

The Irish in Quebec

BY

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FOREWORD

In order to get fairly accurate notions concerning that group of citizens of Quebec City who come under the very general designation of 'Irish', there are certain factors that it is essential to bear in mind. First among these, is the geographical position of the city. Then one should recall the gradual displacement of the head of eastern Canadian navigation. Perhaps more than any other factors, these two account first for the rapid rise in the number of Irish who made Quebec their home, and then for the equally rapid decline of that same portion of the population. Among the others, I should mention the following: The substitution of steel and iron for wood in the building of ships; the removal of shipyards from the Quebec area to the shores of the Great Lakes; the removal of the shoe, and other, industries to Montreal, and elsewhere; the great impetus given to the development of the natural resources of Quebec Province by the influx of British and American capital just before the turn of the century, and since that time. It could readily be shown, if time would permit, that each one of these factors had a definite bearing on the existence of the Irish as a somewhat separate entity in Quebec.

But there is still another point that it is useful to recall – a point which shows that the Irish, quite naturally, conformed to a pattern well known to ethnologists, wherever we find a small group of people settling in the midst of a vastly larger, older, and well-organized group of a different national origin, a different economic and cultural background: the larger group generally absorbs the smaller, and the smaller unconsciously tends to fuse and merge with the larger. So it happened, to a greater or less degree, with the Irish of Quebec. The early groups of immigrants, and their immediate descendants, had a distinct existence for somewhat more than a generation; but, after that, because of intermarriage mainly, the process of fusion began, and has continued on until the present day, when it can hardly be said that the Irish of Quebec constitute a distinct unit of the population. In the Canadian West, we have countless instances of this gradual process of absorption; and I suppose that, from the point of view of the future of our country, as well as for the building up of a homogeneous race, this is only as it should be. With these preliminary thoughts in mind, I will try to sketch

briefly the story of 'The Irish In Quebec'.

THE EARLY DAYS

Apart from the occasional man of Irish ancestry, whom we meet among the French of the Old Regime, such as Dr. O'Sullivan, or Sullivan, who figures in the life story of Madame d'Youville, the first Irish we encounter in the history of Quebec are the officers and crew of a ship that put into port in August, 1710. 'La Belle Brune', commanded by Captain Patrick French, and manned by a crew of Irishmen, hailed from a French port. Shortly after their arrival at Quebec, trouble broke out between the crew of 'La Belle Brune' and that of 'La Concorde', the latter manned by French Canadians. That, and subsequent brawls, in which the Irish are said to have carried off the honours – if honours they were – brought Captain French before Judge de Bremen de la Martinière, where a fine was imposed for bodily harm inflicted on a member of the crew of the rival ship. French appealed the case a first, and then a second time, until finally he was completely exonerated by judgment of the Supreme Council. The case, apart from having to do with the first small group of Irish we encounter in Quebec, has the added interest of showing how expeditiously justice was rendered in French Canada in those days; and that at a time when, in Old France, cases of much greater moment dragged on for months, and even years, while the unfortunate accused rotted in some foul prison, to which he had been consigned, without the formality of a preliminary bearing after some person of influence had obtained one of those infamous 'lettres de cachet' against him. The alleged offense, in the present instance, had been committed on August 30; a first condemnation had been rendered on September 3; this was followed by two appeals, and the two previous findings were rejected by the Supreme Council on September 5.¹

The foregoing incident, and others of a somewhat similar nature, have been held up, with rather amusing earnestness, at times, to show that misunderstandings between French Canadians and people of Irish descent were "from the beginning," and "will abide with us forever," wherever Jean-Baptiste and Patrick have to live within hailing distance of each other. Are not such generalizations a little juvenile, when they appear on the same page of would-be history, side by side with less superficial views and more legitimate historical deductions?

