Curtain, *The story fo Ireland's struggle for self government with the lives and times of her great leaders* (New York, 1893)

Eoin MacNeill, *Celtic Ireland* (Dublin and London, 1921)

John Mitchel, *Jail journal* (Dublin, 1913)

Patrick O'Donoghue, 'Incidents connected with political disturbances in Ireland in 1848: origin, progress and failure of the movement' in *Tipperary Historical Journal*, 1998, pp. 32-45

Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, *Rossa's recollections, 1838 to 1898* (New York, 1898)

Diarmuid O'Donovan Rossa, *Irish rebels in English prisons* (New York, 1882)

John O'Donovan, *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, Annála Rioghachta Éireann* (Dublin, 1851)

John O'Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, Volumes 1 and 2* (Dublin, 1896)

Foras Feasa ar Éirinn.... the History of Ireland, from the earliest period to the English invasion, by the Reverend Geoffrey Keating, D.D. Translated from the original Gaelic and annotated by John O'Mahony (New York, 1857)

John Savage, *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs* (Boston, 1868)

John Savage, *'98 and '48: The modern revolutionary history and literature of Ireland* (New York, 1860)

James Henthorn Todd, *Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill* (London, 1867)

A policeman's Ireland: recollections of Samuel Waters R.I.C. edited by Stephen Ball (Cork, 1999)

V Official Publications

Report of the Proceedings at the first sitting of the special commission for the county of the city of Dublin, held at Green Street, Dublin, for the trial of Thomas Clarke Luby and others for treason felony, 'the Fenian conspiracy', commencing November 27, 1865 (Dublin, 1866)

VI Works of Reference

Henry Boylan, *A dictionary of Irish biography* (Dublin, 1978)

Sir Bernard Burke, *Genealogical history of the dominant, abeyant, forfeited and extant peerages of the British Empire* (London, 1883)

Sir Bernard Burke, *Genealogical and heraldic history of the landed gentry of Ireland* (London, 1958)

George Dames Burtchaeli (ed.) *Alumni Dublinenses* (Dublin, 1935)

S.J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford companion to Irish history*, edited by (London, 1995)

Dictionary of American biography (New York, 1928-36)

Dictionary of national biography (22 vols., London 1908-9)

Dublin almanac and general register of Ireland (Dublin, 1939)

Dublin University calendar (Dublin, 1833-)

Michael Glazier (ed.) *The encyclopaedia of the Irish in America*, edited by (Indiana, 1999)

John Grenham, *Tracing your Irish ancestors* (Dublin, 1999)

E. Keane et al (ed.) *King's Inns admission papers 1607-1867* (Dublin, 1982)

Nessa Ní Sheághdha, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the National library of Ireland Vol. 12* (Dublin, 1990), pp.18-33

Seamus Pender (ed.) *A census of Ireland, circa 1659* (Dublin, 1939)

Pigot and co.'s commercial directory (1824)

Poems and ballads of Young Ireland (Dublin, 1888)

Robert C. Simington, *The Civil Survey 1654-1656, County of Limerick Vol. IV* (Dublin, 1938)

Thom's Irish almanac and official directory, (Dublin, 1848)

Duncan Townson, *The new penguin dictionary of modern history 1789-1945* (London, 1995)

Brian M. Walker (ed.) *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978)

Alfred Webb, *A compendium of Irish biography*, (Dublin, 1878)

Robert Welch, *Concise companion to Irish literature* (Oxford, 2000)

SECONDARY SOURCES

Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican experiment 1848-1852* (Cambridge, 1983)

Tyler Anbinder, "We will dirk every mother's son of you": Five Points and the Irish conquest of New York politics in *Éire-Ireland*, spring/summer 2001, pp.351-87

Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, *The New York Irish* (Baltimore and London, 1996)

Michael Barry, *An affair of honour* (Cork, 1981)

John Belchem, 'Nationalism, Republicanism and exile: Irish immigrants and the revolutions of 1848 in *Past and present*, Feb. 1995, pp. 103-35

Louis R. Bisceglia, 'The Fenian funeral of Terence Bellew McManus' in *Éire-Ireland*, (Autumn 1979), pp.45-64

D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (London and New York, 1982)

D. George Boyce, *Nineteenth-century Ireland: the search for stability* (Dublin, 1990)

Patrick Boyle, *The Irish College in Paris, 1578-1901* (Dublin, 1901)

Patricia Boyne, *John O'Donovan (1806 – 1861) a biography* (Kilkenny, 1987)

