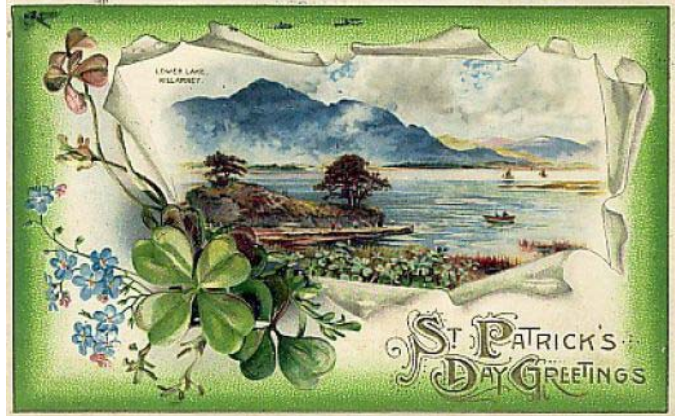


Part II Chapter 10 St. Patrick's Day

“Odd, isn’t it—since Tim’s the one that’s omitting to mention that he’s Catholic to his customers, that he should be the one most loudly encouraging St. Patrick’s Day,” Thomas told Michael, who was also being drawn into Tim’s plans, although he was more careful now, after taking part in the 10-hour strike that lasted ten days, with no benefit except that a lot of strikers, including Michael, were fired.



Strikes were a common occurrence, and usually ended badly for the strikers, they learned. Nevertheless, living with the Learys was making Thomas feel more patriotic about being Irish. He wondered what the celebrations would be like.

Tim’s group, the Hibernian Universal Benevolent Society—Hibernians, Tim called them, with his penchant for abbreviation—were, of course, the number one backers and provided the most men with the most banners in the most parishes. There were what Bridget thought an ostentatious displays of flags “It’s almost like they’re flaunting being Irish.” She and Thomas witnessed the parade Prince Street, across from St. Patrick’s Cathedral, where the processions, departing from their individual parishes, were converging. Tim had told them that they ought to enjoy the spectacle for the first time—next year they could march.

They were growing accustomed to the crowds in New York, but they had never seen so many people together in one place. St. Patrick’s parishioners stood on the steps with their banners to welcome the other parishes. The procession seemed endless. All the parishes were gathering with banners flying. It was fun trying to identify them from their banners and the directions they came from. They recognized people their own St. Peter’s from Barclay and Church coming up from the south—they were the most numerous; followed by St. Mary’s—a small brick-fronted frame building on Broome and Delancy; then came Christ’s Church from St. Ann’s Street; finally St. Joseph’s from Sixth and Barrow with a sizeable crowd, considering that it was a new church. Each parish had its own “St. Patrick” dressed in green chasuble with a bishop’s mitre on his head, and carried a staff.

They identified the banners—Daniel O’Connell was on a lot of them, as were Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmett. Every parish seemed to have its own St.

Patrick's banner—those were the ones that Tim especially liked doing. Bridget looked for ones that she had helped Betty work on.

Speakers from the various associations then spoke, quoting patriots and revolutionary leaders like Wolfe Tone.

To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country--these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman, in the place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter--these were my means."

"To unite Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter under the common name of Irishmen in order break the connection with England, the never failing source of all our political evils, that was my aim".



"If the men of property will not support us, they must fall. Our strength shall come from that great and respectable class, the men of no property".

Robert Emmett was not left out, especially his speech from the dock : *Let no man write my epitaph. . . When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then and not till then, let my epitaph be written."*

After the speeches, the crowd filed into the church, to the accompaniment of a piper on the bagpipes. The Mass was in Latin, but the readings were done in both Irish and English. The songs were all in Irish.

After the Mass, a party was held in front of the church. Tim and Betty with little Nellie joined them there for traditional Irish music, refreshments, ceildh dancing, and camaraderie.

Thomas was all smiles. He had been moved with patriotism at the fiery words of the patriots. He was impressed with the pride that everyone seemed to take in being Irish. He could not get over all the people who were there—Here no one was looking down on the Irish; here it was a great thing, with its own parade.

"Well, Tom. . . Didn't I tell you? Isn't it great?"

"I feel proud to be Irish for the first time since I've come to Americay."

In April, however, Thomas wondered whether he was still proud of being Irish. The spring elections were held and the nearby Sixth Ward became a hotbed of rioting and disorder. The elections lasted three days, and Thomas was glad he wasn't living or working there any longer. "A reign of terror," he read in one newspaper. A powerful block of Whigs, Tim explained, wanted to change the affiliations of the voters there. "The Sixth Ward is a bastion of Jacksonian Democrats," Tim explained, although Tom didn't understand what a Jacksonian democrat was, but when Tom said "Tories," he knew they were usually the Irish nationalists, and Whigs he knew were usually the English. The Whigs hoped to break up allegiance by bribing voters at the polls. . When that didn't work, they began harassing Irish voters, who assumed they wanted to stop them from voting altogether and called them spies trying to intimidate honest working men and prevent their votes. The Irish couldn't resist a fight, Tom knew, so he wasn't surprised when they began attacking the Whigs and drove them out of the ward.

The Whigs in turn marched off to the town arsenal to get muskets and were only restrained by the Mayor. The voting went on for three days, and the Irish were ready for them when they even tried to enter the ward. The gangs were in their element—this was what they lived for-- the Bowery Boys, the Dead Rabbits, the Plug Uglies, the Short Tails, the Slaughter Houses, and the Swamp Angels—they looked for something to start a fight. It lasted three days, and perhaps they hadn't started it, but they certainly kept it going, so, according to the papers, they had with a "blood thirsty spirit, assailed, trampled, and beaten to the earth the poor Whigs." Tom didn't know which side he was on—he was Irish, but the way they carried on they had a drink. He was glad to avoid the ward, except to visit Michael in the Arcade saloon. "I'm about ready to give up on the lot of them," Tim said. "That goes for me too," he agreed.