We need give but passing notice to the Irish who fought in the two contending armies when the fate of North America was decided on the Plains of Abraham, on September 13, 1759. True it is that some of these settled

¹ This incident is recorded, at some length, by Roy, Pierre-Georges, *Le Vieux Québec* (Quebec, 1923), p. 132 et seq.

later in and about Quebec; but their number was small, and it is quite impossible to get any reliable data on their subsequent movements and doings. At no time did they settle in large enough groups to attract the attention of the historian. However, it might not be out-of-place to mention one of them who was General Wolfe's Quartermaster-General; who later, during his first term as Governor of French Canada, made the first effective effort to conciliate the new French subjects of His Britannic Majesty by the Quebec Act of 1774; who, later still, laid the foundations of representative institutions in Canada by the Constitutional Act of 1791 – Sir Guy Carleton, First Baron Dorchester, from Strabane, Co. Tyrone. He was the first earnest apostle of that for which Canada is still striving, with more or less success: Canadian national unity. Let me mention one more arresting Irish figure of that period, the future Bishop Edmund Burke.

One of the most colourful men of Irish birth, who lived at Quebec towards the end of the eighteenth century, and the beginning of the nineteenth, was undoubtedly the Right Reverend Doctor Edmund Burke, about whose name a most strange controversy raged almost a century later, when his memoirs were published by the late Archbishop O'Brien of Halifax.

Dr. Burke had been Parish Priest of the town of Kildare, before accepting an urgent invitation to occupy a chair of philosophy at the Seminary of Quebec. He arrived in that city on August 2, 1780. His reputation as mathematician and classical scholar had long preceded him at Quebec. It seems that his ability to speak the French language was not on a par with his other scholarly attainments, and, that, consequently, his efforts in that tongue were not always very happy, at least from his point of view, though they often produced considerable mirth among his hearers. A whole cycle of stories still goes the rounds in seminary circles about this slip or that of the great Irish scholar, when he attempted to elucidate in the language of Bossuet what did not appear too clear to his hearers when he addressed them in the Latin tongue.

The future Bishop Burke was a close friend of his countryman, Lord Dorchester, who confided to him various missions that the churchman carried out with undoubted success. For these timely good offices, the British Government rewarded him with a pension for life. Among Dr. Burke's other friends were the Duke of Kent and the military and naval commanders in Canada, who are said to have frequently consulted with him on matters of policy, as well as on those of procedure. More than once, he was honourably reported to His Majesty the King. So that it was with the entire approval of the British Government that the renowned ecclesiastic was named Vicar Apostolic of Nova Scotia, with the title of Bishop of Sion.²

² Davin, Nicholas Flood, *The Irishman In Canada* (London, Toronto, 1877) pages 148-9.

THE IMMIGRATION ERA

As suggested at the beginning of this paper, Quebec's geographical position made that city, for long years, the clearing-house for immigrants. In the earlier days, before the Government took a definite hand in planned colonization, it was natural enough for many of the newcomers to attempt to set up homes for themselves and their families in or about Canada's ancient capital. Many of those who did so, really made Quebec their permanent abode, while others, some short while afterwards, pushed on to Montreal, or to Canada West, as Upper Canada was then called. From each successive wave of immigration, Quebec, and its neighbourhood, generally retained their quota, only to lose it, in whole or in part, with the economic fluctuations already mentioned. This accounts for the fact that, some time after the middle of the last century, there was a much larger Irish colony in Quebec than one found at the close of the century. There was a steady increase of Irish residents from 1819 until the 'seventies', when the numbers began slowly to decline; and that decline has continued more or less steadily ever since.