Marcus Bourke, *John O'Leary: a study in Irish separatism* (Tralee, 1967)

Anthony M. Breen, 'Cappoquin and the 1849 Movement' in *History Ireland*, (Summer 1999), pp.31-3

Anthony M. Breen, *The Cappoquin rebellion 1849* (Suffolk, 1998)

Mícheál Briody, 'From Carrickbeg to Rome – the story of Fr. Michael O'Hickey' in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological Society* (2001), p.143-4

Eugene Broderick 'Lord George Beresford and three Waterford Elections, 1830, 1831' in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society*, No. 57, (2001), pp.74-84

Thomas N. Brown, 'The origins and character of Irish-American nationalism' in *Irish nationalism and the American contribution* (New York, 1976), pp.327-58

Thomas N. Brown, *Irish- American Nationalism 1870-1890* (Philadelphia and New York, 1966)

David Brundage, "In time of peace, prepare for war", key themes in the social thought of New York's Irish nationalists, 1890-1916' in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, (Baltimore and London, 1997), pp. 321-34

Christy Cambell, *Fenian fire: The British Government plot to assassinate Queen Victoria* (London, 2002)

Bruce Catton, *The penguin book of the American Civil War* (America, 1967)

Alfred Cobban, *A history of modern France, volume 2: 1799-1971* (Britain, 1981)

J.A. Cole, *Prince of spies: Henri Le Caron* (London, 1984)

R.V. Comerford, *Charles J. Kickham (1828-82) A study in Irish nationalism and literature* (Dublin, 1979)

R.V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context, Irish Politics and Society 1848-82* (Dublin, 1985)

R.V. Comerford, 'Anglo-French tension and the origins of Fenianism' in F.S.L. Lyons and R.A.J. Hawkins (ed.) *Ireland under the union: varieties of tension, essays in honour of T.W. Moody* (Oxford, 1980), pp.149-71

R.V. Comerford, *Inventing the nation: Ireland* (London, 2003)

P.J. Corish (ed.), *A history of Irish catholicism, vol. v*, (Dublin, 1967-71)

Seán Cronin, *Washington's foreign policy 1916-1986: independence partition neutrality* (Dublin, 1987)

Ellen Crotty 'Donnaha Rua Mac Conmara' in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society* (2001), pp.142-9

L.M. Cullen, 'Patrons, teachers and literacy in Irish: 1700-1850' in *The origins of popular literacy in Ireland*, edited by Mary Daly and David Dickson (Dublin, 1990), pp.15-44

Bernadette Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000); 'Geoffrey Keating's Foras Feasa ar Éirinn' in *History Ireland*, vol. 9, No.1, Spring 2001, pp.14-17

L.P. Curtis, *Coercion and conciliation in Ireland 1880-1892: a study in conservative unionism* (London, 1963)

Mella Cusack, 'Something about a cabbage patch – The Hickey's of Waterford, Thomas Francis Meagher and others' – copy of a paper presented to a Conference celebrating the 150th anniversary of 1848 at Hobart University in 1998

Dominic Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde* (Dublin, 1974)

William D'Arcy, *The Fenian movement in the United States, 1858-1886* (Washington, 1947)

Richard Davis, *Revolutionary Imperialist: William Smith O'Brien 1803-1864* (Dublin and Darlington, 1998)

William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*, 2 Vols. (London, 1888)

James S. Donnelly, *The land and the people of nineteenth-century Cork* (London, 1975)

Terence Dooley, *The greatest of the Fenians: John Devoy and Ireland* (Dublin, 2003)

P.J. Dowling, *The hedge schools of Ireland* (Cork, 1968)

Michael FitzGerald, 'From Ballingarry to Fredericksburg: David Power Conyngham' in *Tipperary Historical Journal* 1988, pp.192-200.

R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1988)

Michael F. Funchion (ed.), *Irish American voluntary organizations* (Westport Connecticut, 1983)

Laurence M. Geary, *The Plan of Campaign 1886-1891* (Cork, 1986)

E.R.R. Green, 'The Fenians' in *History Today*, Vol.VIII (1958), pp.698-705

Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848* (Cork, 1949)

William J. Hayes, *Tipperary in the year of rebellion 1798* (Tipperary, 1998)

G.H. Hearder, *Europe in the nineteenth century 1830-80* (new York, 1966)

Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations during reconstruction* (Ithaca, 1969)

Peter Jones, *The 1848 revolutions*, (Essex, 1981)

Toby Joyce, 'The *Galway American* 1862-63: James Roche and the American Civil War' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 1995, pp.108-37.

