

Part II Chapter 9 Tim and Tom

Since they had been living at Mrs. Malloy's, Bridget could see that Thomas had lost his old trust in his luck and was coming to share the suspicions and fears that the new immigrants like O'Malley felt toward the larger Protestant community in New York. Working as a cartman had confirmed those suspicions in his mind. Since Bridget worked for Mrs. Daly, she felt safe in the Protestant milieu, but Thomas still felt his separateness and felt threatened "by a sea of Protestants," as he called it. He was thin-skinned about being Irish and Catholic, ready to feel like a target. His rejection by Mr. Daly had only confirmed that suspicion.

However, now that he had changed jobs-- not the work but the location, working on street crews widening the streets all over the city—he felt more his own boss. He was more cheerful, and though not fully himself yet, Bridget could see that he was feeling better about life in New York.

Every Wednesday morning Mr. Daly's tailor Timothy Leary came to fit him for new clothes. Bridget came to know Leary, and confided him once that she and her husband wished to move out of Five Points. Or at least away from Mulberry Street, where there were continual riots and brawls and fights and fires

One Wednesday the tailor asked her if she would like to meet his wife and daughter. He had a little shop on Fulton Street, just east of Broadway. Maybe on the way home, she could stop by and meet them. Mrs. Leary wanted to meet her. He gave her the address, and that evening, she stopped by.

Mrs. Leary minded the shop when Mr. Leary went to see his customers, she said. She introduced her daughter Nell, then asked if it was true, as her husband had told her, that Mrs. O'Shaughnessy was looking for a new place to live? It turned out that Mrs. Leary had a small back room on the ground floor, behind their shop. They were presently using it for storage, but could clear it out and fix it up so that it might be suitable for living quarters. "The rent being exorbitantly high in this district, we could use the extra income." If they could pay \$5 a month, they would see that everything was nice and they would enjoy having them as a neighbor. Bridget couldn't contain her joy. The place was larger than the space they were living in at Mrs. Malloys—it was in a quieter neighborhood, and the Learys and their daughter seemed like quiet people like themselves.

So Thomas and Timothy became friends. Mr. Leary, who preferred to be called "Tim" had been in New York for five years already. He had learned the basics of tailoring in Dublin, and had worked as a journeyman tailor in New York for 2 years when he first arrived. When Thomas inquired whether he had ever been O'Leary, Mr. Leary winked and nodded. "Betty's old-fashioned and still calls herself O'Leary, but I dropped the O in the ocean, Tom."

Michael came to see their new place, and he immediately took to Tim, who promptly called him “Mike.” When Tim heard that the brothers were cartmen, he wasn’t surprised. “That’s all the work they want us to have—work like beasts, from sunup to sunset. When I was a journeyman tailor, I worked in a shop where I had to work 12 hours a day.”

“That’s us,” Michael added.

“I can help you,” Timothy went on. “A group of us formed a tradesman’s union, just last year, and we’re pressing for a 10 hour day. You can get involved with us. We need rank and file men, so it’s not just us organizers.”

Timothy, Thomas decided later, had done more than drop the O in the ocean. He’d gone overboard himself. Michael disagreed. He thought it was great that someone was agitating for a 10-hour day—“especially as it’s not us, but someone who can’t be fired.”

“Never in a million years, will they give us a ten-hour day.”

“And while they’re at it, they ought to raise our wages.”

“One step at a time. Wages will be next.”

Tim was definitely different from the Irishmen that Michael and Thomas had met so far. Perhaps it was because he was an artisan, not a laborer, and self-employed, that gave him the initiative. Thomas admired his optimism—it reminded him of his own before he got to New York. He was falling into the pessimistic attitude of those who were at Mrs. Malloy’s and the men he worked with on the road crews. Tim wasn’t like them. Tim saw all the possibilities of reforming things. He took part in life’ he didn’t stay on the sidelines muttering and drinking and fighting, like the boys he knew. Tim stayed away from them. He tried to change things.

He was a joiner. He belonged to Irish betterment groups like the Hibernian Universal Benevolent Society. He was presently helping to make their banners for the St. Patrick’s Day parade in March. The parade was becoming more Catholic, he said, now that there were more Irish immigrants coming, since England lifted the restrictions on emigration by Catholics in 1827. That was when he had decided to leave. He and other small scale business men and artisans were taking the lead in the parades now. All the different benevolent organizations carried their flags. His group’s flags were the most splendid, he bragged—everyone agreed. Theirs were the richest and most splendid, with mottoes and crests of various heroes like O’Connell. “*The altar of liberty totters when it is cemented only with blood.*” He quoted O’Connell’s motto, which was on one of the banners.

“Oh, St. Patrick’s Day will be a grand day. But first we have to have the strike!”

The strike was planned for March 1. All the trade unions had notified their workers to stay home from work that day. Thomas didn’t see any point to going on strike. “No one would notice that I wasn’t there. All that would happen would be that I wouldn’t get paid.”

But Michael did strike, against the railroad. He and many others supported the strike, but those who were better paid did not. Strikes came and went, but the . the New York and Harlem Railroad never stopped its inexorable progress northward along Fourth Avenue through the Murray Hill tunnel to Yorkville.

“All he got from it was to be fired,” Tomas told Bridget afterward. “Anyone who didn’t show up was simply crossed off and new men were hired.” Michael was looking for another job. When Thomas tried to get him to join him as a “free-lance” cartman, Michael shook his head. “I’ve had enough of cartage. I want a better job.”

He found one—in a saloon. A friend (one of the Forty Thieves who wanted to go straight) had gotten enough money from thieving to buy a saloon. Michael was only too happy to work as a bartender. He would live above the saloon and earn good money.

He still saw Peggy, but her life at Mrs. Malloy’s he kept to himself.