Now, it is worthy of note that, back of what might be properly styled 'each wave of immigration' from Ireland to Canada, one finds events of major historical, or economic, importance. While this has been a recognized principle in the story of mass movements of peoples since the dawn of history, it is especially noticeable in what now concerns us. From the time of the Conquest of Canada by Britain until after the Napoleonic wars, the number of Irishmen who came to Canada was small. Some of them, it is true, were destined to play leading parts in the upbuilding of the new country—the Baldwins, for instance. Though a number of the 'United Irishmen' came to Canada, after the rebellion of 1798, it was not until the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century that the real tide of Irish immigration began to reach the upper stretches of what was then Canada. Various reasons are assigned as to why Canada then began to attract so many of the sons and daughters of the Emerald Isle; but none of them seems conclusive. Hitherto the United States had looked like the 'Promised Land of the Irish'—a title that she has never completely relinquished. Perhaps the most plausible reason of all is that the population of Ireland—at least so some British economists thought—was increasing in a manner that was entirely out of proportion with the means of subsistence of the country, and that, in modern phrase, it was time 'to do something about it'. Perhaps Malthus, who was then reaching out for fame, was trying to use Ireland as a testing-ground for his geometrical and arithmetical theories concerning population in its relation to food supply. Be that as it may, we find that, from 1819 until on in the last quarter of the century, the immigration from Ireland to Canada was a question that was always to the fore in both countries. It was during

that period that the Irish group in Quebec grew from the hundreds to the many thousands.³

The date 1819 is usually set down as the beginning of the intensive immigration from Ireland. Davin tells us that, of the 13,000 immigrants who arrived in Quebec that year, the vast majority of them came from Ireland. "The same is true of the 40,000 who arrived in the four years that followed. In the seven years from 1819 to 1825, 68,534 immigrants came to Canada – tradesmen, journeymen, day labourers, who, for the most part, took their residence in the town of Quebec, and in Montreal. In the following years the average of arrivals rose much higher. In one year, 1831, as many as 50,000 landed at Quebec, most of them being Irish. The large immigration soon told, even in Lower Canada. In 1820, among the new members returned to parliament, was Michael O'Sullivan, for the county of Huntingdon, a gentleman of great ability, who died chief justice of Lower Canada. In Quebec, in the parishes of Megantic, Lotbinière, and Portneuf, at St. Columban, in the district of Montreal, there were several Irish settlements due to the exodus of that period."⁴ These large groups of Irish immigrants continued to pour into Canada until well after Confederation, when their numbers began to decline appreciably until the end of the century, after which there was a mere trickle to make up a small annual quota.

The 'Canadian Census' of 1871 has the following revealing figures concerning the 'Origins of People': "In the four provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, there are 706,369 of English, 549,946 of Scottish, and 846,414 of Irish origin."⁵ That Quebec City, Canada's main port of entry, should have such a large community of Irish (12,000) at that time is not at all surprising.

Though this paper is mainly concerned with the Irish element in Quebec City, it might be well here to mention small groups, whose history is generally associated with the larger group of the city proper. The main small Irish settlements were those of Laval, St. Catherine, St. Malachy, St. Patrice Beurivage, and Lauzon. At the present time, these have virtually

³ Concerning the small group of Irish in Quebec, prior to 1819, we find an interesting entry in Stotesbury's diary, written after his arrival at that port on the chartered ship of Edward Oates, out of Cork, 1817. We read: "Any man that has a wife, and wishes to live in the country, and has about one hundred guineas, can secure an independence here by getting a grant of land and clearing it." Davin, *op. cit.*, page 259. And in reference to the nucleus of a small Irish colony in Quebec itself, he writes: "On Thursday, the fourteenth of August, met Smith, the coppersmith, and Mahony, the distiller,... On the twenty-second, spent the day with Mr. Gibb, the Chandler. . . Drank tea with Mr. Doyle." Davin, *op. cit.*, page 260. On the following day, he drank tea with Mr. Aitkens. All the foregoing names are those of Cork families residing in Quebec.

⁴ Davin, *op. cit.*, page 244 et seq.

⁵ Davin, *op. cit.*, page 135_

disappeared as Irish, or even as English-speaking, units. There is also a remnant of a group at Little River, a suburb of Quebec, that is fast disappearing. The causes of the failure of these settlements to perpetuate a separate existence of their own are the same, but in a more intensified form, as those that led to such a notable decrease in the Irish population of Quebec City.