Toby Joyce, 'The *Galway American* 1862-63: politics and place in a Fenian newspaper' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 1995, pp.104-36.

Janick Julienne, 'La France et L'Irlande nationaliste de 1860 à 1890: évolution et mutation de liens multiséculaires' in *Études Irlandaises*, No. 24-1, Printemps 1999, pp.123-36

Janick Julienne, 'John Patrick Leonard (1814-1889), chargé d'affaires d'un gouvernement Irlandais en France' in *Etudes Irlandaises*, No. 25-2 automne 2000, pp.49-67

Robert Kee, *The green Flag: A history of Irish nationalism* (London, 2000)

Thomas Keneally, *The great shame: a story of the Irish in the old world and the new* (London, 1998)

Michael Kenny, *The Fenians* (Dublin, 1994)

Michael Kenny, *William Francis Roantree 1829-1918* (Dublin, 1996)

Brendan Kiely, *The Connerys: the making of a Waterford legend* (Dublin, 1994)

Brendan Kiely, *The Waterford rebels of 1849* (Dublin, 1999)

Maria Luddy, 'Whiteboy support in Co. Tipperary: 1761-1789' in *Tipperary Historical Journal* 1989, pp.66-79

Mary C. Lynch and Seamus O'Donoghue, *Sullivan Burke Fenian* (Cork, 1999)

F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine* (London, 1973)

Lawrence J. McCaffrey (ed.), *Irish nationalism and the American contribution* (New York, 1976)

Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Catholic diaspora in America* (Washington D.C., 1997)

Proinsias Mac Cana, *Collège Des Irlandais, Paris and Irish studies* (Dublin, 2001)

Oliver McDonagh, *States of mind: a study of the Anglo-Irish conflict, 1780-1980* (London, 1983)

R.B. McDowell and D.A. Webb, *Trinity College Dublin 1592-1952: An academic history* (Cambridge, 1982)

J. McKillop, Fionn Mac Cumhaill: Celtic myth in English literature (Syracuse, 1986)

John R. McKivigan and Thomas J. Robertson, 'The Irish American worker in transition, 1877-1914: New York City as a test case' in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, (Baltimore and London, 1997), pp. 301-20.

Liam Mac Peaircín, 'William Smith O'Brien, an scoláire Gaeilge' in *North Munster antiquarian journal*, volume 42, 2002, pp.89-112

Peter Gerard Miller, 'John Mitchel 1815-1875: an interpretative study' (M.A. thesis, NUI Maynooth, 1996)

T.W. Moody (ed.) *The Fenian Movement* (Dublin, 1968)

T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan (ed.) *A new history of Ireland iv: eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800*, edited by (Oxford, 1986)

Damien Murray, *Romanticism, nationalism and Irish antiquarian societies, 1840-80* (Maynooth, 2000)

W. S. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America* (Pennsylvania, 1875)

John Newsinger, *Fenianism in mid-Victorian Britain* (London, 1994)

Kenneth E. Nilsen, 'The Irish language in New York, 1850-1900' in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, (Baltimore and London, 1997), pp.252-74

William Nolan, 'The Irish Confederation in the County Tipperary' in *Tipperary Historical Journal* (1998), pp.2-18

William Nolan (ed.) *Tipperary History and Society* (Dublin, 1985)

William Nolan and Kevin Whelan (eds.), *Kilkenny: history and society* (Dublin, 1990)

Nessa Ní Sheághdha, 'John O'Mahony's Irish Hand' in *Sages, Saints and Storytellers* edited by Donnchadh O'Corrain, Liam Breatnach, Kim McCone (Maynooth, 1989), pp.178-80

Leon Ó Broin, *Fenian Fever: An Anglo-American Dilemma* (London, 1971)

Séamus Ó Casaide, 'Seán Ó Mathghamhna's Irish MSS' in *The Irish book lover*, May-June 1930, pp.80-4

Brendan Ó Cathaoir, 'American Fenianism and Canada, 1865-1871' in *Irish Sword* Vol.8 (1967-1968), pp.77-87

Brendan Ó Cathaoir, *John Blake Dillon: Young Irelander* (Dublin, 1990)

Brendan Ó Cathaoir, *Young Irelander abroad: the diary of Charles Hart* (Cork, 2003)

Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'The progenitors of the O'Mahonys' in *Íris Muintir Mhathghamhna* The O'Mahony Journal, vols. 7 & 8, Summer (1978), pp.9-12