Perhaps also, at this stage of the discussion, attention should be called to the popular misconception concerning the importance of the immigration during the late 'forties', or what are often called the 'famine years'. From what has already been said, and still remains to be said, one can see that there was a numerous, well-established, and prosperous Irish community in Quebec before the 'middle forties'; that the foundations of the Irish group as a social unit in the life of the City were well and firmly laid long before the epidemic of '47 and '48 broke out. Still, according to many, who are not familiar with the facts, one would be led to believe that, making allowance for small groups that arrived in Canada previous to that period, the hulk of the Irish who made Canada their home, came in the 'Black Forties'. This, of course, is not in keeping with facts, as we have seen. Probably the misconception is traceable to the stress laid upon the story of those terrible years. Let us look briefly into that story.

DAYS OF SORROW – GROSSE ISLE

“Far from their own beloved isle
Those Irish exiles sleep;
And dream not of historic past,
Nor o'er its memories weep;
Down where the blue St. Lawrence tide
Sweeps onward, wave on wave,
They lie – old Ireland's exiled dead,
In cross-crowned lonely grave.”

These verses came from the gentle soul of Thomas O'Hagan, on the occasion of the unveiling of the Celtic Cross at Grosse Isle, August 15, 1909. The lovely poem, of which the foregoing is the first stanza, might well be called 'An Irish Lullaby to Ireland's Exiled Dead'.

The Irish of Quebec have known their days of joy, gladness, and laughter; but they have also known their seasons of deep sorrow and searing sadness. As Drummond wrote, a few weeks before his untimely death in 1907: "We've bowed beneath the chastening rod; We've had our griefs and pains." Those were the days when the hand of the Lord weighed heavily on the old homeland, and visited her erstwhile smiling hills and fertile valleys with want and starvation; and that, strange as it may seem, in the midst of "profusion that 'they' must not share," as Goldsmith had phrased it

generations before. Those seasons of famine and artificial scarcity were usually followed by the plague, or cholera. Insofar as the latter affected the people of Quebec, the years 1832, 1834, 1847, 1848, 1852, and 1854 stand out in tragically hold relief in the annals of the brave old city. Even in those years of unspeakable woe, the years 1847 and 1848 will be remembered above all others. One would think that Ezechiel had them in mind when he wrote: “And when I looked, behold a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein. And he spread it before me, and it was written within and without; and there was written therein, lamentations, and mourning, and woe.”⁶

It was June 8, 1832, that the brig ‘Carrick,’ a square-rigger, out of Dublin, with James Midson in command, put into quarantine at Grosse Isle. Among her one hundred and thirty-three passengers, some were sick with cholera. As early as June 9 the scourge had reached Quebec, and, in a few hours, had carried off six victims. Soon the sickness reached epidemic proportions, despite all that could be done to stay its progress. Hundreds of the citizens, before many days, were numbered among the dead. From June 16, when one hundred and forty-three persons succumbed, until June 21, the plague raged with unabated fury. The number of victims tapered off towards the end of the month; but it was not until the close of that awful summer, during which 3,451 persons had answered the call of the dreaded visitor, that the plague ceased completely. In 1834 the death toll from cholera was 2,509. That year also the epidemic was traced to shipping from the British Isles. The epidemics during the other years mentioned were traced to various sources, of which the incoming ships from the British Isles were the principal ones. During the seven outbreaks, no fewer than 8,372 persons of Quebec City fell victims to the dreaded disease.⁷

But let us return to Grosse Isle, which was, figuratively speaking, the epicentre of the disaster in Canada. If ever Canadians, of all ethnical strains and religious persuasions, ‘did themselves proud’, to use a popular phrase, it was here, on this lovely isle, that rises from out the bosom of the majestic St. Lawrence. The sheds at Quebec, and at Point St. Charles also saw their days and months of heroism; but, here in this lazaretto, the clearing-house of lazarettos, if human misery reached an ‘all-time low,’ Christian heroism reached an ‘all-time high’. I cannot, and indeed need not, enlarge upon the story here. The mighty tragedy has been well and often told. A few notes will, therefore, suffice. I will begin with a few figures, since they relate, with

⁶ Ezechiel 11. 9.

⁷ The foregoing figures are taken from “An Essay On the Contagion, Infection, Portability, and Communicability of the Asiatic Cholera In Relation to Quarantine, With a History of its Origin and Course In Canada from 1832,” by George Mardsen, quoted by Pierre-Georges Roy, *op. cit.*, page 253 et seq.

telling force, the extent of :the catastrophe.

Of the 25,000 persons who died of the cholera in 1847-1848, thousands lie buried at Grosse Isle. All told, the Grosse Isle Immigrant Cemetery received the remains of 10,000, who sought a home, and found naught but a nameless grave. Their last resting-place is marked by a beautiful Celtic Cross, erected to their sacred memory by the Ancient Order of Hibernians of America, and dedicated on the Feast of the Assumption, 1909. Though there is a partial record of the fever victims who died at sea, the complete roll will never be known. No blessed symbol of our redemption has been erected to their memory; but the mighty waves of the Atlantic will “chant a requiem hoarse and low” over their blessed remains, till time shall be no more.⁸

Of the scores of clergymen of different denominations, of medical doctors, of nurses and nuns, of people who served in more humble capacities, who ministered to the spiritual and bodily wants of the stricken immigrants, I can mention but a few. Numbers of them laid down their lives while trying to solace the sick and the dying. We find the names of some twenty French Canadian priests, and among them the future Cardinal Taschereau, who volunteered to exercise their priestly ministry in the fever-infested sheds of Grosse Isle. The Right Reverend George J. Mountain, Anglican Bishop of Quebec, together with many Protestant clergymen, likewise betook themselves to the scenes of sorrow, to look after those of their own faith. Among these latter was the Very Reverend Canon Ellegood, who, until early in the present century, was Rector of St. James Anglican Cathedral in Montreal. Of the Irish Catholic clergy, we notice the names of the Reverend Fathers Bernard McGauren, Moylan, James McDonnell, Hugh McGuirk (who, at the age of ninety-six, was still living when the great Memorial Service took place at Grease Isle in 1909). These are but a few. What each of them did in his respective calling is best known to Him who promised a reward for even a cup of cold water given in His Holy Name. What praise need they that feeble mortals can bestow?

The Irish of Quebec have known other great days of sorrow, besides those occasioned by epidemics. I refer to the snowslides and avalanches of falling rock that occurred periodically between the years 1836 and 1889, and that left death and destruction in their wake. People who know Quebec – the Quebec of other days – will recall that a large and prosperous Irish community dwelt for many years below the frowning heights of Cape Diamond, mainly along Champlain Street. In 1836, and again in 1875 great volumes of snow became detached from the Cape, and overwhelmed the

⁸ The entries at the port of Quebec, for the year 1847, show a total of 98,821 immigrants. Bechard places the number of burials at Grosse Isle, both within and without the Immigrant Cemetery, at 12,000.” Jordan, J. A., *The Grosse Isle Tragedy* (Quebec, 1909) page 46.

houses and their occupants immediately below.

The first avalanche of rock on record occurred in May, 1841, burying some thirty residents of 'The Cove', as the area was, and still is, called. The rock slide of 1842, though it caused much damage to property, fortunately brought death to no one. It happened on Sunday, June 9, at a time when all the people of the ruined buildings were either at church or in the streets. Other slides occurred in 1852 and in 1864. On both occasions, there was a considerable destruction of homes, but a small number of casualties. But the great avalanche of September 19, 1889, which many of the older residents of Quebec still remember, left a trail of disaster and sorrow that cast a gloom, over the City, and especially over the River Front, for many long years. This time the death toll was forty. The suddenness with which the avalanche of tons of rocks thundered down on the peaceful homes of Champlain Street, between seven and eight o'clock, on the evening of September 19, left no time for escape. Whole families, and in some instances, several members of families, were wiped out in an instant. The names of some of the victims leave no doubt as to where they, or their forebears, first saw the light of day. There were the Leahys, the Berrigans, the Powers, the Fitzgeralds, the Deahys, the Bradleys, the Kennedeys, the Brackens, the Burkes, the Aliens, the Farrells, the Readys, and many others.⁹