Brian Ó Cuív, 'Irish language and literature 1691-1800' in *A new history of Ireland iv: eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800*, edited by T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan (Oxford, 1986), pp.393-4

Padraig Ó Macháin and Thomas F. Overlander, 'Michael Cavanagh of Cappoquin, 1822-1900' in *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society* (2000), pp. 97-122

Canon John O'Mahony, 'History of the O'Mahony septs of Kinelmeky and Ivagha' published in the *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological society* between 1906 and 1910

R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1989)

Fearghas Ó Fearghail, 'A stormy decade in the Irish College, Paris, 1849-1859' in *The Irish-French Connection 1578-1978* (Paris, 1978), pp.108-18

Cormac Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and beyond: the great Irish famine in history, economy and memory* (Princeton, 1999)

Seán Ó Lúing, *Fremantle mission* (Tralee, 1965)

Seán Ó Luing, *Ó Donnabháin Rosa Rosa I* (Dublin, 1969)

Seán Ó Lúing, 'The Phoenix Society in Kerry, 1858-9' in *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society* (1969), pp.5-26

Proinsias Ó Drisceoil, 'Duchas Sheáin Ui Dhálaigh', *An linn bhúí*, uimhir 7, 2003, pp.87-99

Colman O'Mahony, 'John Mandeville and the Plan of Campaign at Mitchelstown in the 1880's' in *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna*, Vol.13, (Summer 1989), pp.5-15

Eoghan O'Neill, *The golden vale of Ivowen* (Dublin, 2002)

T.F. O'Sullivan, *The Young Irelanders* (Tralee, 1944)

Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the famine 1798 – 1848* (Dublin, 1990)

Gary Owens, 'Popular mobilisation and the rising of 1848: the clubs of the Irish Confederation' in *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland*, edited by Laurence M. Geary (Dublin, 2001), pp.51-63

Thomas Pakenham, *The year of liberty: The story of the great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London, 1982)

George Potter, *To the golden door: The story of the Irish in Ireland and America* (Boston, 1960)

Bill Power, *Mitchelstown through seven centuries* (Cork, 1987)

Bill Power, *White knights, dark earls: The rise and fall of an Anglo-Irish dynasty* (Cork, 2000)

Joe Power, 'Stephen Joseph Meany' in *Dal gCais: the Journal of Clare* 1991, pp.39-48

Patrick C. Power, *History of Waterford City and county* (Cork, 1990)

Patrick C. Power, *The Courts martial of 1798-99* (Kilkenny, 1997)

Thomas P. Power, *Land, politics and society in eighteenth century Tipperary* (Oxford, 1993)

Kevin Quigley, 'American financing of Fenianism in Ireland, 1858-67' (M.A. thesis, NUI Maynooth, 1983)

Brian Holden Reid, *The American Civil War* (London, 2000)

Oliver P. Rafferty, *The church, the state and the Fenian threat, 1861-75* (London, 1999)

Oliver P. Rafferty, 'Fenianism in North America in the 1860s: the problems for church and state' in *History: the Journal of the Historical Association*, Apr. 1999, pp.257-77

Desmond Ryan, *The Phoenix flame: a study of Fenianism and John Devoy* (London, 1937)

Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian chief: a study of James Stephens* (Dublin, 1967)

Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The prairie years and the war years in three volumes* (New York, 1954)

A.J. Semple, 'The Fenian infiltration of the British army in Ireland, 1864-67' (M. Litt. Thesis, T.C.D., 1971)

Hereward Senior, *The Fenians and Canada* (Toronto, 1978)

Mainchín Seoighe, *Portrait of Limerick* (London, 1982)

Quentin Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought* (Cambridge, 1978)

Robert Sloan, *William Smith O'Brien and the Young Ireland Rebellion of 1848* (Dublin, 2000)

William H.C. Smith, *Second empire and commune: France 1848-1871* (London and New York, 1996)

Edward K. Spann, 'Union green: the Irish community and the Civil War' in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore and London, 1997), pp.193-209

Liam Swords, *Soldiers, scholars, priests: short history of the Irish College, Paris* (Paris, 1985)

A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford, 1954)

Mabel Gregory Walker, *The Fenian movement* (Colorado, 1969)

R.E. Zegger, 'Victorians in arms: the invasion scare of 1859', in *History Today*, xxiii, no. 10 (Oct. 1973), pp.705-14

Trevor West, *Midleton College 1696-1996, a tercentenary history* (Cork, 1996)

David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States* (Dublin, 1998)