GROWTH AND PROSPERITY

And now, for a while, let me turn to a phase of the story of 'The Irish In Quebec' which deals with a happier and more ordered existence than was possible during the times of sorrow and disaster.

How the Irish in Quebec stood, economically and socially, early in the second half of the nineteenth century may be gleaned from what Maguire tells us about them in *The Irish In America*. We read:

"Entering Canada at Quebec, the presence of a strong, and even influential, Irish element is observable. In the staple industry of this fine old city, the lumber trade, the Irish take a prominent part. This trade is divided into several branches, some requiring different degrees of skill and judgment; others calling for physical strength, endurance and dexterity; more necessitating the possession of capital;. . . And these men are principally Irish. . . The 'cove-owners', who purchase, store and prepare timber for exportation, are principally Irish. . . Nor are there wanting Irishmen in the ranks of the shipowners, men of large means and good standing in the commercial world."

⁹ The dates and numbers of casualties of the last two paragraphs have been taken from Gale, George, *Quebec Twixt Old and New* (Quebec, 1915) page 116 et seq.

Speaking of one class of Irish ship labourer, the cullers, Maguire tells us that they earned as much as 300 Pounds a year (Halifax currency), while falling rock that occurred periodically between the years 1836 and 1839, and that left death and destruction in their wake. People who know Quebec – the Quebec of other days – will recall that a large and prosperous Irish where the pay was always good. All this goes to show how the recent arrivals from Ireland, as well as their sons, were not slow in taking advantage of the vastly improved labour conditions in the land of their adoption. In this connection, Maguire goes on to say: “It is pleasant to know that not only are the Irish in Quebec, and indeed along the St. Lawrence, among the most industrious and energetic of the population, but that they are thrifty and saving, and have acquired considerable property. Thus, along the harbour, from Champlain Market westward to the limits of the City, an extent of two miles, the property, including wharves, warehouses, and dwelling houses, belongs principally to the Irish, who form the bulk of the population in that quarter. And by ‘Irish’, I here mean Irish Catholic.”¹⁰

“There are Irishmen of other persuasions, eminent in trade and commerce, men of highest standing and repute. But not only are there many Catholic Irishmen, who came to this country, with little more than their skill as mechanics, or their capacity as labourers, now in positive affluence, but the larger portion of those who live by their daily toil have acquired and possess property of more or less value... It is ascertained that the Catholic Irish – the Irish of the working class – have 80,000 Pounds, or \$400,000.00, lodged in the Savings’ Bank at Quebec; and that, in all kinds of bank and other stock, they own something like 250,000 Pounds, or \$1,250,000.00 ... The secret of the success or failure of Irishmen may be summed up in a sentence, spoken by a countryman of theirs in Quebec; words which I have heard expressed hundreds of times in all parts Of America, and which could not be too often repeated: ‘Where the Irish are steady and sober, they are sure to get on.’”¹¹

And let us not forget that we are speaking of times removed by less than a generation from that national catastrophe that is recalled by such names as Grosse Isle, Point St. Charles, Gap Rosier.

Such are a few facts, mainly about the economic standing of the Irish in Quebec a little more than seventy years ago. Socially and religiously, their rating was likewise high. The Irish Catholic population at that time stood at

¹⁰ Maguire, John Francis, M.P., *The Irish In America* (D. & J. Sadlier, Montreal, 1880) page 91. (The book, of which this is a later edition, was first published by Maguire in 1867.)

Note – “About 700,000 tons of shipping are annually loaded at Quebec. In this vast business also the Irish take a prominent Part.” Maguire, op. cit., page 91.

¹¹ Maguire, op. cit., page 92 et seq.

12,000. They had acquired church property of considerable value; owned and operated an excellent school for boys; had been instrumental in establishing a secondary school, taught by the Christian Brothers; supported a good home for the aged and the orphan; had set up national and cultural societies; were prominent in the labour organizations of the period; contributed generously to public charities, and took a large share in the civic affairs of the community. So that we find the immigrants of other days, and their descendants, prosperous, progressive, and happy; attending to their duties as Christians; living as good citizens, and happy to call themselves Canadians. In answer to a question put by a traveller to scores of persons of Irish birth, as to how they liked their new home, Canada, almost the selfsame words were used: "The laws are good and just, and we enjoy everything we have a right to hope for. We have nothing to complain of here, and all we wish is that you were as well off at home."¹²

CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS

It is not possible to determine, even approximately, how many English-speaking Catholics were in Quebec City before the early part of the nineteenth century. One thing is certain, and that is, no place of worship was set aside for them; nor were they looked upon as a separate religious unit. In 1819, there was a 'get-together' of the Irish, and other English-speaking Catholics, to celebrate fittingly the feast of Ireland's Patron Saint, by assisting at High Mass in the Chapelle de la Congrégation, d'Auteuil Street, in Upper Town. Doughty, in his book *The Cradle of New France*, says, "This is the first record we have of the observance of the day in the city." No doubt, it was the first that the Irish Catholics held; but there is also a record of the day having been kept by the Irish Protestants many years earlier. In *Historic Tales of Old Quebec* we read of a religious service, held under Anglican auspices on St. Patrick's Day, 1765, in the Recollet Church. On that occasion, a patriotic sermon was delivered by the Reverend Dr. Brooks, in presence of the military, judicial, and other authorities of the City. The civil part of the celebration was held in the 'Sun Tavern', St. John Street, where the Landlord, Miles Prentice, played host to the Irishmen and their friends. Gale says that "This is the earliest celebration of St. Patrick's Day recorded in Canada."¹³ Let us return to affairs more strictly parochial.

In 1822, the Irish Catholics formed themselves into a congregation, with

¹² Maguire, op. cit., page 95.

Note – How strangely these lines (12, Maguire) read when placed beside the inflammatory speeches that the traveller of the same period heard everywhere in the old homeland of those same men. One cannot help wondering where the real seat of the trouble lay. Or need one wonder at all?

¹³ Gale, George, *Historic Tales of Old Quebec* (Quebec, 1923) page 209.

the Reverend Father McMahon as Pastor. They met at the Parish Church in – Upper Town now the Basilica – for a few years; finally, the Bishop of Quebec assigned Notre-Dame des Victoires in Lower Town for their gatherings. This edifice soon proved inadequate for their accommodation, so that, in a short time, steps were taken for the erection of St. Patrick’s Church – the grand old building that still stands on McMahon Street, with the date, 1832 over the main entrance. The new church was opened to divine worship in 1833; but it was not until 1853 that St. Patrick’s was “constituted a body corporate under the name of the Congregation of the Catholics of Quebec speaking the English language.”¹⁴

Until 1874, the parishioners of St. Patrick’s were ministered to by the English-speaking diocesan clergy. It was in that year that the Redemptorist Fathers, at the request of Archbishop Taschereau, took over the direction of the Parish. They have continued until the present day to look after the spiritual – and, not infrequently – many of the temporal wants, of this very interesting group of people of Irish descent. Their work among the people has been of a very high order, and, despite a constantly dwindling congregation, they have been able to open another beautiful centre of worship, out in the newer residential area, to which hundreds of families have moved. To-day, the Sunday services, as well as some weekday gatherings, are held in three different churches: at the old St. Patrick’s Church on McMahon St.; at the new church on Grande Allée, and at the Diamond Harbour chapel. The last-named centre was once the focal point of the religious and educational life of a thriving community of shipbuilders, ship chandlers, stevedores, sailmakers, and small shop-keepers. The private chapels of the Parish are to be found in the residence of the Sisters of Charity (Halifax), the Christian Brothers’ Residence, and at that fine old home of Christian charity, St. Bridget’s. Owing to the enlightened efforts of the Redemptorist Fathers, this home for the aged and the orphan has been greatly enlarged and modernized within the recent past, so that it can now accommodate at least three times the number of guests it did at the beginning of the century. Until recently, St. Bridget’s Home was capably managed by the Grey Nuns; this summer, it came under the care of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax, who also direct Leonard School for girls.

In the early days of the last century, little was done for the education of Quebec’s Catholic boys. In 1844, the Christian Brothers, who had arrived in Quebec that year, opened a few classes for the English-speaking Catholic boys in their school in Upper Town. In 1849, another English school was started in Diamond Harbour, where the bulk of the Irish population then lived. Many years after, in 1884, the Brothers and their pupils from Diamond Harbour were transferred to a splendid new school, erected on McMahon Street at the expense of St. Patrick’s Parish. This school, in turn, after training thousands of the youth of Quebec, was transferred to the neighbourhood of Grande Allée church. It now has an enrollment of five hundred pupils; a staff of twenty teachers; and complete primary and high school

¹⁴ Doughty, Arthur G., *The Cradle of New France* (Montreal, 1908) page 278.

courses. Some few years ago, the Parish was fortunate enough to secure the services of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax, to take charge of the new Leonard School for girls. There also, the pupils of all grades, from kindergarten to senior high school, are given a sound training by those renowned teachers of the Institute founded by Mother Seton.

Before closing my very sketchy remarks about 'Churches and Schools,' there are two more things I should like to mention; one of them has to do with St. Patrick's war effort, and the other will evoke the memory of the much beloved founder of St. Patrick's Parish. Concerning the former, all I need say is that, to date, St. Patrick's has seen more than a thousand of her sons go to defend the sacred cause of human liberty. Like their brothers in the service, scores of them have already laid down their sweet young lives, and, no doubt, many more will follow them to an honoured grave, before the strife is over. As regards the kindly first Pastor of St. Patrick's, I will merely borrow a few lines from *Quebec 'Twixt Old and New*.

"Reverend Father McMahon, who was one of the most prominent clergymen of his day in Quebec, was the founder and first priest in charge of St. Patrick's. He was held in such high esteem by his Protestant fellow-citizens, that they not only subscribed to the building of the church, but raised a subscription and presented him with several hundred pounds towards the purchase of the first church organ, which was surmounted by an emblematic figure of Erin with her harp. Father McMahon died at St. Patrick's Presbytery on the third of October, 1851, at the age -of fifty-six, and was buried in the church."¹⁵

While there are many more items of interest concerning the Irish of Quebec that could lawfully claim a place in this sketch, such as the historic cemeteries, the Gavazzi Riots, the 'gold fever' at the time of the California gold rush, the Irish societies, the visits of men prominent in Irish political, literary, and ecclesiastical life, I think that the foregoing will suffice to do what I had promised and planned, viz., to give an outline of the people of The Irish race, who made their home in Quebec City; to tell of their arrival in the 'land of the stranger,' as the people at home called Canada and the United States; to relate their painful, often heroic, beginnings and their subsequent prosperity; to tell of the rise and fall of their numbers; to account for the fluctuations of their influence and prosperity; to shed a tear with them in their days of sorrow, and to rejoice with them in their seasons of happiness; and, finally, to note that, though greatly decreased in numerical strength, they have endured until this year of grace 1944 in the grand old city of Quebec, where they constitute a small, but highly respected, minority.

¹⁵ Gale, George, *Quebec 'Twixt Old and New* (Quebec, 1915) page 141.